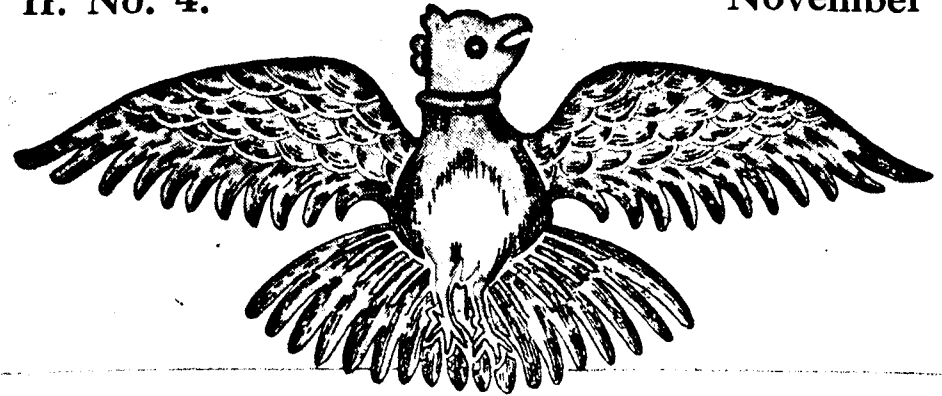


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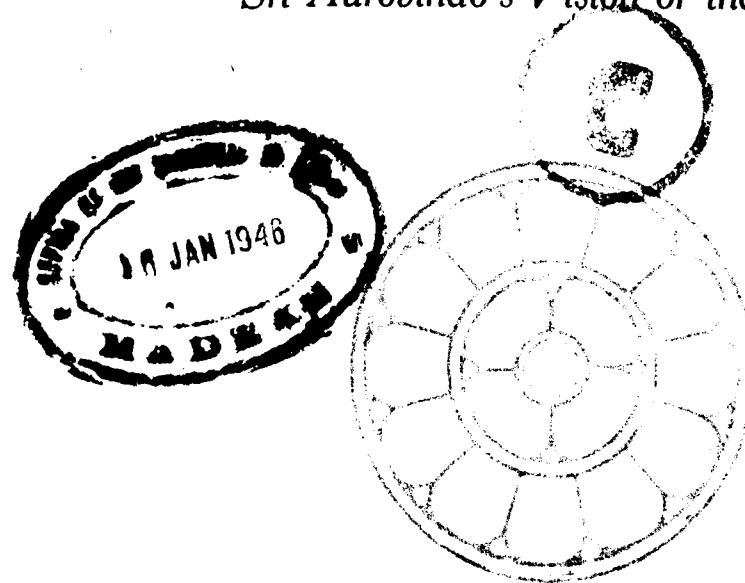
Vol. II. No. 4.

136
November 1945



The ADVENT

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



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N 45-2-4.

178971

Publication Office

Sri Aurobindo Library, George Town, Madras

1, Rupees Five; Foreign, Twelve Shillings Six Pence

Single Copy, Rupee One and Annas Eight

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Editor
R. VAIDYANATHASWAMY, D.Sc.

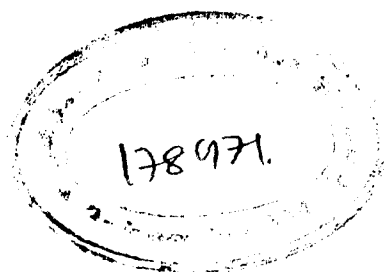
Publisher
SRI AUROBINDO LIBRARY, MADRAS

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ADVICE TO A SICK DISCIPLE

You must not fear. Most of your troubles come from fear. In fact, 90 p. c. of illnesses are the result of the subconscious fear in the body. In the ordinary consciousness of the body there is a more or less hidden anxiety about the consequences of the slightest physical disturbance. It can be translated by these words of doubt about the future: "And what will happen?" It is this anxiety that must be checked. Indeed this anxiety is a lack of confidence in the Divine's Grace, the unmistakable sign that the consecration is not complete and perfect.

As a practical means of overcoming this subconscious fear each time that something of it comes at the surface, the more enlightened part of the being must impress on the body the necessity of an entire trust in the Divine's Grace, the certitude that this Grace is always working for the best in our self as well as in all, and the determination to submit entirely and unreservedly to the Divine's Will.

The body must know and be convinced that its essence is divine and that if no obstacle is put in the way of the Divine's working, nothing can harm us. This process must be steadily repeated until all recurrence of fear is stopped. And then even if the illness succeeds in making its appearance, its strength and duration will be considerably diminished until it is definitively conquered.

The Mother.

October 14, 1945.



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.

TRUE HUMILITY

It is not by repeating *mea culpa* depress yourself and harden your ad infinitum that one can show nature, but to enthuse you with one's true humility. In owning a fresh resolution, to rekindle your too much and too often one's sins, aspiration so that you may take one may be just on the wrong side another step forward. And, naturally, this you must do not with of virtue. There lurks a strain of the sense that you can succeed or vanity in self-maceration: the move forward by any inherent sinner in an over-dose of self-pity capacity of yours—your failures almost feels himself saintly. Certainly one must stand before are there always as standing eye-self face to face, not hide or minimise or explain away one's errors openers to you. No, it is not your and lapses, all one's omissions and self but the Divine Self that will commissions. But one need not come to your succour and lift you brood over them, merely repenting and repining. One sees up—*tameva esha vrinute tanum swam*—to him alone it unveils its own steadily, without flinching, what body. That is the humility to be one actually is and then resolutely learnt. But it does not mean that and sincerely takes to the ways you are to remain merely passive, and means of changing it, becoming inert—you cannot but be that if ing what one has to be. A fall, you are only a "weeping willow"—a dead-weight upon the force of the discovery of a new frailty Grace that would carry you up. should be an occasion not to chastise and punish yourself, thus to weight, whatever it is, on the side

of the Divine. An atmosphere of alacrity and happiness and good will goes a long way to the redemption and regeneration of the consciousness. This is demanded of you; the rest is the work of the Divine. It is under such conditions that the Divine's help becomes all the more speedy and effective. Otherwise, mere contrition and lamentation and self-torture mean, as I have said, a ballast, a burden upon the force of progress and purification, as Sri Krishna says in the Gita, by oppressing oneself one oppresses only the Divine within. Humility, in order to be true and sincere, need not be sour and dour in appearance or go about in sackcloth and ashes. On the contrary, it can be smiling and buoyant: and it is so, because it is at ease, knowing that things will be done—some things naturally will be undone too—quietly, quickly, if necessary, and inevitably, provided the right consciousness, the right will within is maintained. The humble consciousness does not, of course, take credit for what is being done for it, nor does it concentrate wholly or chiefly on its utter futility and smallness. It feels small or helpless not in the

sense as when one feels weak and miserable and almost undone, but as a child feels, naturally and innocently, in the lap of its mother: only perhaps it is more awake and self-conscious than the child mentality.

Humility is unreservedly humble, as it envisages the immensity of the labour the Divine has undertaken, sees the Grace, infinite and inscrutable, working miracles every moment: and it is full of gratitude and thanksgiving and quiet trust and hopefulness. Certainly it means self-forgetfulness and selflessness, as it cannot co-exist with the sense of personal worth and merit, with any appreciation of one's own tapasya and achievement; even so it thrives ill upon self-abasement and self-denigration, for if one is *rajasic*, the other is *tamasic* egoism—egoism, in any case. Absolute nullity of the egoistic self is the condition needed, but anything less than that, any lowering of the consciousness beyond this zero point means reaffirming the ego in a wrong direction. True humility has an unostentatious quietness, as it has a living and secret contact with the divine consciousness.

THE SPIRITUAL OUTLOOK

The spiritual outlook is a global view, unlike the mental which is very often the view from a

single angle or in rare cases, at the most, from a few angles. The ordinary man, even the most

cultured and enlightened, has always a definite stand-point from which he surveys and judges; indeed without such a stand-point he would not be considered educated and worthy of consideration. In other words, he aspects one side of his object and thus perceives only a partial truth. That there are other stand-points, that other people may view the same thing from other grounds does not trouble him or troubles him to the extent that he considers them all mistaken, illusory. He condescends to admit other stand-points if they are near enough to his, if they support or confirm it. Otherwise if they are contrary or contradictory to what he perceives and concludes, then evidently they are to be discarded and thrown away into the dustbin as rubbish.

The spiritual consciousness dawns precisely with the rejection of this monomania, this obsession of one-track mentality. It means, in other words, nothing less than coming out of the shell of one's egoism. To be able thus to come out of oneself, enter into others' consciousness, see things as others see them, that is the great initiation, the true beginning of the life of the spirit. For the Spirit is the truth of all things: all things, even what appears evil and reprehensible, exist and have their play

because of a core of truth and force of truth in each. Mind and mind's external consciousness and practical drive compel one to take to a single line of perception and action and that which is more or less superficial and immediately necessary. But it is only when one withdraws from the drive of Maya and gets behind, gets behind all opposing views and stand-points and tries to see what is the underlying truth that seeks to manifest in each, that one enters the gateway of the spiritual consciousness.

The spiritual consciousness is global, not in the sense that it is eclectic, that is to say, the sum total of all the superficial views, but in the sense that it experiences the one dynamic truth that underlies all and which manifests its varying powers and potentials in various objects and forces, which expresses itself in multiple stand-points and modes and angles of vision.

When the Divine acts, it acts always in and through this transcendental and innermost truth of things. When it helps the seeker, it touches and inspires the secret soul in him—his truth—not like the human teacher or reformer who addresses himself to the outer personality, to laws and codes, prohibitions and injunctions, reward and punishment, for the education and instruction of his

pupil. Indeed, the Divine chastises also in the same way. The Asura or the anti-divine he does not kill with one blow nor even with many blows of his thunder-bolt or burn away with his red wrath. The image of Zeus or Jehovah is a human figuration: it depicts the human way of dealing with one's enemies. The Divine deals with the undivine in the divine way, for the undivine too is not something outside the Divine. The Asura also has his truth, his truth in the Divine, only it has been degraded and deformed under circumstances. The Divine simply disengages, picks up that core of truth and takes it away so that it can no longer be appropriated and deformed by the Asura who now losing the secret support of his truth automatically crumbles to

pieces as mere husk and chaff. If there is something more than the merely human in the image of Durga, the Goddess transfixing her lance right into the heart of the Asura may be taken as indicative of this occult truth.

There is then this singular and utter harmony in the divine consciousness resolving all contraries and incompatibles. *Neha nanasti kinchana*, there is no division or disparity here. Established in this consciousness, the spiritual man naturally and inevitably finds that he is in all and all are in him and that he is all and all are he, for all and he are indivisibly that single (yet multiple) reality. The brotherhood of man is only a derivative from the more fundamental truth of the universal selfhood of man.

THE MESSAGE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

The moralist—the Christian moralist particularly—has dubbed the atomic bomb as the Devil's engine; while the practical politician retorts that the accursed machine has cut short the war, saved more lives on the whole and reduced the extent and duration of suffering and agony. In any case the new weapon is so radical and devastating in its effectiveness that even politicians do not seem to be without a

qualm and heart-burning, not in the moral but in the physical and nervous sense. The atom bomb is a bombshell not upon your enemies alone, but it is a boomerang likely to turn back upon yourself, upon the whole of humanity and human civilisation. Archimedes asked for a fulcrum outside the earth to be able to move it out of its orbit; we have found out something with which one hopes and fears one would do much more.

Man's invention of death-dealing weapons has an interesting history. It is, curious to say, the history of his progress and growing civilisation. The primitive man fought with the strength of his God-given limbs—tooth and nail—to which he subsequently added the crudest of weapons, clubs, of wood or flint. A revolution was brought about when iron was discovered and archery invented. Next revolution came with the appearance of gun-powder on the stage. And then the age of gun-cotton and T.N.T. which held sway till the other day. An interim period of poison gas and chemical warfare was threatened, but everything now has gone overboard with the advent of the atomic bomb and the threatened advent of the Cosmic Death-Ray.

In one sense certainly there has been a progress. This march of machinery, this evolution of tools means man's increasing mastery over Nature, even though physical nature. The primitive man like the animal is a slave, a puppet driven helplessly by Nature's forces. Both lead more or less a life of reflex action: there is here no free, original initiation of action or movement. The slow discovery of Nature's secrets, the gradual application and utilisation of these secrets in actual life

meant, first, a liberation of man's conscious being originally imbedded in Nature's inertial movements, and then, a growing power to react upon Nature and mould and change it according to the will of the conscious being. The result at the outset was a release and organisation on the mental level, in the domain of reason and intelligence. Of course, man found at once that this increasing self-consciousness and self-power meant immense possibilities for good, but, unfortunately, for evil also. And so to guard against the latter contingency, rules and regulations were framed to control and canalise the new-found capacities. The Dharma of the Kshatriya, the honour of the Samurai, the code of Chivalry, all meant that. The power to kill was sought to be checked and restrained by such injunctions as, for example, not to hit below the belt, not to fight a disarmed or less armed opponent and so on. The same principle of morals and manners was maintained and continued through the centuries with necessary changes and modifications in application and finds enshrined today in International Covenants and Conventions.

But a new situation has arisen for some time past. The last Great War (World War No. I) was crucial in many ways in the

life of humanity. It opened a new direction of man's growth, opened and then closed also apparently. I am referring to the tragedy of the League of Nations. That was an attempt on the part of man (and Nature) to lift the inner life and consciousness to the level of the outer achievements. The attempt failed. Man could not rise to the height demanded of him. Now the second World War became logically more devastating and shattering; it has given the go-by to all ethical standards and codes of honour. The poison gas was not used not because of any moral restraint or disinclination, but because of practical and utilitarian considerations. The Atom Bomb however, has spoken the word.

That word is a warning that unless man changes, becomes master of himself, he cannot be truly master of the world. He cannot command the forces he has unleashed unless he has command over his own nature. The external immensity, the bloated mass that his physical attainments are, unless armoured and animated by an inner growth, will crash by its own weight. The mammoth,

the mastodon, the huge pachyderms, in spite of, rather because of their inordinately one-sided growth could not stand the demand of life and perished. Likewise man will not possess the world, but the world will engulf and devour him in its aboriginal hunger of unconsciousness, if he does not take a right-about turn and declare his conversion. The Frankenstein that man has raised can no longer be met by merely human devices—reason and morals—but by a higher discovery and initiation.

The Bomb has shaken the physical atmosphere of the earth as no other engine has done. It has shaken the moral atmosphere too not in a lesser degree. Reason and moral sense could not move man, so Fear has been sent by the Divine Grace. Dante said that God created Hell in his mood of infinite love and justice—that seems to be the inevitable gate through which one has to pass to arrive at the Divine. We are indeed in hell today upon earth, a worse can hardly be tolerated.

Indeed this is the bleak winter of human consciousness—yet can spring be far behind?

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

A leading Nationalist has opined—somewhat pontifically, I am afraid—that he does not un-

derstand the "slogan" of viewing the nation against a background of internationalism. We

can only say that the pontiff has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing always like the old guards attached to the old régime who do not see how much water has flown below their feet while they stood gazing at the sky or shut themselves up in their ivory tower. Well, a village headman could in the same way assert that he does not know and cares not to know how to look upon his village against the background of the whole nation: still the village exists only in and through the life of the nation. Even so, the nation which grew out of the fusion of clans and tribes has to outgrow itself: it has to live today, if she wishes to live, in and through the life of humanity as a whole.

Kurukshetra is a turning-point in history. The battle was between an old order that had to go and a new order that was taking birth. The old order was supported, on the one hand, by Bhishma and Drona, personating its codes and laws, its morals, and, on the other, by Duryodhana and Sisupala as its dynamic actors and executors. The new order was envisaged by Krishna and its chief protagonists were the five brothers. The old order meant the supremacy of the family and the clan: that was the central unit round which society grew

and was held together. Krishna came to break that mould and evolve a higher and larger unit of collective life. It was not yet the nation, but an intermediary stage something like a League of clans, (as we in our day are trying another higher stage in the League of Nations). The Rajasuya celebrates the establishment of this New Order of a larger, a greater human organisation, Dharmarajya, as it was called.

We have just passed through another, a far greater, a catastrophic Kurukshetra, the last Act (Shanti Parvam) of which we are negotiating at the present moment. The significance of this cataclysm is clear and evident if we only allow ourselves to be led by the facts and not try to squeeze the facts into the groove of our past prejudices and set notions. All the difficulties that are being encountered on the way to peace and reconstruction arise mainly out of the failure to grasp what Nature has forced upon us. It is as simple as the first axiom of Euclid: Humanity is one and all nations are free and yet interdependent members of that one and single organism. No nation can hope henceforth to stand in its isolated grandeur—not even America or Russia. Subject or dependent nations too who are struggling to be free will be

allowed to work out their freedom and independence, on condition that the same is worked out in furtherance and in collaboration with the ideal of human unity. That ideal has become dynamic and insistent—the more man refuses to accept it, the more he will make confusion worse founded.

PEOPLE'S WAR

A correlated issue is whether the present war was a people's war or not: some wiseacres say it is not, it is an Imperialists' war all over—Germany or Japan or Britain or America (or Russia) all, all are Imperialists and the war was nothing but a scramble for power and dominion among these different Names of Imperialism. Well, it is as easy to coaltar as it is to whitewash. But to distinguish shades and colours, degrees and qualities, modes and magnitudes in human movements needs a less simple and radical procedure. Answer but one question. If Germany had won, do you think the world would have been as it is now (in spite of the sorry mess we are in)? The whole earth would have been a vast Belsen. In India we would not have been crying for independence, vaunting our claims and capacities, demanding our own lebensraum—all would have been a dead dumb wasteland, a Lidice on a continental scale. That the danger was not a mere possibility or contingency, but actually imminent, that the Allies just managed to escape, as the saying goes, by the skin of their teeth has been admitted and disclosed even the other day by General Marshall. But for the victory of the Allies there would have been no people, no people but mere herds or, worse still, corpses. Today the people exists, it has survived the death trial: although wounded and mangled, which is but natural after such a travail, it has still life and hope and a future. What is now required is time and good-will on all hands. Thus there was really an alignment, a definite demarcation of the forces that clashed. And there is merit or demerit according to the side that one might have taken and supported. If you cannot distinguish, if you are colour-blind, it is as it were you closed your eyes and daubed all in black. The character of the war has not changed if we Indians did not or could not avail ourselves of the opportunity it offered us. What the war faced was a human problem and it cannot be blamed if it could not or has not yet solved the national problem. It has saved humanity and the next problem comes next.

BIRTHDAY PRAYER

Mother, I am your spoilt and wanton child :
To disobey you my unholy joy ;
What with a sculptor's patience and care you build
In moods of frenzy I do soon destroy.

Although your love for me incessant flows—
A stream of rare coolness and nectar-sweet,
My senses yearn for the earth's flaming Rose
That casts a glowing spell on each heartbeat.

I revel in the deeps of dark disorder,
A perilous game my nature loves to play ;
Of grains of wisdom never an ant-like hoarder—
I squander the riches of my night and day.

Things of the Spirit, and the Unknown's Splendour,
Shine on the far sky-hill like diamond dreams,
The earth opens its eager gates of wonder,
So full of beauty, love and joy it seems !

Why do I then feel strangely drawn to you,
Alien as I am to heaven's bliss and light,
And you, quintessence of the pure and true
And beautiful, image of the Infinite ?

In your secret plan what destiny sublime
Have you ordained Mother, for my errant soul ?
A wandering moth in the twilight worlds of time,
Can I aspire for the heavens of thy Goal ?

I shall not question ; humbly do I pray
At your hallowed feet : your Will alone be done :
If you have chosen me for your cosmic play
Let me gambol with the rays of your gold Sun.

—Nirodbaran.

A LETTER

I don't know that I can help you very much with an answer to your friend's questions. I can only state my own position with regard to these matters.

1. Sankara's explanation of the universe.

It is rather difficult to say nowadays what really was Sankara's philosophy: there are numberless exponents and none of them agrees with any of the others. I have read accounts given by some scores of his exegetes and each followed his own line. We are even told by some that he was no Mayavadin at all although he has always been famed as the greatest exponent of the theory of Maya, but rather, the greatest Realist in philosophical history. One eminent follower of Sankara even declared that my philosophy and Sankara's were identical, a statement which rather took my breath away. One used to think that Sankara's philosophy was this that the Supreme Reality is a spaceless and timeless Absolute (Parabrahman), which is beyond all feature or quality, beyond all action or creation, and that the world is a creation of Maya, not absolutely unreal but real only in time and while one lives in time;

once we get into a knowledge of the Reality we perceive that Maya and world and all in it have no abiding or true existence. It is, if not non-existent, yet false, *jaganmithya*; it is a mistake of the consciousness, it is and it is not; it is an irrational and inexplicable mystery in its origin, though we can see its process or at least how it keeps itself imposed on the consciousness. Brahman is seen in Maya as Iswara upholding the works of Maya and the apparently individual soul is really nothing but Brahman itself. In the end, however, all this seems to be a myth of Maya, *mithya*, and not anything really true. If that is Sankara's philosophy, it is to me unacceptable and incredible, however brilliantly ingenious it may be and however boldly and incisively reasoned; it does not satisfy my reason and it does not agree with my experience.

I don't know exactly what is meant by this *yuktivada*. If it is meant that it is merely for the sake of arguing down opponents, then this part of the philosophy has no fundamental validity; Sankara's theory destroys itself. Either he meant it as a sufficient explanation of the universe or he

did not. If he did, it is no use dismissing it as *Yuktivada*. I can understand that thoroughgoing Mayavadin's declaration that the whole question is illegitimate, because Maya and the world do not really exist; in fact the problem how the world came to existence is only a part of Maya, is like Maya unreal and does not truly arise; but if an explanation is to be given it must be a real and valid satisfying explanation. If there are two planes and in putting the question we are confusing the two planes, that argument can only be of value if both planes have some kind of existence and the reasoning and explanation are true in the lower plane but cease to have any meaning for a consciousness which has passed out of it.

2. Adwaita.

People are apt to speak of the Adwaita, as if it were identical with Mayavada monism, just as they speak of Vedanta as if it were identical with Adwaita only; that is not the case. There are several forms of Indian philosophy which base themselves upon the One Reality, but they admit also the reality of the world, the reality of the Many, the reality of the differences of the Many as well as the sameness of the One (*Bhedabheda*).

But the Many exist in the One and by the One, the differences are variations in manifestation of that which is fundamentally ever the same. This we actually see as the universal law of existence where oneness is always the basis with an endless multiplicity and difference in the oneness; as for instance there is one mankind but many kinds of man, one thing called leaf or flower but many forms, patterns, colours of leaf and flower. Through this we can look back into one of the fundamental secrets of existence, the secret which is contained in the one reality itself. The oneness of the Infinite is not something limited, fettered to its unity; it is capable of an infinite multiplicity. The Supreme Reality is an Absolute not limited by either oneness or multiplicity but simultaneously capable of both; for both are its aspects, although the oneness is fundamental and the multiplicity depends upon the oneness.

There is possible a realistic as well as an illusionist Adwaita. The philosophy of the Life Divine is such a realistic Adwaita. The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore is itself real. The reality is the infinite and eternal Divine, infinite and eternal Being, Consciousness—Force and Bliss. This Divine by his power has created the world or

rather manifested it in his own infinite Being. But here in the material world or at its basis he had hidden himself in what seem to be his opposites, Non-Being, Inconscience and Insentience. This is what we nowadays call the Inconscient which seems to have created the material universe by its inconscient Energy; but this is only an appearance, for we find in the end that all the dispositions of the world can only have been arranged by the working of a supreme secret intelligence. The Being which is hidden in what seems to be an inconscient void emerges in the world first in Matter, then in Life, then in Mind and finally as the Spirit. The apparently inconscient Energy which creates is in fact the Consciousness—Force of the Divine and its aspect of consciousness secret in Matter begins to emerge in Life, finds something more of itself in Mind and finds its true self in a spiritual consciousness and finally a supramental consciousness through which we become aware of the Reality, enter into it and unite ourselves with it. This is what we call evolution which is an evolution of consciousness and an evolution of the Spirit in things and only outwardly an evolution of species. Thus also, the delight of existence emerges from the original insenti-

ence first in the contrary forms of pleasure and pain and then has to find itself in the bliss of the Spirit or as it is called in the Upanishads, the bliss of the Brahman. That is the central idea in the explanation of the universe put forward in the Life Divine.

3. Nirguna and Saguna.

In a realistic Advaita there is no need to regard the Saguna as a creation from the Nirguna or even secondary or subordinate to it: both are equal aspects of the one Reality, its position of silent status and rest and its position of action and dynamic force, a silence of eternal rest and peace supports an eternal action and movement. The one Reality, the Divine being is bound by neither since it is in no way limited; it possesses both. There is no incompatibility between the two, as there is none between the Many and the One, the sameness and the difference. They are all eternal aspects of the universe which could not exist if either of them were eliminated, and it is reasonable to suppose that they both came from the Reality which has manifested the universe and are both real. We can only get rid of the apparent contradiction—which is not really a contradiction but only a natural concomitance—by treating one or the

other as an illusion. But it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the eternal Reality allows the existence of an eternal illusion with which it has nothing to do or that it supports and enforces on being a vain cosmic illusion and has no power for any other and real action. The force of the Divine is always there in silence as in action, inactive in silence, active in the manifestation. It is hardly possible to suppose that the Divine Reality has no power or force or that its only power is to create a universal falsehood, a cosmic lie—*mithya*.

4. Compounds and Disintegration.

No doubt all compounds, being not integral things in themselves but integrations, can disintegrate. Also it is true of life, though not a physical compound, that it has a curve of birth or integration and, after it reaches a certain point, of disintegration, decay and death. But these ideas or this rule of existence cannot be safely applied to things in themselves. The soul is not a compound but an integer, a thing in itself; it does not disintegrate, but at most enters into manifestation and goes out of manifestation. That is true even of forms other than constructed physical or constructed life-forms; they do not disintegrate but appear and disappear

or at most fade out of manifestation. Mind itself as opposed to particular thoughts is something essential and permanent; it is a power of the divine Consciousness. So is life, as opposed to constructed living bodies; so I think is what we call material energy which is really the force of essential substance in motion, a power of the Spirit. Thoughts, lives, material objects are formations of these energies, constructed or simply manifested according to the habit of the play of the particular energy. As for the elements, what is the pure natural condition of an element? According to modern Science what used to be called elements turn out to be compounds and the pure natural condition, if any, must be a condition of pure energy, it is that pure condition into which compounds including what we call elements must go when they pass by disintegration into Nirvana.

5. Nirvana.

What then is Nirvana? In orthodox Buddhism it does mean a disintegration, not of the soul—for that does not exist—but of a mental compound or stream of associations or *samskaras* which we mistake for ourself. In illusionist Vedanta it means, not a disintegration but a disappearance of a false and unreal individual

self into the one real self or Brahman ; it is the idea and experience of individuality that so disappears and ceases,—we may say a false light that is extinguished (*nirvana*) in the true Light. In spiritual experience it is sometimes the loss of all sense of individuality in a boundless cosmic consciousness ; what was the individual remains only as a centre or a channel for the flow of a cosmic consciousness and a cosmic force and action. Or it may be the experience of the loss of individuality in a transcendent being and consciousness in which the sense of cosmos as well as the individual disappears. Or again, it may be in a transcendence which is aware of and supports the cosmic action. But what do we mean by the individual ? What we usually call by that name is a natural ego, a device of nature which holds together her action in the mind and body. This ego has to be extinguished, otherwise there is no complete liberation possible ; but the individual self or soul is not this ego. The individual soul is the spiritual being which is sometimes described as an eternal portion of the Divine but can also be described as the Divine himself supporting his manifestation as the Many. This is the true spiritual individual which appears in

its complete truth when we get rid of the ego and our false separative sense of individuality, realise our oneness with the transcendent and cosmic Divine and with all beings. It is this which makes possible the Divine Life. Nirvana is a step towards it ; the disappearance of the false separative individuality is a necessary condition for our realising and living in our true eternal being, living divinely in the Divine. But this we can do in the world and in life.

6. Rebirth.

If evolution is a truth and is not only a physical evolution of species, but an evolution of consciousness, it must be a spiritual and not only a physical fact. In that case, it is the individual who evolves and grows into a more and more developed and perfect consciousness and obviously that cannot be done in the course of a brief single human life. If there is the evolution of a conscious individual, then there must be rebirth. Rebirth is a logical necessity and a spiritual fact of which we can have the experience. Proofs of rebirth, sometimes of an overwhelmingly convincing nature, are not lacking, but as yet they have not been carefully registered and brought together.

7. Evolution.

In my explanation of the universe I have put forward this cardinal fact of a spiritual evolution as the meaning of our existence here. It is a series of ascents from the physical being and consciousness to the vital, the being dominated by the life-self, thence to the mental being realised in the fully developed man and thence into the perfect consciousness which is beyond the mental, into the Supramental consciousness and the Supramen-

tal being, the Truth-Consciousness which is the integral consciousness of the spiritual being. Mind cannot be our last conscious expression because mind is fundamentally an ignorance seeking for knowledge ; it is only the Supramental Truth-Consciousness that can bring us the true and whole Self-Knowledge and world-Knowledge ; it is through that only that we can get to our true being and the fulfilment of our spiritual evolution.

—Sri Aurobindo.

THOUGHTS ON CURRENT EVENTS

THE ABOLITION OF WAR.

The atomic bomb has telescoped history. The building up of human unity and world peace, on account of intrinsic difficulties, would have taken a long time, but now it must be accomplished without delay, if humanity is to live at all. President Truman recently remarked that if there be another war, it would be a global war fought with such weapons as the atomic bomb and that would mean the sure destruction of civilisation. Mr. Attlee, the Prime Minister of Britain, also made a similar remark some time ago. These are the two persons who had taken upon themselves the tremendous responsibility of using the atomic bomb which has shocked the moral sense of the whole world and struck such a terror into the heart of mankind as was never known before. It is in such crises that great things are done. If the President and the Prime Minister were truly logical they would have to abolish their army, navy and air force, thus giving a lead to the whole world. For what purpose would be served by these monstrous instruments of mass massacre if, in case of another war, humanity cannot be saved in any way ? But this is not possible and would indeed be useless unless Russia and other great countries followed suit ; these things are too utopian to be expected from nations who have always practised power-politics and to whom idealistic passivism would sound like mere moonshine. Even then for the maintenance of peace and order in the world some military force would have still to be maintained until " the average and the aggregate man become

more of an intellectual, moral and spiritual being and less predominantly the vital and emotional half-reasoning human animal". For that purpose the international organisation that is being built up and has already come into existence by the ratification of the United Nations Charter by thirty nations can be entrusted with a sufficiently big force for doing police duties throughout the world. If the nations which possess the secret of the atomic bomb are not prepared to communicate it to any other nation they would at least have to give a solemn pledge that it will never be used by any individual nation on another, but that it will be placed at the disposal of the international authority which would be responsible for maintaining world peace.

Sri Aurobindo thus wrote in the *Arya* during the first world war: "War can be abolished if national armies are abolished and even then with difficulty, by the development of some other machinery which humanity does not know how to form or, even if formed, will not for some time be able or willing perfectly to utilise. And there is no chance of national armies being abolished; for each nation distrusts all the others too much, has too many ambitions and hungers, needs to remain armed, if for nothing else, to guard its markets and keep down its dominions, colonies, subject peoples. Commercial ambitions and rivalries, political pride, dreams, longings, jealousies are not going to disappear as if by the touch of a magic wand merely because Europe has in an insane clash of long ripening ambitions, jealousies and hatreds decimated its manhood and flung in three years the resource of decades into the melting-pot of war. The awakening

must go much deeper, lay hold upon purer roots of action before the psychology of nations will be transmuted into that something "wondrous, rich and strange" which will eliminate war and international collisions from our distressed and stumbling human life."

But the unspeakable horrors of the second world war and specially the rocket and the atomic bomb may induce humanity to turn to the only means by which there can be a deep psychological change, the means of spiritual discipline; and sooner or later the nations will have to abolish their armies if they really want to avert utter destruction by another global war. "The limitation of armies and armaments," wrote Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya*, "is an illusory remedy. Even if there could be found an effective international means of control, it would cease to operate as soon as the clash of war actually came. The European conflict has shown that, in the course of war, a country can be turned into a huge factory of arms and a nation convert its whole peaceful manhood into an army. England which started with a small and even insignificant armed force, was able in the course of a single year to raise millions of men and in two to train and equip them and throw them effectively into the balance. This object-lesson is sufficient to show that the limitation of armies and armaments can only lighten the national burden in peace, leaving it by that very fact more resources for the conflict but cannot prevent or even minimise the disastrous intensity and extension of war. Nor will the construction of a stronger international law with a more effective sanction behind it be an indubitable or perfect remedy . . .

The metaphysical sword of justice can only act because there is a real sword behind it to enforce its decrees and its penalties against the rebel and the dissident. And the essential character of this armed force is that it belongs to nobody, to no individual or constituent group of the community except alone to the State, the King or the governing class or body in which sovereign authority is centered. Nor can there be any security if the armed force of the State is balanced or its sole effectivity diminished by the existence of other armed forces belonging to groups and individuals and free in any degree from the central control or able to use their power against the governing authority."

"Therefore pending the actual evolution of an international State so constituted as to be something other than a mere loose conglomerate of nations or rather a palaver of the deputies of national governments, the reign of peace and unity dreamed of by the idealist could never be possible by these political or administrative means or, if possible, could never be secure. Even if war were eliminated, still as in the nation crime between individuals exists or as other means, such as disastrous general

strikes, are used in the war of classes, so here too other means of strife would be developed, much more disastrous perhaps than war. And even they would be needed and inevitable in the economy of Nature not only to meet the psychological necessity of egoistic discord and passion and ambition, but as an outlet and an arm for the sense of injustice, of oppressed rights, of thwarted possibilities. The law is always the same, that wherever egoism is the root of action it must bear its own proper results and reactions and, however minimised and kept down they may be by an external machinery, their eventual outburst is sure and can be delayed but not prevented for ever.

"It is apparent at least that no loose formation without a powerful central control could be satisfactory, effective or enduring, even if it were much less loose, much more compact than anything that seem at present likely to evolve in the near future. There must be in the nature of things a second stage, a movement towards greater rigidity, constriction of national liberties and the erection of a unique control authority with a uniform control over the Earth's People." (*The Ideal of Human Unity* published in *Arya* in 1916).

THE WORLD-STATE

Writing about the ideal of human unity Sri Aurobindo thus observed in the *Arya*: "In principle, then, the ideal unification of mankind would be a system in which, as a first rule of common and harmonious life, the human peoples would be allowed to form their own groupings according to their natural divisions of locality, race, culture, economic conveniences and

not according to the more violent accidents of history or the egoistic will of powerful nations whose policy it must always be to compel the smaller or less timely organised to serve their interests as dependents or obey their commands as subjects." A system of free and natural groupings under a World State which would leave no room for internal discords, incompati-

bilities and repression and revolt as between race and race or people and people might lead to an ideal solution. "Any system which would appear to stereotype anomalies, eternise injustice and inequality or rest permanently on a principle of compulsion and forced subjection, would have no security and would be condemned by its very nature to transience. It is easy to build up a system in the mind and propose to erect it on foundation which would be at first sight rational and convenient. At first sight it would seem that the unity of mankind could most rationally and conveniently arrange itself upon the basis of a European grouping, an Asiatic grouping, an American grouping with two or three sub-groups in America, Latin and English-speaking, three in Asia, the Mongolian, Indian and West-Asian with Moslem North Africa as an annexe, four in Europe, the Latin, Slavonic Teutonic and Anglo-Celtic, the latter with the colonies that still choose to adhere to it, while Central and Southern Africa might be left to develop under present conditions but with the more human and progressive principles upon which the sentiment of a united humanity would insist."

Such arrangements, however rational in theory, encounter at once actual and obvious difficulties and are usually impracticable. Peoples who would fall into such natural categories are often more at odds with each other than those who are divided by distance or race. Thus Mongolian Japan and Mongolian China are sharply divided in sentiment; Arab and Turk and Persian, although one in Islamic religion and culture, would not, if their present sentiments towards each other persist-

ed, make an entirely happy family. The Slavonic group have similar internal difficulties consisting in the traditional animosity between the northern Slavs and southern Slavs; even to-day the Pole and the Czech, the Czech and the Slovak, the Slovak and the Ruthene, bear distrust against each other. "But these antipathies," said Sri Aurobindo, "really persist only so long as there is some actual unfriendly pressure or sense of subjugation or domination or fear of the oppression of the individuality of one by the other; once that is removed they would be likely to disappear. It may be that a great change and revolution in the world would powerfully and rapidly abolish all the obstacles, as the obstacles of the old regime to a uniform democratic system were abolished in France by the French Revolution."

At that time Sri Aurobindo ruled out of consideration as a practical impossibility in the prevailing international conditions and the prevailing state of international morality the idea of an immediate settlement on the basis of an association of free nationalities, although that would be obviously the ideal basis. "For", he said, "it would take as its principle a harmony of the two great principles, nationalism and internationalism. Its adoption would mean that the problem of human unity would be approached at once on a rational and a sound moral basis, a recognition on one side, of the right of all large natural groupings of men to live and be themselves and the enthronement of respect for national liberty as an established principle of human conduct, on the other an adequate sense of the need for order, help, mutual participation, a common life and interests in the unified and associated

human race. The ideal society or State is that in which respect for individual liberty and free growth of the personal being to his perfection is harmonised with respect for the needs, efficiency, solidarity, natural growth and organic perfection of the corporate being, the society or nation. In an ideal aggregate of all humanity, in the international society or State national liberty and free national growth and self-realisation ought in the same way to be progressively harmonised with the solidarity and unified growth and perfection of the human race.

"Therefore, if this basic principle were admitted, there might indeed be fluctuations due to the difficulty of a perfect working combination, as in the growth of the national aggregate there has been sometimes a stress on liberty and at others a stress on efficiency and order; but since the right conditions of the problem would have been recognised from the beginning and not left to be worked out in a blind tug of war, there would be some chance of an earlier reasonable solution with much less friction and violence in the process. But there is little chance of such an unprecedented good fortune for mankind. Ideal conditions cannot be expected, for they demand a psychological clarity, a diffused reasonableness and scientific intelligence and, above all, a moral elevation and rectitude to which neither the mass of mankind nor its leaders and rulers have yet made any approach."

Discussing the practical difficulties of organising a World-State Sri Aurobindo summed up thus: "A federal system would tend inevitably to establish one general type for human life, institutions and activities; it could allow only a play of minor variations.

But the need of variation in living Nature could not always rest satisfied with that scanty sustenance. On the other hand, a looser confederacy might well be open to the objection that it would give too ready a handle to centrifugal forces, were such to arise in new strength. A loose confederation could not be permanent, it must turn in one direction or the other, end either in a close and rigid centralisation or a break up of the loose unity."

The conclusion at which Sri Aurobindo arrives is that while it is possible to construct a precarious and quite mechanical unity by political and administrative means, the unity of the human race, even if achieved, can only be made real if the religion of humanity, which is at present the highest active ideal of mankind, spiritualises itself and becomes the general inner law of human life. Sri Aurobindo saw what very few people are able to see even now that though a World State was necessary to maintain world peace and prevent disastrous wars, it would not be an unmixed blessing. Peace assured, there would be an unparalleled development of ease and well-being. But the soul of man would begin to wither in the midst of his acquisitions. A World State would have to bring the whole life of humanity under its domination and that would mean a tremendous outer organisation which would crush the life of man under its mechanical burden. "The result would come about for the same essential reasons as in the ancient Roman empire. The conditions of a vigorous life would be lost, liberty, mobile variation and the shock upon each other of freely developing differentiated lives."

"The saving power needed is a new psychological factor which will at

once make a united life necessary to humanity and force it to respect the principle of freedom." "There would be needed a religion of humanity much more powerful, explicit, self-conscious, universal in its appeal than the nationalist's religion of country: the clear recognition by man in all his thought and life of a single soul in humanity of which each man and each people is an incarnation and soul form; an ascension of man beyond the principle of ego which lives in separateness,—and yet there must be no destruction of individuality, for without that man would stagnate; a principle and arrangement of the common life which would give free play to individual variation, interchange in diversity and the need of adventure and conquest by which the soul of man lives and grows great, and sufficient means of expressing all the resultant complex life and growth in a flexible and progressive form of human society."

"A spiritual religion of humanity" said Sri Aurobindo, "is the hope of the future. By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite. Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system one in mental creed and vital form. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. A religion of humanity is the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one; that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth and that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a grow-

ing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation, but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded. There must be too a discipline and a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself, so that it may be developed in the life of the race. To go into all that this implies would be too large a subject to be entered upon here; it is enough to point out that in this direction lies the eventual road."

"Could such a realisation develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then, the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must proceed. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent,—perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing,—the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection." (*The Ideal of Human Unity* published in the 'Arya' in July, 1918.)

—Critic.

THE FUTURE POETRY¹

I

A word or sign is enough for the wise. Cousins' slender and now forgotten *New Ways in English Literature* was enough for the discerning Sri Aurobindo to start voyaging on strange seas of aesthetic thought alone, the occasion for "the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name, in the inner and outer worlds." The result was *The Future Poetry*, that amalgam of analysis, interpretation and prophecy, a serial publication of thirty-two articles, in *Arya*, from December, 15, 1917 to July, 15, 1920. Cousins' book, we suspect, was a peg to hang his own rich pendants upon; for only after the first article we hear of him no more, though some use is made of his selection from the works of 'recent' poets. Unfortunately, it has not yet been published in book form and we will, therefore, make frequent references to the original.

It is not my intention—for it is beyond my ability—to evaluate all that he has said there. I would be content if I can present a reasonable *precis* of these essays and the argument contained in them, and thus draw attention to an aspect of his works not sufficiently known. For however unusual and incomplete (in spite of their inordinate length) these essays, I think, deserve studying. At least for their being, in Chaucerian language, so "wonder nice and strange" to our ears. And not for these alone.

Tagore had once said to Sri Aurobindo in a different context: "You have the Word, and we are waiting to hear it from you: India will speak through your voice, Harken to me." Indeed, in recent times no voice, though wedded to self-chosen silence, has been more intuned to the heart, the mind and the soul of India than his, of the purest Aryan undefiled.

The same is true of *The Future Poetry*, which is a bold, subtle, and wholesale application of ancient Indian aesthetics to the problem of modern verse, especially to English poetry. It is probably the most consistent effort at poetics from any modern Indian writer. Few, by the way, could claim equal competence with him in the study undertaken. We did not know what we were lacking till we heard Sri Aurobindo speak out loud and bold. There is something to be said in favour of this fusion of ancient tradition with recent tendencies, the reconciliation of the East and the West. A new Bhagiratha—he brings the perennial waters from the fount and archetype of all high poetic speech, the Vedic *mantra*. Certainly a curious starting point for evaluating English poetry, you say. But that exactly is what he has done. In the cactus land of contemporary critical theory and poetic practice Sri Aurobindo brings a new and occult measure, a hope and a forecast, not unfounded on facts, though the emphasis, and interpretation will be open to challenge

¹ A summary of Sri Aurobindo's *Future Poetry* published in *Arya* (1917 December—1920 July.)

in the minds of western—and westerned—poets and critics.

Cousins' book, according to Sri Aurobindo, "suggests the whole question of the future of the poetry in the age which is coming upon us, the higher functions open to it...and the part which English literature on the one side and the Indian mind and temperament on the other are likely to take in determining the new trend." How "the Indian mind and the temperament" enters the issue at all, one is tempted to ask. But more anon.

This, then, is his main thesis: "Taking the impression it (Cousins' selections and criticism) creates for a starting-point and the trend of English poetry for our main text, but casting our view farther back into the past, we may try to sound what the future has to give us through the medium of the poetic mind and its power for creation and interpretation.

The issues of recent activity are still doubtful and it would be rash to make any confident prediction; but there is one possibility which the book strongly suggests and which is at least interesting and may be fruitful to search and consider. That possibility is the discovery of a close approximation to what we might call *mantra* in poetry, that rhythmic speech which, as the Veda puts it, rises at once from the heart of the seer and the distant home of Truth—the discovery of the word, the divine movement, the form of thought proper to the reality which, as Mr. Cousins excellently says, 'lies in the apprehension of a something stable behind the instability of word and deed, something that is a reflection of the fundamental passion of humanity for something beyond itself, something that is a dim fore-shadowing of the

divine urge which is prompting all creation to unfold itself and rise out of its limitations towards its God-like possibilities.' Poetry in the past has done that in moments of supreme elevation; in the future there seems to be some chance of its making it a more conscious aim and steadfast endeavour."

The "idealistic" bias, no less than the special approach of this criticism, is too well marked not to call for attention, if not scrutiny. The approach, it may be said, is correlated with a special world-view, a world-view which is hinted at different places, rather than plainly stated. In brief, it is part and portion of an integrated metaphysics, but the metaphysics itself may not be entirely acceptable to most. Ergo, nor the criticism? For instance, the nature and "high function" of poetry suggested by him differs so radically from the prevalent notions, the standards obtaining. To take a passage at random:

"The voice of poetry comes from a region above us, a plane of our being above and beyond our personal intelligence, a supermind which sees things in their inmost and largest truth by a spiritual identity. It is the possession of the mind by the supramental touch and the communicated impulse to seize this sight and word that creates the psychological phenomenon of poetic inspiration and it is the invasion of it by a superior power to that which it is normally able to harbour that produces the temporary excitement of brain and heart and nerve which accompanies the inrush of the influence."

Casting our view farther back into the past, Sri Aurobindo reaches the Himavant of *mantric* verse. Cortez-like, it is from that elevated peak of consciousness that he surveys the

course of English poetry. No wonder he is able to find out unexpected gullies and whirlpools, uncharted regions, strange ginnungaps of emotions and imagination. He sees, "a region holy and enchanted," whose inner bearing but few poets and critics have known or fully explored. Also, he feeds the main thesis with many tributary streams, set amidst the rich foliage of supplementary ideas: ideas of the origin and function of language, of the graded planes of emotion and imagination, of the evolution of the human mind, the history of poetic speech and the growth of the soul-vision recorded in it. These ideas are, of course, all of a piece with his main approach. The nature of our reactions will greatly depend on whether or not we accept these side issues and implications as well as the heretic thesis, which is a transvaluation of all our values. But even without assenting to the general thesis, no sensitive reader will fail to notice the power, justness and the subtlety of the remarks scattered throughout, the always interesting, often illuminating, evaluation of individual poets and their works.

The *mantric* approach may, we repeat, superficially strike many readers as an imposition which the facts will not bear, the evidence so far being frail and occasional. The superstructure may appear too heavy for the base. For instance, the Celtic revival on which so much emphasis is laid seems mostly to have ended without yielding the rich harvest expected of it. But it is too early to hope for any great or definitive achievement. For what Sri Aurobindo has stressed is after all one tendency, "one possibility," out of many, rather than a *fait accompli*. "There seems to be some chance," as

he says, of *mantric* verse being "a more conscious aim and steadfast endeavour" among some of the poets. Sri Aurobindo states his case unambiguously, but with impeccable reserve and distinction; he always makes minute and careful qualifications,—even if at times he sounds *ex cathedra*—which commentators are apt to overlook, reducing the original statements to very near to absurdity. But probably the danger is inherent in the attempt itself, for Sri Aurobindo, of all persons, cannot be precised or paraphrased with impunity. Attempting to slice and outline we dissect, isolating we introduce an artificiality. The link that binds these essays in criticism to each other is uncommonly strong. Yet they are not quite logical nor critical in the sense that these words are understood amongst us. But we anticipate.

We have spoken just now of the order and interrelation of this series of essays. Let us survey, first, its contents, *as far as possible in his own words*.

II

The Essence of Poetry: Closely following the review of Cousins' book and what, among other things, it suggests to him, Sri Aurobindo explains in the second article what he calls "the essence of poetry." In the retrospect and prospect we have proposed to ourselves we need some guiding intuitions, some helpful descriptions of what may be the nature of poetry, its essential law, and how out of that arises the possibility of its use as the *mantra* of the Real.

And he at once warns us against two common enough errors, to one of which the ordinary uninstructed mind is most liable, to the other the too instructed critic or the too intellectually conscientious artist or craftsman.

For the first, poetry is nothing more than an aesthetic pleasure of the imagination, the intellect or the ear, a sort of elevated pastime. About the second, certainly in all good art technique is the first step towards perfection; but there are so many other steps. The poet has to possess it no doubt but in his best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it altogether. For neither the intelligence, the imagination nor the ear (nor technique) are the true recipients of the poetic delight, even as they are not its true creators; they are only its channels, and instruments; the true creator, the true hearer is the soul. Also, the rhythmic word is more full of subtle and immaterial elements; its sound value, its significance or thought value, and both of these again, the sound and the sense, have separately and together a soul value, a direct spiritual power, which is infinitely the most important thing about them. The perfection of the sound movement and style comes entirely as the spontaneous form of the poet's soul; the utterance itself is an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word, even as the universal Soul created the harmonies of the universe out of the power of the word secret and eternal within him, leaving the mechanical work to be done in a surge of hidden spiritual excitement by the subconscious part of his Nature. It is this speech which is the supreme poetic utterance and it is this power which makes the rhythmic word of the poet the highest form of speech available to man for the expression whether of his self-vision or of his world-vision.

In this connection we may usefully cast a glance, not at the least inexpressible secret, but at the first elements of this heightening and intensity pecu-

liar to poetic utterance by looking into the origin of language, when words had a more real and vivid life of their own and stood for feelings, sensations, broad indefinite mental impressions with minute shades of quality in them which we now do not care to pursue. Now poetry goes back in a way and recovers, though in another fashion, as much as it can of this original element. It brings out not only the definitive intellectual value of the word for which speech now usually serves, not only its power of emotion and sensation, its vital suggestion, but through and beyond these its soul suggestion, its spirit.

As contrasted with the aim and achievement of prose, it is the privilege of the poet to go beyond and discover that more intense illumination of speech, that inspired word and supreme inevitable utterance. He may not always or often find it, but to seek for it is the law of his utterance, and when he can not only find it, but cast into it some deeply revealed truth of the spirit itself, he utters the *mantra*. But that which causes the expression and movement is always a vision in the soul of which it is eager to deliver itself. The vision may be of anything, it is sufficient that it is the soul which sees and the eye, sense, heart and thought-mind become the passive instruments of the soul.

In all things that speech can express there are two elements, the outward or instrumental and the real or spiritual. The heightened style of poetry makes the deeper realities close and living and the higher cadences of poetry carry it on their wings what the style by itself could not bring. This is the source of that intensity which is the stamp of the poetical speech and of

the poetical movement. It comes from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word: it is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds.

Rhythm and Movement: The *mantra*, poetic expression of the deepest spiritual reality, is only possible when three highest intensities of poetic speech meet and become indissolubly one, a highest intensity of rhythmic movement, a highest intensity of verbal form and thought substance, of style, and a highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth.

In this chapter Sri Aurobindo discusses the first of these intensities. Rhythm is of primary importance, but it is not merely metrical rhythm, even in a perfect technical excellence, which we mean when we speak of poetic movement; that perfection is only the first step, the physical basis. (Incidentally, he warns us against *vers libre* as a point of view which cannot eventually prevail, because it does not deserve to prevail. It certainly cannot triumph, unless it justifies itself by supreme rhythmical achievements beside which the highest work of the great masters of poetic harmony in the past shall sink into a clear inferiority. That has not yet been done.)

Metrical speech, as the ancient Indians had perceived, has in itself not only an easier durability, but a greater natural power than unmetrical. There is perhaps some truth in the Vedic idea that the Spirit of creation framed all the movements of the world by *chandas*, in certain fixed rhythms of the formative word; and it is because they are faithful to the cosmic metres that the basic world movements unchangingly endure. A balanced har-

mony maintained by a system of subtle recurrences is the foundation of immortality in created things, and metrical movement is simply creative sound grown conscious of this secret of its own powers.

Still there are all sorts of heights and gradations in the use of this power. A vigorous or catchy metrical form, an effective jog trot of Pegasus, may have a great staying power, but no real soul movement can get easily into this mould. But even high above this level we still do not get at once the greater sound movement of which we are speaking. Even a great attention and skill in the use of metrical possibilities, in the invention of rhythmical turns, devices, modulations, variations, strong to satisfy the ear, to seize the ear, to maintain the vigilant interest, will not bring us yet to the higher point we have in view.

Poetic rhythm begins to reach its highest levels, the greater poetic movements become possible when rising from and beyond any of these powers the soul begins to make its direct demand and yearn for a profounder satisfaction: they awake when the inner ear begins to listen.

Technically, this happens when the poet becomes a miser of sound and syllable, when every sound is made the most of, whether in its suppression or on its swelling expansion, its narrowness or its open wideness, in order to get in the combined effect of something which the ordinary flow of poetry cannot give us.

But this is only the technical side. The conductor of the orchestral movement is the soul coming forward to get its work done by its own higher and unanalysable methods. The result is something as near to wordless music

as word-music can get. This is the intensity of poetic movement out of which the greatest possibility of poetic expression arises. It is where the metrical movement remains as a base, but either enshrines and contains or is itself contained and floats in an element of greater music which exceeds it and yet brings out all its possibilities, that the music fit for the *mantra* makes itself audible. It is the triumph of the spirit over the difficulties and limitations of its physical instrument.

Style and Substance: After rhythm come style and substance. But in regard to style too we have to make precisely the same distinctions as in regard to poetic rhythm. It is true we distinguish between verse and poetry, but where there is some thought power or other worth of substance attended with some power of expression, false values more easily become current and even a whole literary age may dwell on this borderland.

The essential power of the poetic word is to make us see, not to make us think or feel; thought and feeling must arise out of or rather be included in the sight.

The modern distinction is that the poet appeals to the imagination and not to the intellect. But there are many kinds of imagination. The essential poetic imagination is creative, not of either the actual or the fictitious, but of the more and the most real: it sees the spiritual truth of things, of this truth too there are many gradations. It is an interpretation of the images.

Nature herself affords us not on one but on many planes of her creation.

But the human mind arrives at this highest and essential aim only by a succession of steps. There is at first a strong vital, emotional, intellectual poetry, and it is certainly quite legitimate to enjoy them and to enjoy them strongly and vividly on our way upward; but if we rest content with these only, we shall never get very high up the hill of the Muses.

The style of each poetry corresponds usually to its substance, and which it is essential to distinguish from the language of the higher spiritual imagination. There is a genuinely imaginative style, with a certain, often a great beauty of vision in it either objective or subjective, or with a certain, often with a great but indefinite soul-power bearing up its movement and rhythm. It varies in intensity, for the loftier intensity we can cite at will from Milton's earlier poetry, for another from poets like Keats and Shelley. But this too is not the highest intensity of the revelatory poetic word from which the *mantra* starts. That intensity comes where everything else may be present, but all is carried on the surge of a spiritual vision which has found its inspired and inevitable speech. This intensity belongs to no style, depends on no conceivable formula of diction, and has an unpredictable variety. It is not a style, but the poetic style itself; whatever its outward form it is always the one fit style for the *mantra*.

—Sisir Kumar Ghosh.

READINGS FROM THE UPANISHADS

III

S'ANDILYA-VIDYĀ

"He should make the resolve"

Or, in Sanskrit "*Sa kratum kurvīta*".

The Chāndōgya Upanishad devotes a short section (III. 14.) to a famous Sādhana of the early Vedāntic seers, known as the *S'andilya Vidyā*. *S'andilya* is a teacher, cited several times as an authority in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa: there his 'Agni' is called *S'andīla* as in the parallel instance of the *Kāthaka Brāhmaṇa* naming the 'Celestial Fire' Svargyā agni after Nāciketas. He is one of the great teachers of *Agnirahasya*—what on the surface appears to be a fire ritual, but is clearly 'The Secret of the Mystic Fire' as the title itself suggests. It is here in the *Agnirahasya* that we find the spiritual discipline associated with the name of *S'andilya*. It is briefly noted in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (V. 6) with slight variation. But the Chāndōgya, quite in line with the usual brevity and compactness of these texts, yet quite adequately and thoroughly, gives us an idea of the *Vidyā*, quoting *S'andilya* by name at the close of the instruction.

The opening sentence of the section contains the great affirmation of the Vedānta that All this is Brahman and that the All begins and ends and lives in the Brahman. The famous dictum is followed by an advice calling upon the aspirant to fix himself upon a definite idea of what he is and what he shall be. The Upanishad which has set out to give the Sādhana directs the Vedāntic

sādhaka to make the choice with a firm will and form a purpose for himself and live the life conducive to its fruition. "He should make the resolve" (*Sa kratum kurvīta*) is the exhortation.

What is the character of the resolve that one is called upon to make? How can one's resolve affect the truth or change the order of things? How is it necessary? How is it to be made? What precisely is the idea that is to govern the approach for carrying out the resolve? Besides, the exhortation that one should make the resolve is preceded by the statement that All is Brahman etc.; if so, how to make it a living truth is the question. The Upanishad proceeds to give the answer in the sādhana it advocates as we shall see in this brief exposition.

First, let us take up the question of the resolve that is to be made. *Kratu* is the word used in the text; it means generally sacrifice in later Sanskrit. But this ancient term connotes will with wisdom as in the Rks, or later in such passages of the Upanishads, as *krato smara*. Resolve is indeed an inadequate English equivalent empty of the suggestions associated with the thought content of the Sanskrit word. Here it is used in the sense of *adhya-vasāya*, as Sanskrit commentators have explained, a firm will with a fixed idea and sense of certainty that "This is so.

not otherwise", *evam etat na anyathā iti avicalah pratyayah*.¹ A resolute will with a firm faith in one's future is indispensable for the *sādhana* to start with; for, the text says, it is the will, the resolve that is mostly the *man*, *kratumayah puruṣah*. Man's present life in the world is the expression of a resolve, the working out of a will to be and to live as he does. It is again the resolve made now that works out the will and shapes the future. Therefore one must make sure of what he is to be in order that he may find the means of realising it now in this earthly existence. For one can retain and enjoy the fruits of his achievement and maintain the stature he has grown to, after disappearance from the earth scene, *yathākratur asmin loke puruṣo bhavati tathā itah pretya bhavati*. It is not to be supposed that the Upanishad teaches how best man can prepare for departure from this world. On the contrary, it states that the spiritual status attained by man on earth survives the close of his earthly life and continues to be his in the after-life and that it is the achievement here that matters most and determines the condition of his future. Elsewhere the Upanishads emphasise that if one has known It here, then there is Truth for him (for he has truly lived), otherwise great is the spiritual perdition. Therefore the wise discern THAT in all beings and become immortals on departure from here (Kena Up. II. 5). With a slight variation the same statement is made in the *Brhadāraṇyaka* (IV. 4. 14), the same emphasis is laid on knowing it,

while here, *ihaiva santo vayam*. The question of an after-life, life in the other world is taken up to stress the continuance of the human soul (with all the essentials of the gains acquired in the life lived on earth) in other conditions of being, in other worlds of the Spirit to which it has journeyed. The scriptures recognise the fact of death, the disintegration of the material body composed of the gross elements even in the case of those who have, while living in this world, realised the immortal in the mortal, unaffected by or transcending all that is mortal. They also recognise the possibility that the physical body can become immune to death and disease and aging in the instance of one who gets endowed with a body re-formed by the Fire of Yoga—*yogāgnimayam Sarīram* (Sveta Up. II. 12). But the question the Upanishad is occupied with here is not how to sustain and prolong the integration of the component elements of the gross body; nor is it the control and conquest of the forces that bring about the mortality of the living matter used as a vehicle and instrument of the ensouled mind and embodied life of the Person, the *Puruṣa*. The Upanishad does not apply itself to the problem of the physical mechanism meant and used for working out the potentialities of the Spirit housed in and yet presiding over the gross and organised substance of what we call the material body. It concerns itself with the subject of man's realisation of his true Being, and its relation to the ultimate Truth, Brahman, while living on earth.

¹ This is from the commentary of *Ācārya Sankara* whom I have followed in fixing the senses of doubtful words used in the text. Later on, in extending the connotation of certain terms e.g. *prāṇa*, in *prāṇa-sarīra*, I have quoted the Sanskrit phrases of *Sankara* and given their English renderings. There is a distinct advantage in relying upon the most ancient of extant commentaries in such matters, especially for the elucidation of certain expressions in so far as they appeal to reason. Incidentally, we are enabled to judge how much ancient indigenous scholarship lends support to the line of exposition of these *Vedāntic Sādhana*s presented here in the light of Sri Aurobindo's high esteem of the Upanishads and of his teachings in general.

Indeed, it is understood that the physical life is not the sole life and that the human soul does not end with its end, but continues its existence in another state of consciousness, in another plane of being corresponding to the condition and level it being it has risen to in the terrestrial existence. If man is to survive the physical death with a spiritual status, he has to establish in himself in the period of his bodily life on earth, points of contact with the higher powers of the Spirit, must have awakened and opened in him the subtle psychic and spiritual centres of knowledge and will communicating with the higher planes of being in other fields of Consciousness, in the supra-physical and still subtler and higher worlds that are the constituents of this Cosmos. For, thus and not otherwise, when the hour comes for the material body to fall or when the physical life has no further use for the Spirit, he can switch on to the light of his highest level, betake himself to the escalator of the Yoga Force that gives him the lift to those regions of the Spirit with which he has already familiarised himself in a way under conditions obtaining in embodied life on earth. This is a general law that holds good even in the case of one who has chosen—rather who is chosen for—the way of dissolution or absorption, *laya*, in the Being or a return to the Beyond that is absolved from all relations and conditions of being anywhere in the created existence. For the question of the states of the soul and survival does not arise at all in the case of one to whom realisation of Brahman is the absorption where he is, in the Absolute, and the very thought of this world or the next is out of question. But the man in whom the fire is not kindled for a life

of the Spirit, gropes in the dark after death, revelling in things he ran after in embodied life; but only he who is able to know before the fall of the body is competent for a subtle and spiritual embodiment in other worlds (Katha VI—4.)

It is precisely to draw the aspirant's attention to the necessity of discovering his connection with the deeper truths of his own being, of contacting himself with the innermost Truth, the Spirit, of forging and fashioning the link between himself, the outer man, and the deeper and larger powers of Consciousness and Force of the true Self, that the Upanishad formulates in a few words the substance and frame of connected ideas that have to mould and govern his attitude in the application of his will for the purpose in question.

In any attempt to seize the spirit of the language of these texts it is necessary to bear in mind certain features that are characteristic of these early Upanishads. The words and phrases used in these passages are surcharged with an irresistible force of implicit reasoning and power of direct appeal to the aspiring soul of man. It is an astounding fact—and this can hardly escape the notice of the student of the Upanishads—that they often neglect the etymological sense of well-known names and terms, such as *Indra*, *Satya*, *Sāman*, and give their own interpretation in order to drive home the truth they have set themselves to deliver to those for whom they are intended. Or, they make a symbolic use even of the component sounds of a single syllable, as in the case of AUM, or construct new phrases, to suggest meanings packed with serious and profound

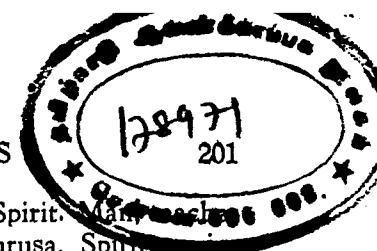
thoughts and present to the perceiving mind vivid images of the Truth. The sentence declaring the celebrated Vedāntic dictum with which begins the section we are considering affords a sovereign illustration of the liberty that the Upanishad takes in minting a phrase for making the Indefinable Brahman definite in idea to our intelligence. "Taj-ja-l'ān" is the new coinage used to describe Brahman as That (*Tad*) from which All is born (*ja*, part of the root *jan*), in which All is absorbed (*la*, for *laya* of root *li*), and in which All breathes (*an*, to breathe, live). We may note in passing the strange remark of some reputed translators that these are mystic syllables. While these scholars give the right interpretation of the word following the ancient Sanskrit commentators, their own remark does not improve but mystify it, there is nothing mystical about the expression 'Tajjalān' as has been shown above. There is, indeed, an archaic freedom quite manifest in the formation of the phrasing, but the etymology is correct. The economy evident in the structure of the word lends a symbolic colour, almost a symbolic value to the condensed expression which wears a mystical appearance. That is so, because the Upanishad here suggests to the mind with a revealing power of Truth an idea that drives to the core and shapes the thought-vision encompassing the All and each in Brahman and as Brahman,—or an idea that fills the mind with a definiteness that All is born, breathes and is dissolved in That—Brahman.

*Sarvam khalv'idam Brahma;
Tajjalān iti śānta upāsita.*

To return to the text : It is true that all and each of the All, things, forces,

forms and beings in this world or elsewhere are Brahman. If one realises this truth, certainly he can be tranquil in his worship of Brahman as such, since there is nothing to disturb the tranquillity. For, when one sees that everything is Brahman, the question of attraction or repulsion, desire or disgust does not arise to unsettle the calm of the being, the peace of the soul. But how to *know*, to realise It, to make It a truth of life, a fact of living experience is the problem. If Brahman is the One that forms and presents itself as the Many and is present in the Many, surely man can realise it by realising the whole truth of any part of the One, any one of the Many. While it is always possible for Brahman to reveal its truth to man from anywhere in the outer world as everything *is* Itself, the direct and comparatively easier line open to him is to go inside and discover the truth of himself, the truth of what he is as an embodied being here and what he could become as related to the Power of the Spirit that has shaped his present and to the One Brahman and the Self in the many of which he is one.

Brahman does not present itself as the All, as if by chance or magic without order; the sole Supreme Reality does not become the Many without a method. Because It is the supreme Existence, the One Consciousness and Force, the Self which is the illimitable reservoir of all Knowledge and all Power, all processes proceed from that Intelligence, all methods are worked out by that Power, all the worlds are built and graded levels of Creation and layers of our being formed in and of the Substance and Force of that Conscious Being—Brahman. This Truth is sum-



marily hinted and kept in the background; for the Upanishad has an eye on the practical value of the Truth, on that aspect of the truth that shows man as he finds himself to be in this world of Matter. He is an embodied being centred in between the innermost part, the core of his being, and the most outward expression; he is a mental person with a living body for instrumentation on the surface of this world-existence. For the purpose of the *sādhana*, our text starts with the utmost state and principle of development that man has arrived at and treats him first as an individualised Spirit leading him on to realise his right relations with the outward parts of his embodied being on the one hand, and on the other his true nature and relation with the All Being, the All Power, the Sole Self that penetrates into and embraces and transcends the All.

Manomayah Puruṣaḥ.

The *sādhana*, then, begins straight with man, the mental being, whose position lies midway between the two extremes, the pure self-existent conscious Being and the inert inconscient Matter of which the gross body is made. The physical body is an obvious fact of life overwhelming the gross intelligence so much that it appears to be the sovereign basis and substance with life and mind included in it as its own product or by-product having no other ground or right of being independent of the material stuff. This coarser view holds good and is valid for the animal life and sensational mind; but to the deeper, finer and elevated side of man, the Upanishad presents a larger and higher view, correcting the lower standpoint that no longer applies to the mental man closely allied to, reflecting

and acting for the Spirit. Man, as the scripture, is Puruṣa, Spirit, individual, encased in the mind, as it were, mostly mentalised, *manomaya*. Whatever else he may be in the inner existence or in the outward movements, his centre of being as he finds himself now is characteristically mental. For mind, the instrument of thought, is the highest and the most developed part of Nature he is endowed with. Thus, he is first mental in nature, enclosed in life by which the material body is animated and functions in the outer existence. If mind is closer to the Puruṣa, and a finer principle in Nature, what is its true function, its true character? The *manas* of the *Manomaya Puruṣa* in the Upanishads does not connote the same thing as it does in the later works. It is not a jumble of feelings and passions, desires and sensations, or even a sheer repertory of thoughts. It is, certainly, an instrument of thought and expression: but in its true part it is a calm, transparent, reflecting apparatus receiving and transmitting truths and true ideas shaping them into thought-forms, translating them into its own terms. When it reflects the desires, passions and other activities of the lower life, they are mentalised, and are reflex actions which do not really form part of the true character and function of the mind. That is why some later Upanishads speak of mind being two-fold: the one is higher, *param*, and pure, *Sudham*, naturally calm; the other is the lower, *aparam*, and impure *asudham*, soiling the mirror of mind with desires etc., screening its natural purity and quietude from being effective. When we consider the question of mind which is essentially calm in its pure nature, we can well appreciate the yogic disciplines that lay stress on the

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necessity of stilling the mind which would be an impossibility but for the presence of a natural calm in some essential part of mind itself. Incidentally we may remark that this truth of yogic psychology is a standing challenge to some of the popular theories of modern science that hold that an uninterrupted flow of thought is an essential characteristic of mind, which is the very opposite of quietude. Needless to say that this is not valid in the light of yogic experience. Such is the mind that encases the *Puruṣa*.

Prāṇa-śarīrah

But the mental person, *manomaya puruṣa* is embodied in life, *prāṇa-śarīrah* (lit., one whose body is life, *prāṇa*). It is necessary to note the significance of this statement, especially in view of the fact that the physical body is left out of consideration; for the latter is just a framework of *prāṇa* acting on matter, and the durable subtle body which can live independent of the physical is the *prāṇic* body of the *manomaya puruṣa*. Though the *prāṇa-śarīra* can move and act without the material body, it uses the latter for its expression in the physical world. What we call the activity of the body is only a part of the *prāṇic* force. It is the *prāṇa* that embodies the *manomaya puruṣa*, while the physical body is just an outer instrument dependent on, and in fact, built and shaped by the *prāṇa* which is the true vehicle for the mental Spirit; or, in the words of another text (*Muṇḍaka* II. 2-7.), the mental person is the leader of the *prāṇic* body, *prāṇa-śarīra-netā*. It must be noted that *prāṇa* is not merely a force of life, but a body formed of the substance of the Life-world; for there is substance variously constituting the worlds of Matter,

Life, Mind and still other higher and subtler principles of creation. What is the character of the *prāṇa* of which the subtle body is formed and led by the mental *puruṣa*? The *prāṇa*, like the mind, in the Upanishads has a larger connotation; it is not life-force alone as in later religious philosophies. In its origin, as well as in its purer form embodying the *Puruṣa*, it is Consciousness-Force as is taught in some texts. Here it is a body, an instrument and vehicle in which is condensed a double force—the twin power of knowledge and action, *Vijñāna-kriyā śakti-dvaya-sammārchitah*, as the ancient commentaries explain. If the mental *puruṣa* is endowed with such a life-body—a concentrated subtle mass of Consciousness and Force, what is it that degrades it in its actual functioning as we understand it? Just as the mind has a higher level, an inner layer, which is pure and calm and transparent enclosing the *Puruṣa*, the *prāṇa* also has a higher and purer part that embodies the mentalised Spirit, while the lower and impure is riddled with desires, thirst and hunger of different kinds and their consequential activities that disfigure the true and splendid expression of the higher *Prāṇa* in its pristine purity. *Prāṇa* is essentially the dynamis of the Spirit. If mind is an instrument of thought, expressive of knowledge, *jñāna*, *prāṇa* is an instrument of action, more truly, an instrument for the expression of the Spirit's will in action. In the embodied being it is active, placed between the material body and mind, links and helps them in their functionings. As has been already stated, the *prāṇa* is not a mere life-force that moulds and carries out the functions of the body as a whole and its organs, but is a subtle

body, *lingātma* of the *puruṣa* who is mostly mentalised while retaining in a way his self irrespective of the life-body or mental case which he uses for working out the Truth-Will, *Satya-saṅkalpa* of the Self to which our text presently refers.

Bhārupah satya-saṅkalpah

We have so far spoken of the *puruṣa* in the human being as mental in nature and embodied in life. What is the form and character of that *Puruṣa* himself? Light is his form *bhā-rupah* says the Upanishad. In other words this *Puruṣa* is a soul, having a form which is Light. Or, as another text of this Vidyā has it, "Light is his Truth", *bhās-satyah*. The scripture sets at rest any doubt that may arise in regard to the meaning of the word, *Bhā-rupah*, by making it clear that Light is not a fanciful figure, though it is often used as a symbol of knowledge, as also a figure of Truth. A figure and symbol it is, but a living symbol so figuring the Spirit, *Puruṣa*, that it is visible to an inner vision; for Light-form is visible as all forms are, though the visibility is confined to the range of the inner vision.

This *Puruṣa* as Light, as a form of the Spirit, should not be mistaken for the formless Self. An individualised Spirit, he is a soul-formation for embodied existence, willed and effected by the Self of all selves. To say that the Spirit, this *Puruṣa* is *bhā-rupah*, has a form of Light and is visible to the inner sight may at first scandalise the dialectic intelligence of the Vedāntin; but it must be borne in mind that it is the soul-form that is light that is visible and not the Self, not the Atman that sees and makes others seen. The *Puruṣa* is luminous, his Will is the Truth-Will, i.e. the Truth in its aspect of Will; he has no desires apart from the desires

of the Truth Being that manifest themselves through the True Will of the *Īśvara*, his Lord and Self. What we call the human desires are not those of this luminous Soul, the *Puruṣa*, but are part of the lower workings and coverings of the *Prāṇa*, smokes over the flaming force of Will of the *Puruṣa*, and they dim and distort the True Will, running in a vicious circle until they learn the futility of straying away from the unfaltering lines of the Truth-Will and the Truth-Idea in the active gaze and disposition of the supreme Self. Whatever Desire there is in him, in this Soul, is a true Will that knows no failure, *satya-saṅkalpa*; for it is the True Will transmitted to the *manomaya puruṣa* from the Self who is spoken of as *Ākāśa-Ātman*, in order to denote the all-pervasive and immanent nature of the Divine Being, the Self of the individual. The true Desire, *satya-kāma*, or true will, *satya-saṅkalpa* in the *Puruṣa* is covered by the outer impurities and falsehood, *anrtāpidhānah*, and without understanding the true Desire which is resplendent with the glorious power and light of the true Self within, men are ordinarily carried away by false desires, *anrtena pratyūdhāh* (*Chandogya* VIII. 3).

Ākāśātma

Then we come to the question of *Ātman*, what our text calls "*Ākāśātma*". He is the original Eternal Being of whom the mental *puruṣa* is an emanation, a soul-formation of the Spirit, or a ray of the Truth-Sun, a spark of the Divine Fire, *Agner visphulinga*, as some texts have it. He is the creator of All, *sa hi sarvasya kartā*; all work, the work of the whole creation is His, *sarvakarmā*; all true desires are His, *sarvakāma*, because His is the sole unfaltering will by which they are fulfilled.

part of it and each detail in it, all beings, all souls, all bodies and their organs are in him and for him, *sarva-gandhah, sarva-rasah*. With the utmost care and interest expressed in this stupendous work of the World-creation, he encompasses the all, *sarvam idam abhyāttah*; notwithstanding all this, he remains in Himself, Silent, *Avākī* (lit. speechless) and stays unconcerned, *anādarah*.

This Ātman who is too subtle for comprehension like the Akāśa is everywhere present, the universal Being, the Creator who constitutes the worlds and beings and directs them and their forces; He is at the same time awake in the heart of things, seated within in the deepest depths, in the heart of man, *antar hṛdaye*. Silent and unconcerned, yet he is the Divine Being within transmitting this Truth-Will to the luminous soul of the mental person, *manomaya puruṣa*, embodied in the *prāna*, for its realisation and expression in the outer existence. He is smaller, *anīyān*, than the smallest we can perceive or conceive of. He is the Divine in the heart of every creature, the Divine as the Individual but not a finite Being although he founds Himself in the limited and the conditioned existence, and supports the individuality as the Individual. For this self-differentiation, the self-limiting itself is an expression of the all-seeing Power of His Infinite Being. He is greater, *jyāyān*, than the Earth, the Sky, the High Heaven and all other worlds, greater and vaster than the greatest and vastest of our comprehension. Both as subtle or small, *anūh*, and great or large, *mahān*, he transcends our understanding. He is therefore the Beyond, the Transcendent, the Ātman, who is also the Universal Self and Godhead of all existence and in all

creatures, and is yet the same Self, the Self of my being, *eṣa me Ātmā*, the Divine Master of my individuality whose Truth-Will constitutes the poise and attitude of the Puruṣa encased in the mind with prānic body for action and expression in the vast field of this created Existence.

In calling upon us to worship Brahman as the All, the source and substance and support of the All, the Upanishad at the very start, as we have seen, rightly stresses the need for a sublime calm to be maintained in the worship, *Santa upāsita*. But this calm, which forms an essential limb of the worship is not the supreme Peace, *parā śānti* which itself is a realisation, an achievement in the sādhanā. A settled quiet of the mind, a certain poise and peaceful disposition of the being, aloof from the common distractions of life and its interests is all that the Upanishad means by *śānti* as a condition of the *upāsana*. This is so, because the worship which implies concentration on what is worshipped would not be possible in the face of other objects of interest overpowering the mind with their claim to be enshrined in the quietude and disturbing the poise of the being. When one's interest is ardent, intense and sufficient, no effort is needed for concentration; there is an effortless focussing of the attentive seeings and thinkings on the object of adoration, a free concentration, a spontaneous gathering of all feelings and thoughts opening to the realisation of the Truth, of the subject meditated upon or the object worshipped. Therefore to be possessed of an ardour and keen interest is indispensable for any sādhanā. But even sufficient interest may prove futile in the absence of right conception and correct attitude to justify and reinforce the strength of the interest. It is for that purpose that the

Upanishad places before man his true position in relation to his embodied existence here as well as to his origins in the Brahman, who is the Self higher and larger than all the worlds, yet Immanent, the Self of the Universal, and who is also the Self in man, the True Individual. If man chooses to realise his true nature and get restored to the exalted place he is entitled to as his spiritual and divine heritage, Brahman, the Īwara in the heart as his own Self is watchful and waits for the hour.

But is there choice for man? Is he free to make up his mind one way or the other? Whatever may be the ultimate character of a free choice or free will, it is an undeniable fact—this is a truth of practical importance in life—that man has a sense of freedom, feels free to make his choice in certain spheres of thought and action, though his freedom may not be unchecked and absolute or his choice always right or fruitful. Therefore as a practical step, it is a prerequisite of the sādhanā that man must make up his mind to have a clear conception of the Truth and choose his line. For he can choose the common run and be bound to the routine of ordinary life and think that he is dust and to dust he returns. Really, there needs be no choice at all in the case of one who has not emerged sufficiently from the murk of animal life and lower mind with their ignorant, impure and false workings—desires and passions, crude impulses and instinctive grabbings at things small and low and brutish that effectively cover the higher thought-mind, and cloud the light of Truth in the human Spirit. The choice, then, is possible and necessary for the man in whom the inner and finer parts close to the Spirit, the *Puruṣa*, are developed

enough to be dominant factors, arisen to the heights befitting him, the mental being.

Even so, the aspiring man can choose any line, for there are many lines of spiritual life leading to the goal as envisaged and chosen by the aspirant. One can envisage the Truth, as Pure Existence, *Sat*, and discover the road to reach it; one can conceive of it as Non-being, *asat*, and find the appropriate path; one could start with the faith that all creation is myth, *mythyā*, and nothing but Name and Form, and by emptying the mind of all ideas and names and forms, making it a sort of *śūnya*, could arrive at the acme of perfection in what is called the path of "neti, neti" (not thus, not thus). These negative methods of approach by reducing or renouncing the activities of life and rejection of thoughts are powerful in their own way and hit the aim, when successful. But most of the *sādhana*s, especially the Vidyas of the Chāndogya advocate the positive method, choosing one aspect or other of the Truth to start with, culminating in the attainment of Brahman, *Sampad*, as it is termed in the Brahma sutras (IV-4. 1); the latter's conclusions are based on the Chāndogya text which conceives of the goal in terms of a positive attainment, *sampatti*. "I shall become, I shall attain" (*Abhisambhavitāsmi sampatsye, sampadye*) are the terms often used in the text. This affirmative statement in regard to the crowning stage of the *sādhana*, is the positive counterpart of the negative term, *mukti*, release from sorrow and suffering, or liberation from the bonds of the world of Ignorance. What we have to bear in mind in this context is that though *mukti*, liberation, is the *sine qua non* for a solid spiritual attainment, it is a negative conception of

which the purpose is achieved in the achievement of *sampat*—a positive state and goal, arrived at by positive methods on which stress is laid in the Chandogya Upanishad guiding the author of the *Vedānta* sutras to conclude with the goal of *Īśvara, saguṇa Brahman* of the later Vedantins.

The Vidyā we have been considering in this short discourse is one of the renowned sādhanās that employ positive methods of approach to the ultimate Reality in its relation to the human being. The feature that distinguishes it from other sādhanās lies in the fact that it is comprehensive in its survey and presents a synthetic view of man as a whole. Man is called upon first to recognise that he is Spirit, *Puruṣa*, really superior to mind and life, not to speak of the body, and live in that truth, look and act on that basis. He is not to renounce the mind that is nearer to the *Puruṣa* and encases him, but to maintain it in its pristine purity that it may reflect the Truth and receive the Truth-Knowledge; nor is the life that embodies the mental person to be rejected, but to be kept free from the impurities that clog, for the true expression of the Will in action. The *Puruṣa* is neither mental nor vital in his essential nature, but a luminous soul, with a true Will: even as this soul is an emanation or formation in Nature of the Divine, the Lord and Self in the core of the being and as such one with that Consciousness, this Will also is one with the Will of the Lord aglow in the Heart. Man has to renounce nothing, as he has nothing to renounce, for the mind and life and body are in their own kinds parts of the Universal; the soul itself is a ray and form of the Supreme Being. The only thing he has to renounce is the notion and sense and feeling that he is some-

body independent and apart from others, and has the right to possess things which in reality are forms and substances and qualities of the Supreme Being, Brahman, as the Lord of the Universe.

When man realises that it is the misuse of an innate capacity by which he identifies himself with what he is not or what is not his that leads him to the wrong end and proves false to his true being, when he discovers the necessity of learning and learns the right use of his native power of identifying himself with the Spirit superior to Matter and Mind and Life and discerns the true Will, allows nothing to intervene between himself and the Truth-Will, when he makes way and the passage is clear for the Soul to radiate and manifest the Truth-Consciousness of the Self, then there dawns the realisation—"Verily, All this is Brahman"; even what he calls his mind, his life, his soul, his will are not his in the ego-bound personal sense, but are individual receptacles, channels, centres, power-houses of the All Mind, All Life, All Soul, All Will of the One Supreme; it is no longer the human soul *jīva*, that is endowed with mind and life and the rest, but it is He who is the adorable and adored, the True Individual, the Soul, the Light of Truth, encasing Himself in the Mind and sheathed in Life for His own purpose in this Cosmic manifestation.

This is the famous *Śāṇḍilya Vidyā* of the Upanishads; this is the prime necessity it urges upon the *upāsaka* that once he recognises this Truth, then he should proceed with certitude and faith—"He should make the resolve"
sa kratum kurvīta.

—T. V. Kapali Sastry.

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THOUGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

Much has been written on Sri Aurobindo's conception of intuition and the role he has assigned to it in his philosophy. But very little has been said so far about his conception of the nature of thought and the position he has given it in world evolution. There is still a great deal of confusion in men's minds regarding his attitude towards thought, and while many think that thought plays a very subordinate part in his philosophy, some, as I had occasion to point out recently,¹ take the opposite view and maintain that intuition in his philosophy is nothing but a kind of enlarged thought. It is therefore necessary to make clear what is precisely Sri Aurobindo's conception of the nature and function of thought, and this is my apology for writing this article.

The double role of thought: Its first role as that of a paraclete

Thought plays a double role in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. There is, firstly, the role of it which he has beautifully described in his poem *Thought the Paraclete*. He has called thought in this poem the paraclete and what he means by this term will be evident from the poem itself. The opening lines of the poem

"As some bright archangel in vision flies
Plunged in dream-caught spirit immensities
Past the long green crests of the mystic mind
Flew my thought self-lost in the vasts of God".

make clear the nature of the movement

of thought. It is to fly from the mundane regions where it dwells to the eternal regions, "the vasts of God," illumined by Divine effulgence. It is on account of this upward movement of thought that he calls it a paraclete:

"Thought the great-winged wanderer paraclete
Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune"

Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in an appendix to his masterly biography of Sri Aurobindo has very clearly explained the meaning of the word *paraclete* and also the role which Sri Aurobindo assigns to thought as the paraclete, and I cannot do better here than quote his words. "Thought the Paraclete," he says, "Thought, our winged intercessor, our comrade, our friend, and the resourceful mediator in our dire distress. —Thought the Paraclete can alone facilitate our ascent 'to those supramental planes,' it alone can prepare us to receive those 'descending messages'".

From this quotation from Prof. Iyengar's book it is clear that this role is that of an intercessor, "a resourceful mediator in our dire distress." Thought plays this part of an intercessor or a mediator by taking us on its wings to the higher regions. The individual can thus obtain with the help of thought a taste of the bliss of these higher regions when it is not otherwise possible for him to get it on account of the low stage of evolution of the world. This function of thought, therefore, is a great source of consolation to sick souls,

¹ See the chapter on Sri Aurobindo's conception of intuition in my book *Studies in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*.

weary of life, seeking refuge in supra-mundane spheres.

**The second role of thought:
Thought as builder, organizer
and systematizer**

If this had been the only role assigned to thought, then it might have helped individuals to obtain salvation, but it would have been of no significance from the point of view of cosmic salvation. Thought, therefore, if it is to play a part in cosmic evolution, must have another function. This function must be supplementary to, and a completion of, the first function. This is, in fact, its function in its downward movement. The light which it is the privilege of thought to receive from the upper regions in its upward flight, it must be in a position to place at the disposal of the world. Strictly speaking, this is also part of its function as paraclete. If thought is to be a real intercessor, 'a true mediator in our dire distress', it must not only rise to the higher regions, but must also descend from those regions and bring the truths which it obtains from them to the world, in order with their help to raise its status. It is only in this way that it can be a true mediator between the higher and the lower regions.

Thought here acts as a representative or ambassador of truth. It presents to the world the truth so far as it has been possible for it to grasp it in its first movement, namely, its upward flight to the higher regions. Sri Aurobindo is as much alive to the necessity of this second function of thought as he is to the first. Thus, he says, "Thought creates a representative image of Truth; it offers that to the mind as a means of holding Truth and making it an object

¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 995.

of knowledge"¹. There is, however, always a difference between the principal and the agent, and thought with all its privilege of coming in contact with the higher sources, does not still give a perfectly adequate picture of truth to the world. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "thought in itself, in its origin on the higher levels of consciousness, is a perception, a cognitive seizing of the object or of some truth of things which is a powerful but still a minor and secondary result of spiritual vision, a comparatively external and superficial regard of the self upon the self; the subject upon itself or something of itself as object: for all there is a diversity and multiplicity of the self."²

It is in the second role of thought that it is a builder or systematizer. Bergson has a horror for all order and system, for he thinks they are symbols of stagnation. In his view, the living, moving truth refuses to be brought under any system; it is only when it has lost all its vitality and become a *thing* and ceased to be a truth, that it can be systematized. Systems, in fact, are for him nothing else than museums of dead things; they have no contact with life.

This view of Bergson is manifestly wrong. Order and system, far from being symbols of decay and death, are really symptoms of life. A stagnant system is a contradiction in terms. A system, if it is to continue as a system, must be perpetually fed by new truths. It is only the living cell that can integrate itself with other cells. Life develops through continuous integration. The same is true of culture. It is only when a culture is active and virile that ideas, instead of remaining

² *Ibid.*, p. 994.

detached and isolated, form themselves into a system. We may therefore go further and say that it is not only *not* a sign of decay, but, on the contrary, it is a sure sign of the vitality of a nation or a culture, when its ideas integrate themselves into definite wholes.

Thought's main work is to produce such integrations of ideas. The ennobling, vivifying truth which it receives from the higher sources, it releases into the world and builds with their help organic wholes which we call systems. The result of this is not the maintenance of the *status quo*, but the raising of the world to a higher status. Indeed, if the army marches on its stomach, the world marches on its thoughts. Next to the original creative truths emanating from the supernal regions, it is thought which is the most potent factor in the progress of the world.

If thought has its weakness, it is not because it systematizes, but because it does not systematise sufficiently well. Its systems are not sufficiently systematic. They show too many gaps, too many weak links, and they have to go the way of all incomplete and unfinished objects—they have to lie in the dustheap of forgotten things.

Periods in the world's history are generally classed as creative and constructive. The creative periods are characterized by rich flow of intuitions. But they generally lack the power to integrate these intuitions and build them into stable structures. That, however, is the main work of what are called the constructive periods. The rich legacy of intuitions which the creative periods have left is utilized in the constructive periods for the erection of gigantic systems. Here we see the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 103-104.

distinctive role of thought; the building of these systems is entirely the work of thought. Of course, in no period of history do we see exclusively the work of creation or the work of construction, but we may broadly say, so far as the cultural history of our country is concerned, that the age of the Upanishads was mainly an age of creation, while that of the great Acharyas was mainly one of construction. The age of the Upanishads was chiefly one of intuitions; the great Rishis simply sowed, broadcast their intuitions. But the germination of these seeds and their growth into mighty trees was due to the fostering care of thought and was the distinguishing feature of the later age, the age of construction. The importance of this work of thought cannot be exaggerated. Speaking of the respective roles played by intuition and thought in the development of human consciousness, Sri Aurobindo says,¹ "Intuition is unable to give us the truth in that ordered and articulated form which our nature demands. Before it could effect any such completeness of direct knowledge in us, it would have to organize itself in our surface being and take possession there of the leading part. But in our surface being it is not the Intuition it is the Reason which is organized and helps us to order our perceptions, thoughts and actions. Therefore the age of intuitive knowledge, represented by the early Vedantic thinking of the Upanishads, had to give place to the age of rational knowledge, inspired Scripture made room for metaphysical philosophy, even as afterwards metaphysical philosophy had to give place to experimental Science. Intuitive thought which is a messenger from the

superconscient and therefore our highest faculty, was supplanted by the pure reason which is only a sort of deputy and belongs only to the middle heights of our being; pure reason in its turn was supplanted for a time by the mixed action of the reason which lives on our plains and lower elevations and does not in its view exceed the horizon of the experience that the physical mind and senses or such aids as we can invent for them can bring to us. And this process which seems to be a descent, is really a circle of progress. For in each case the lower faculty is compelled to take up as much as it can assimilate of what the higher had already given and to attempt to reestablish it by its own methods".

Sri Aurobindo and Kant

We can illustrate Sri Aurobindo's conception of thought by comparing it with two typically modern conceptions of it. The two modern conceptions which we shall examine for this purpose are those of Kant and Hegel.

To come to Kant first. He makes a distinction between thinking and knowing. It is possible, he says, to think the Unconditioned, but it is not possible to know it. One can soar on the wings of thought, but if one does so, one loses contact with Mother Earth, whereas if one maintains contact with the latter, one cannot soar very high. Knowledge always keeps touch with Mother Earth, and the result is that its wings are clipped and it cannot soar beyond the region of the phenomenal. For Kant, therefore, the poet's requirement, namely, to be "true to the kindred points of heaven and home" cannot be satisfied.

For Sri Aurobindo, however, as we

have seen, it is of the essence of thought that it maintains contact both with heaven and earth. As a paraclete it soars heavenward, but as a builder and systematizer, it descends from heaven and maintains contact with earth. It is only because of this peculiar position enjoyed by thought that it is such a potent factor in world evolution. Its double role gives it its peculiar significance. Not only this, but it is because of this double role of thought that world evolution can proceed. Without it there would have been absolute stagnation. Or rather, the world would have moved forward only by direct hits from the supra-conscient sphere. But such direct hits in the shape of descents of the supra-conscient are not a normal feature of world evolution but occur only at catastrophic moments, as, for instance, when matter has to pass into life or life into mind.

Kant's separation of thought entirely from the world leaves the latter without any hope of improvement. Kant is not wholly unaware of this unfortunate result of his philosophy, and therefore he brings in the Ideas of Reason as a sort of Son of God to intervene between the phenomenal world and the noumenal thought. But the Ideas of Reason, unfortunately, have clay feet and cannot effect any transformation of the phenomenal world. They only plant in it an aspiration after perfection, which, however, can never be satisfied. This is the tragedy of the Kantian philosophy: we are haunted by ideas of perfection which it is not in our power to realize. What a contrast this to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy which not only gives man his aspiration after perfection but also conveys an assurance to him that his aspiration is bound sooner or later to be fulfilled!

Sri Aurobindo and Hegel

But if Kant errs by keeping thought completely aloof from the world, Hegel errs in the opposite direction by merging the world entirely in thought. For Hegel, in fact, thought is the Absolute. Sri Aurobindo is not prepared to give thought this position, although he agrees with Hegel that it is not possible to separate thought from the world as Kant has done. For him thought is still of the earth, earthy. It can fly into the ethereal regions, but it is not a permanent dweller there.

Hegel is typically Western, in fact, typically Greek in his outlook. That gigantic wave of rationalism which, acting almost like an atomic bomb, swept everything before it and was let loose by Socrates, left its distinctive mark upon the whole subsequent course of Greek philosophy, so much so that Greek philosophy and rationalism have become almost synonymous terms. But rationalism is also the keynote of the philosophy of the Renaissance with its doctrine of *lumen naturale*, which exhibits itself in a militant form in Descartes' famous dictum *Cogito ergo sum*. Hegel is deeply influenced by both these forms of rationalism: in fact, he represents the intoxication of Greek rationalism as well as that of the Renaissance. And it is in the height of this intoxication that he makes the famous statement: Thought and Being are identical.

Sri Aurobindo cannot forget his Oriental lineage, although he had imbibed very freely—as very few of his countrymen have had the fortune of doing—and that, too, at the most formative period of his life, all that is best in Western thought and culture. It is

¹ Ibid, Vol. I, p. 119.

therefore impossible for him to subscribe to the view that thought and being are identical. He will say, as our ancient sage said to all champions of this principle or that principle: "नेति नेति" 'The Absolute is not this, not this.' In fact, the Absolute cannot be characterized by any of the symbols or categories of human consciousness. Sri Aurobindo is very definite on this point. Thus, he says, with regard to the categories of stability and becoming, of oneness and multitude,—and what he says about these categories applies equally to all other categories—"Stability and movement, we must remember, are only our psychological representations of the Absolute, even as are oneness and multitude. The Absolute is beyond stability and movement, as it is beyond unity and multiplicity."¹

The Absolute cannot therefore be identified with thought. The apparently plausible manner in which Hegel has been able to identify thought with the Absolute is due to a circumstance which we shall presently mention. Hegel has studied Greek philosophy too well to think that Socrates is the only representative of it. He is very well aware that if Socratism represents the surface current of Greek philosophy, Heracliteanism and Pythagoreanism represent its subterranean currents, and that it is the mixing of the surface current with these underground currents that has made Greek philosophy what it is. Plato's philosophy, in fact, is what it is on account of the blending of Socratism with Heracliteanism and Pythagoreanism. The presence of these subterranean currents has given Plato's philosophy the requisite dose of mysticism which has strengthened his rationalism. Hegel

has similarly strengthened his rationalism by a touch of mysticism. But he has done it much more cleverly than Plato, for while in Plato the two separate streams are clearly discernible, Hegel has combined them into a mighty river. The result is a type of rationalism very different from any that has been hitherto in vogue. It is given by its critics the characteristic name of *Begriffsdichtung* or *Begriffsromantik*, the poetry or romanticism of the concept. It is, in fact, a revolutionary form of romanticism. It allows the placid waters of Parmenidean philosophy to be joined to the turbulent currents of Heracliteanism. Its fundamental principle is that if Being represents the nature of thought, equally so does Becoming. It was formerly supposed that thought was constitutionally incapable of following the sinuosities of Becoming, Hegel has demonstrated that this view is absolutely mistaken. If thought cannot follow the movements of Becoming, it is no live thought at all. It is, in fact, abstract thought, and the mistake of the earlier rationalists consists in looking upon all thought as being of the nature of abstract thought. This is the root cause of their failure. If rationalism is to succeed, it will have to discard completely this view of thought. It will have, in fact, to recognize the existence of *concrete thought*. The raising of concrete thought to the position of the most fundamental metaphysical principle is the revolutionary change introduced by Hegel. As a result of this revolutionary change, thought becomes an instrument of extraordinary potency. It has become, in fact, almost a philosophical cosmic ray that can penetrate regions previously impregnable to it.

But with all this improvement, thought still remains an inadequate instrument for expressing the nature of reality. This inadequacy makes itself felt in the Hegelian interpretation of history. The Hegelian philosophy looks upon history as a mathematician looks upon the binomial theorem, that is, as something which can be determined completely by *a priori* reasoning. The fact is conveniently ignored that history is the field of operation of the human will which refuses to submit to the cut and dried formulae of logic. The movement of thought, as Hegel views it, is in one fixed direction, that, namely, which is indicated by the development of the categories in his logic. But the forces that move and shape the human will do not all move in a straight line; rather their movement is a zigzag one. In one word, the course of history is much more complicated than that shown in the logical scheme of Hegel. Even more glaring is the inadequacy of the Hegelian interpretation of art.

But it is in its conception of the Absolute that the Hegelian philosophy shows its greatest weakness. The Absolute of thought is the negation of all values. It is 'beyond good and evil' with a vengeance. Its neutrality, indeed, is something frightful. It cannot in any sense be said to be the fulfilment of the world, for where all values are completely destroyed, there cannot be any talk of any fulfilment. It is not the terminus of the world but rather its termination. It is no doubt the logical culmination of the world, but it is certainly not its spiritual fulfilment. In fact, there is hardly anything spiritual about it. Its whole conception is rather mechanical. Once the logical process starts, it goes on mecha-

nically, like a mill grinding corn, till the Absolute is reached. The Absolute of logic is a colourless Absolute. It cannot by any stretch of imagination be called a Person. Still less can it be called God, for it cannot evoke any sentiments of reverence, far less of love. It no doubt can fill our minds

with a kind of awe at its stupendousness, but it cannot create any feelings of admiration and respect. Its position, in fact is very much like that of the Grand Moghul in the days of the Moghul Emperors or that of the Tsar in those of Tsarist Russia.

—S. K. Maitra.

MOODS AND MODES OF POETRY

(Two Letters)

I

You are right in saying that the true objective of poetry is not merely expression but also communication. A poet should not care solely to please himself or one or two of his own mind; he should try to establish *rapprochement* with the large number of cultured men who are receptive to poetry. Yet, to make easy communication his entire ideal would be unfaithfulness to his own inspiration, particularly if he happens to be a mystic. "Clarity winged with beauty" is indeed a fine thing finely stated and some of the world's greatest verse conforms to this type—but clarity is a relative term and what is clear to one may be obscure to another and what may be clear on one plane of consciousness may be on another pretty obscure, at least at the start.

If we take the mass of men as our criterion we confine ourselves to the mental plane which is at present our general status. There are many other planes deeper and higher than the little bit of individualised mind which *homo sapiens* enjoys, and they have their own concrete and harmonious and vivid contents—like Sri Aurobindo's

Sun-realms of supernal seeing,
Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss.

Why should poetry convert everything into a mental clarity? I do admit that poetry errs when it is undisciplined and has no moulding of significant form. Does it err, however, when it transmits a state of consciousness which is not familiar to most men, even most men of culture, and into which they cannot easily enter?—an Aurobindonian state, for instance:

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence,

OR

My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight

Poetry has its obligations to men but it has also its obligations to the Gods: it is not altogether a man-made thing and so other planes than that on which man is normally at home have their rights of expression—and expression in their own modes and not just in the modes of the human intelligence. If we say Nay to these modes on the ground that they would not be found vivid and vibrant by us at first blush, we set up a rather rigid and unnatural standard, besides shutting out influences that would evolve our consciousness by mingling with it the patterns and

tempos of the ultra-mental in an undiluted form. Art is not only recreation: it is revelation too, and it need not be understood or appreciated easily. Even in recreation there is some strain: one does not hit a boundary or score a goal without the least fatigue! You have gone to the extent of conceding that poetry succeeds if its meaning can be even "dimly divined by anyone and everyone whose mind, imagination and spirit are in a sufficient measure capable of appreciating beauty and art." But don't you think the dim divination is somewhat arbitrarily defined as happening almost at once and without any strain? Of course if a poem remains a total Sphinx for ever and yields no significant suggestion to a cultured man in spite of his brooding on it and absorbing it and living with it, there is for all practical purposes failure. What I want to claim is that a poem should not be considered to have missed its objective if it does not yield immediately its purport. One must try to open oneself to it, let its figures and rhythms sink into one and stir layers of consciousness subliminal and supraliminal. I do not wish to defend the pretentious gibberish that is often written by modern poets and labelled Surrealism. Perhaps even those who style themselves Symbolists are also at times guilty of a mere musical mystification. I am pleading only for those who convey authentic figures and rhythms of the subliminal and the supraliminal—as Nishikanto does with

O Sleeping Lion in the caverned darkness
Of the rock-heart of every sentient thing!
Give us thy glance, if only for a moment,
Of a child up-gazing in its slumbering.

or Dilip Kumar Roy with

O deep starry secrecy
Twinkling in my heart

or Sri Aurobindo himself with

The dragon tail aglow of the faint night

and

Swan of the supreme and spaceless ether
wandering winged through the universe!

I dare say I may thus give the benefit of the doubt to many an ingenious purveyor of abracadabra—but the insistence of the French savant you quote on "No Fatigue" and yours on simplicity and clarity of the mental kind run the risk of condemning what is beyond the mind's threshold in a genuinely inspired and beautiful way together with what is confused and chaotic, nebulous and nonsensical.

To be involved in construction and precious in language are faults if one use these things for their own sakes. However, if a certain state of being cannot be fully brought out in a simple and straightforward manner or with easy and ordinarily poetic words, hasn't one to be true to one's complex vision and true to the atmosphere of a rich rarity that envelopes that vision? You will perhaps declare that there is nothing that cannot be said clearly and simply. Well, some people declare that there is nothing that cannot be said sufficiently in prose. Poetry, in my view, comes in to say what prose cannot; and in poetry, complexity and out-of-the-way speech come in to do what simplicity and so-called natural speech cannot. When the vision is not complex and the atmosphere not a rich rarity and still the poet tries to make them out to be such, it is then that he produces spurious work—manufacture and mechanism instead of creation and organism. Not otherwise. And this holds for non-mystical poetry no less than mystical; poetry of the mental plane as well as of planes beyond the mind. I do realise that we must spare no trouble to bring our vision to a focus, we must not luxuriate in the

hazy and the slipshod. The point I am trying to make is that there can be a focus in which several shades of light mingle and there can be a multi-faceted distinctness and a crowded accuracy. You mention Greek poetry as being the opposite of the involved and the complex. I must admit Greek poetry to be superb and to be in the main, despite Aeschylean and Pindaresque elements, "clarity winged with beauty." But I wonder what the Greeks would have thought of Shakespeare at his most Elizabethan, at his extreme of mercurial mood, metaphor-gorgedness, word-variety, protean syntax. More or less the same, I suspect, as what Voltaire did. The French have an intellect very much like the Greeks', though in other respects they are very different, and most probably Aristotle would have proclaimed like Voltaire that Shakespeare was a drunken barbarian. And would the Greeks have got hold of the Romantic Movement in its Shelleyan, ethereally entangled aspects by the right end? And would they have relished the bold and colourful intricacy that is so magnificent in certain portions of Francis Thompson? Would the Celtic twilight of Yeats with its labyrinths of vanishing iridescence found any place in their subtle yet "sunny" consciousness? Intellectual criss-cross and sophisticated mazziness are definitely objectionable in poetry—and I am of the opinion that it is these that Milton excluded when he talked of poetry being simple as well as sensuous and passionate. Milton himself—as compared to a poet like Homer—was far from simple. I don't believe his construction and his mode of thought were even as simple as Sophocles's or Euripides's. His "simple", therefore, I understand as "unforced" or "fresh"

or "alive with a natural vigour": it is opposed not to "complex" but to "mechanically constructed" or "dryly devious" or "artificially abstract." To be "simple" in the Miltonic sense one must have authentic vitality, a force as of Nature. Is Nature or authentic vitality always simple in your sense? Is an organism uncomplex? Are the formations of the life force quite straightforward? The important point appears to be that whatever the complexity there must be a harmonious working, a fine unity of effect—what the Greeks called the quality of being felt as a whole. The means for achieving such an end can be elaborate or ingenuous, multiply wrought or plain-built, highly coloured or crystal-clear, remote in suggestion or of the earth earthy, precious in language or direct-dictioned: does it matter a hoot what manner of thought and word the poet employs so long as the manner is appropriate and there is the creative *elan*? Sometimes the impression of the involved and the precious is given us because an unfamiliar plane of consciousness is manifested; the manner of thought and word may be in itself quite simple on that plane without seeming simple to the plane we commonly bring to poetry. But even when the expression is actually not simple and straightforward on any plane, I am disposed to think it has a right to exist as a legitimate manifestation of the poetic spirit; there is nothing in it intrinsically opposed to the play of genuine inspiration.

2

Your original position which amounts to saying that mysticism is an affair unusual enough and that its poetry, if not simple and clear, becomes useless to the world at large is quite definite though open to serious dispute. What

puzzles me is the qualifications to it you are prepared to make. Besides adding that at least dimly the mystical poet should make himself understood you affirm that even this he should do at not necessarily first sight. Your "at least dimly" and much more the lease of time you are ready to grant a poem for delivering its purport—don't they take away the edge of your formula of "simple and clear"? A poem which gives a dim sense of its drift at the start and especially a poem which gives it only after effort by the reader through a period of time can never be called clear or simple. Intricacy and complexity and preciousness are admitted as soon as you relax the demand for crystalline disclosure and quick communication. It is just this relaxing, on behalf of a certain type of inspiration, that I was asking for in my letter. Where then do our ways part? Do they part solely in that you personally prefer clear and simple poetry while conceding a firm *locus standi* to the other sort and that I enjoy the two sorts equally in general while personally preferring the latter when it is the result of allowing planes higher and deeper than the mind to speak straight away in their own mode of consciousness? Perhaps the crucial parting lies in one thing alone: the native speech of the ultra-mental planes.

In the light of your relaxing your demand, your reference to the frustration and irritation most readers feel with a great many modern poets acquires a special meaning: their work must be such as to yield nothing at all to the bulk of readers although it may be studied again and again. And since your discouragement of the native speech of the ultra-mental planes is almost in the same breath as your re-

action against those modern poets, I take it that according to you the communication by this speech to the bulk of readers is nil and hence this speech must be eschewed, no matter how deep and high it may be, until humanity has evolved beyond its present level by means of the poetry which converts mysticism into terms mentally understandable.

But is it true that here general communication is nil? What I declared to be naturally lacking was "mental clarity", the absence of which is not the same as the mind's hold reduced to zero. The speech I am talking of may not be *clear* to the mind, but it does give some hold to our mental awareness: a dim hold at the outset or a hold dim or otherwise after effort by the reader. It differs from intricate or complex verse of the mental type not by denying the mind any hold but by addressing its appeal to layers of consciousness in us that are hidden at present and by making their response a condition for the development of the hold afforded. In the appreciation and absorption of all poetry, to see and feel and intuit are as important as to understand: in fact, understanding has to be brought about by them instead of *vice versa*. It is because of this that rhythm with its strangely moving, subtly suggestive potencies and metaphor with its impact on sight, on imaginative association, on "empathic" powers in us have been regarded as so vital since the dawn of literary history. The peculiar mode of poetry would lose its *raison d'être* if mental understanding which is the arbiter of prose were deemed the chief recipient of impressions here. Now, what the direct poetry from planes higher and deeper than the mind does, while giving the

mind a small initial hold either immediate or after effort, is to push through the more important avenues of seeing and feeling and intuiting towards the ultra human background in us; stirring that background, it supplies the understanding mind with a species of revelation which on analysis satisfies the demand for significance. Communication, therefore, to the mental understanding is not nil. It is achieved after difficult contact with secret forces accessible to the seeing and feeling and intuiting side of us—secret forces which, in the case of the large run of poetry, are never substantially stimulated but which in a kind of surface-projection are always evoked by all genuine poems of the mental plane since it is always on what we vaguely name the soul that poetry presses for essential appreciation and absorption.

"After difficult contact", I have said. Counter balancing the difficulty of communication, however is the value of it. For the contact with the ultra-human background is of the utmost use in our progress beyond our present level. Though you admit the need of progressing to the planes deeper and higher than the mind you consider the best method to be mental instruction in the matter of them, I believe that one of the most important methods is to expose, through poetry, humanity as much as possible to them in their own original form instead of "mentalising" them. The responses called forth by such exposure are dynamic in a manner that nothing else can equal. Mental explanation and elucidation and interpretation of the mystical Beyond by poetry can be helpful in preparing humanity for a step inward and upward; yet we cannot dispense with the help of a

direct touch of the In-world and the Over-world. The two helps are something like the Guru's precept and his example, his teaching and his personal influence, his putting us in the way of his books and his permitting us to sit at his feet in meditation.

Deeming ultra-mental poetry to be an immense aid to human evolution, I hesitate to stop trying only hand at it side by side with mental. And I feel sure that if you who have so keen and sensitive yet critical approach to the Muse gave closer thought to the question you would discern all the abyss that gapes between this class of verse and the product of the high-brow coteries from whom you seceded during your literary life in England. I myself am no apologist for the various schools of dadaists, surrealists and futurists nor the intellectual contortionists and abstractionists and those who elaborately manufacture private symbols. I think it is these men you refer to in your interesting account of the change of outlook undergone by you—writers who tap the chaotic side of the subconscious in one mis-shape or another and who employ the ingenious outer brain with this or that faddist penchant. Not only is no small initial purchase permitted by them to the mind in the midst of their obscurity but even the obscurity they go in for is cut off from the roots of inspired living, is sterile, is haphazardly intricate or deliberately recondite. The vital breath is missing in such obscurity—there is not the afflatus and the enthousiasmos without which poetry can never make us see and feel and intuit. Authentic mysticism is very far indeed from the cult of the modern unintelligibles. It is a mode of intense living, charged with the concreteness

and directness of warm throbbing intimate experience. Even the peace-aspect of it is not arid and artificial and unfruitful but fresh, fragrant, all-enfolding and most creative by stilling the diverse petty confusions that hinder and impair the founts of spontaneity. The obscurity of authentic mysticism has an atmosphere of wide reality—it is not haughty or exclusive or self-satisfied—it does not stand apart from vital springs. Neither the chaotic side of the subconscious nor the ingenious outer brain can produce art. Authentic mysticism comes with a fire in the emotions and a light in the imagination and a golden glow in the intuitive self, it strikes harmonious chords in our being and finds a most natural outlet in artistic activity. It is entirely different from the "modernism" from which you broke away. The latter is incapable of being truly inspired and consequently has no evolutionary value. Wanting in that value, it has no justification for being obscure—nor, I should add, the power to overcome the neglect into which it may fall, for only when an obscure work is inspired the possible neglect of it by people will pass because of its innate drive towards their seeing, feeling, intuiting faculties. Sooner or later it is bound to become a force in the general life of the world and deliver the illumination which is hidden in its apparent obscurity.

I do not aver that all mystical art should be ultra-mental or that, when the ultra-mental confronts us, there will always be difficulty in getting through its "door of dreams." I am just putting my finger on the merits of the ultra-mental art; they are undeniable, be the difficulty what it may. One of the most profound merits is in con-

nection with the meaning you give to the term "democracy": the basic brotherhood of man. I agree that the universal acceptance of the spiritual principle of human brotherhood is not assisted by the esoteric doctrines, narcissism and intellectual snobbery characterising the work of the modern exponents of poetry among whom you began your literary career and whose inadequacy and wrong-headedness you soon realised. But to be intellectually democratic does not travel a long way. It is, no doubt, a worthy thing—yet if it occupies the whole domain of literary endeavour it becomes a menace by shutting out still more puissant agents. Together with it, there should be the direct sweep of the ultra-mental planes. For, on these planes alone the brotherhood of man is no sentiment or idea but an actuality of experience, a burning truth of our very being. There the Self of selves is found—and even further than the human formula the spiritual basis extends, underlying all living creatures, unifying the entire cosmos. The inmost throb of the world's oneness is there, a universal unity of conscious existence as natural and indefeasible and immediate as our present sense of distinct individuality. Understanding and sympathy, intellectual democracy and ethical fellow-feeling are fine as far as they go. But they have serious limits: the beast in man and much more the devil in man are too strong to be changed by them. Even mentalised spirituality is not enough; the planes where oneness is an automatic experience must invade us in their own original form. And part of the grand invasion must be through the sort of poetry I am advocating—poetry like that invocation by J. A. Chadwick who was known in Sri Aurobindo's Asram as Arjava:

Immortal wisdom of gold which was thrice
refined,
Shine in the clear space of holy noon
On all the upland hollows of the mind:
May every shadow-harboured thought be
strewn
With solar vastness and compelled
To feel all fear and all self-limits quelled.

Such poetry, more than any other, creates in us the turn of consciousness which opens into the Upanishad's One who has gone forth and grown many.

—K. D. Sethna.

REVIEWS

Four Quartets by T. S. Eliot. Faber and Faber.

In these latest poems of his, Eliot has become outright a poet of the Dark Night of the Soul. The beginnings of the new avatar were already there certainly at the very beginning. The Waste Land is a good preparation and passage into the Night. Only, the negative element in it was stronger—the cynicism, the bleakness, the serenity of it all was almost overwhelming. The next stage was the Hollow Man: it took us right up to the threshold, into the very entrance. It was gloomy and foreboding enough, grim and serious—no glint or hint of the silver lining yet within reach. Now as we find ourselves into the very heart of the Night, things appear somewhat changed: we look at the past indeed, but can often turn to the future, feel the pressure of the Night yet sense the Light beyond over-arching and embracing us. This is how the poet begins:

I said to my soul be still, and let the dark
come upon you
Which shall be the darkness of God

and continues

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without
hope

but what he adds is characteristic of the new outlook

For hope would be hope for the wrong
thing; wait without love

For love would be love of the wrong thing;
there is yet faith

7

But the faith and the love and the hope are
all in the waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not
ready for thought:

So the darkness shall be the light, and the
stillness the dancing.

Yes, by the force of this secret knowledge he has discovered, this supreme skill in action, as it is termed in the Eastern lore, that the poet at last comes out into the open, into the light and happiness of the Dawn and the Day

Whisper of running streams, and winter
lightning.

The wild rhyme unseen and the wild straw-
berry,

The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the
agony

Of death and birth.

It is the song of redemption, of salvation achieved, of Paradise regained. The full story of the purgatory, of man's calvary is beautifully hymned in these exquisite lines of a haunting poetic beauty married to a real mystic sense:

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire

The Divine Love is a greater fire than the low smouldering fire that our secular unregenerate life is. One has to choose and declare his adhesion.

Indeed, the stage of conversion, the crucial turn from the ordinary life to the spiritual life Eliot has characterised in a very striking manner. We usually say, sometimes in an outburst of grief, sometimes in a spirit of sudden disgust and renunciation that the world is dark and dismal and lonesome, the only thing to do here is to be done with it. The true renunciation, that which is deep and abiding, is not however so simple a thing, such a short cut. So our poet says, but the world is not dark enough, it is not lonesome enough: the world lives and moves in a superficial half-light, it is neither real death nor real life, it is death in life. It is this miserable mediocrity, the shallow uncertainty of consciousness that spells danger and ruin for the soul. Hence the poet exclaims:

Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.
Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude . . .
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Desecration of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperance of the world of spirit.

Yes, that is the condition demanded, an entire vacuity in which nothing moves. That is the real Dark Night of the soul. It is then only that the Grace leans down and descends, then only beams in the sweet Light of lights. Eliot has expressed the experience in these lines of rare beauty and sincerity:

Time and bell have buried the day
The black cloud carries the sun away.
Will the sun-flower turn to us, will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us: tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?
Fingers of yew be curled
Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent,
the light is still
At the still point of the turning world.

Eliot's is a very Christian soul, but we must remember at the same time that he is nothing if not modern. And this modernism gives all the warp and woof woven upon that inner core. How is it characterised? First of all, an intellectualism that requires a reasoned and rational synthesis of all experiences.

Another poet, a great poet of the soul! Dark Night was, as we all know Francis Thompson: it was in his case not merely the soul's night, the darkness extended even to life, he lived the Dark Night actually and physically. His haunting, weird lines, seize within their grip our brain and mind and very flesh—

My days have crackled and gone up in smoke

or,

Suffered the trampling hoof of every hour
The night's slow-wheel'd car...

But Thompson was not an intellectual, his doubts and despondencies were not of the mental order, he was a boiling, swelling life surge, a geyser, a volcano. He too crossed the Night and saw the light of Day, but in a different way. Well, he did not march into the day, it was the Day that marched into him! Yes, the Divine Grace came and seized him from behind with violence. A modern, a modernist consciousness cannot expect that indulgence. God meets him only halfway, he has to work up himself the other half. He has laid so many demands and conditions: the knots in his case are not cut asunder but slowly disengaged.

The modern temper is especially partial to harmony: it cannot assert and reject unilaterally and categorically, it wishes to go round an object and view all its sides, it asks for a synthesis and reconciliation of differences and contraries. Two major chords of life experience that demand accord are Life and Death, Time and Eternity. Indeed, the problem of time hangs heavy on the human consciousness. It has touched to the quick philosophers and sages in all ages and climes; it is the great question that confronts the spiritual seeker, the riddle that the Sphinx of life puts to the journeying soul for solution.

A modern Neo-Brahmin, Aldous Huxley, has given a solution of the problem in his now famous apothegm, "Time must have a stop". That is an old-world solution rediscovered by the modern mind in and through the

ravages of Time's storm and stress. It means, salvation lies, after all, beyond the flow of time, one must free oneself from the vicious and unending circle of mortal and mundane life. As the Rajayogi controls and holds his breath, stills all life movement and realises a dead-stop of consciousness (Samadhi), even so one must control and stop all secular movements in oneself and attain a timeless stillness and vacancy in which alone the true spiritual light and life can descend and manifest. That is the age-long and ancient solution to which the Neo-Brahmin as well as the Neo-Christian adheres.

Eliot seems to demur, however, and does not go to that extreme length. He wishes to go beyond, but to find out the source and matrix of the here below. As I said, he seeks a synthesis and not a mere transcendence: the transcendence is indeed a part of the synthesis, the other part is furnished by an immanence. He does not cut away altogether from Time, but reaches its outermost limit, its rim, its summit, where it stops, not altogether annihilated, but held in suspended animation. That is the "still point" to which he refers in the following lines:

At the still point of the turning world,
Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards: at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered.
Neither movement from nor towards.
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

He aims at the neutral point between the positive and the negative poles, which is neither, yet holding the two together—at the crossing of Yes and No, the known and the unknown, the local and the eternal. That is what he means when he says:

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

First, the movement towards transcendence, that is the journey in the

Night which you do throwing away one by one all your possessions and burdens till you make yourself bare and naked, you die—but you are reborn a new babe:

Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation.
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end
is my beginning.

There must be a beginning, an affirmation. The other side of nature is not merely transcended and excluded, it must be taken up too, given some place, its proper place in the totality, in the higher synthesis:

So, Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna
On the field of battle. Not fare well,
But fare forward, voyagers.

That is the lesson that our poet has learnt from the Gita and that is the motto he too would prescribe to the seekers.

Now, a modern poet is modern, because he is doubly attracted and attached to things of this world and this mundane life, in spite of all his need and urge to go beyond for the larger truth and the higher reality. Apart from the natural link with which we are born, there is this other fascination which the poor miserable things, all the little superficialities, trivialities especially have for the modern mind in view of their possible sense and significance and right of existence. These too have a magic of their own and not merely a black magic:

our losses, the torn seine
The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar
And the gear of foreign dead men...

or even these local names and habitations:

Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate—

It is true the movement towards transcendence is stronger and apparent in our poet, but the other kindred point—of home and time—is not forgotten. So he says:

History may be servitude,
History may be freedom. See, now they
vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which,
as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another
pattern.
Sin is Behovely, but
All shall be well, and
All manner of thing shall be well.

Nothing can be clearer with regard to
the ultimate end the poet has in view.
Listen once more to the hymn of the
higher reconciliation:

The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Are figured in the drift of stars
Ascend to summer in the tree
In light upon the figured leaf
And hear upon the sodden floor
Below, the boarhound and the boar
Pursue their pattern as before
But reconciled among the stars.

The Word was made flesh and the Word
was made Poetry. To express the
supreme Word in life, that is the work
of the sage, the Rishi. To express
the Word in speech, that is the labour
of the Poet. Eliot undertook this
double function of the poet and the
sage and he found the task difficult.
The poet has to utter the unutterable,
if he is to clothe in words the mystic
experience of the sage in him. That
is Eliot's ambition:

Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the
pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.

But, alas!

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the
burden. . .

And a lower and more facile inspiration
tempts the poet and he often speaks
with a raucous voice, even as the Arch-
tempter sought to lure the Divine
Word made flesh:

Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
Always assail them. The word in the
desert

Is most attacked by voices of temptation,

Our poet is too self-conscious, he
himself feels that he has not the perfect
voice. A Homer, even a Milton pos-

sesses a unity of tone and a wholeness
of perception which are denied to the
modern. To the modern, however, the
old masters are not subtle enough,
broad enough, psychological enough,
let us say the word, spiritual enough.
And yet the poetic inspiration, more
than the religious urge, needs the in-
junction not to be busy with too many
things, but to be centred upon the one
thing needful, viz., to create poetically
and not to discourse philosophically or
preach prophetically. Not that it is im-
possible for the poet to swallow the
philosopher and the prophet metaboli-
sing them into the substance of his
bone and marrow, of "the trilling wire
in his blood", as Eliot graphically
expresses. That perhaps is the consum-
mation towards which poetry is tend-
ing. But at present, in Eliot, at least,
the strands remain distinct, each with
its own temper and rhythm, not fused
and moulded into a single streamlined
form of beauty. Our poet flies high,
very high indeed at times, often or
oftener he flies low, not disdaining
the perilous limit of bathos. Perhaps
it is all wilful, it is a mannerism which
he cherishes. The mannerism may
explain his psychology and enshrine
his philosophy. But the poet, the
magician is to be looked for elsewhere.
In the present collection of poems it is
the philosophical, exegetical, discursive
Eliot who dominates: although the
high lights of the subject matter may
be its justification. Still even if we
have here doldrums like

• That the past has another pattern, and
ceases to be a mere sequence—
Or even development: the latter a par-
tial fallacy
Encouraged by superficial notions of evo-
lution,
Which becomes, in the popular mind, a
means of disowning the past—
we have also high flights like the lines
I have already quoted:—

Time and bell have buried the day,
The black cloud carries the sun away. . .

which makes one wish to have more of
the kind. Perhaps his previous works
contained lines more memorable, for
example those justly famous

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams,
In death's dream kingdom,
These do not appear:
There the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column. . .

Here the poet is almost grimly tense,
concentrated and has not allowed him-
self to be dissipated by thinkings and
arguments, has confined himself wholly
to a living experience. That is because

the poet has since then moved up and
sought a more rarefied air, a more even
and smooth temper. The utter and
absolute poetic ring of the *Inferno* is
difficult to maintain in the *Paradiso*,
unless and until the poet transforms
himself wholly into the Rishi, like the
poet of the *Gita* or the *Upanishads*.

—V. G.

Philosophy and the Physicists: By L. Susan Stebbing. Published by
Penguin Books (212 pages).

Professor Stebbing has in the book
under review directed all her energy
and attention to discovering the incon-
sistencies in the expressions and ideas
in the writings of Jeans and Eddington
—particularly of the latter—and then
criticising them with the steel hammer
of critical philosophy with a view to
leading back laymen and those 'philoso-
phers who should have known better'
to light and truth from obfuscation and
falsification into which they have been
according to her, misled by Jeans and
Eddington. She is mainly concerned
with the philosophical implications or
interpretations of recent developments
of science as elaborated by Jeans and
Eddington. Though it is tempting to
enter into a detailed discussion we can
but confine ourselves to general obser-
vations.

Undoubtedly the recent researches in
physics, specially on the experimental
side, stimulate philosophical speculation
and this is recognised by Professor
Stebbing herself when she says, "It
can hardly be denied that these changes
in the views of scientists, which have
been brought about by the way in
which the physical sciences have in
fact developed, have interesting impli-
cations for philosophy" (p. 96). Natural-
ly scientists with philosophical inclina-
tion are encouraged to find out what
bearing these researches have on the
problems of human life and thought.
Jeans and Eddington in their attempt
have taken a particular philosophical
direction which they have substantiated
probably by different lines of argument

but both of them have come to the
same general conclusion that modern
physics has idealistic tinge or that in
the modern conception of the physical
world there is room for the reality of
mind and consciousness. Professor
Stebbing herself states: "It is worth
noticing that most physicists who have
attempted to construct a philosophy
upon the basis of their physical re-
searches have ended by elaborating
some form of idealism. I at least have
met none who have attempted to
derive new arguments in favour of
materialism" (p. 179). And she admits
with evident dislike, if not disap-
proval, that so eminent a physicist as
Milikan agrees with Jeans and Edding-
ton in maintaining that materialism is
dead. She says, "Milikan is, however,
in agreement with the physicists whom
we have been considering in holding
that materialism is now obsolete"
(p. 211).

So it seems that she, though not very
jubilant over the matter, concedes that
modern science does not support
materialism but that she has objection
to any opinion to the effect that modern
physics supports idealism. Because she
says, "If I have succeeded in showing
that the present state of physical
theories does not warrant any form of
idealism, it must not thereby be con-
cluded that I suppose it to warrant any
form of materialism" (p. 7). At the
same time she admits in a passage
already quoted that the "changes have
interesting implications for philosophy".
The crime of Jeans and Eddington, so

it seems, has been that they have attempted to elaborate these implications, probably because she cannot agree with them and not because there is no scope for such speculation. Sri Aurobindo with remarkable grasp of the underlying truth of things very significantly says, "Science itself nowadays is neither materialistic nor idealistic. The rock on which materialism was built and which in the 19th Century seemed unshakable has been shattered...The way which had been almost entirely barred except by rebellion now lies wide open to spiritual truths, spiritual ideas, spiritual experiences.... The facts of science do not compel anyone to take any particular philosophical direction. They are now neutral and can even be used on one side or another, though most scientists do not consider such a use as admissible."

It is worth noticing that Professor Stebbing has not met any physicists who have derived new arguments in favour of materialism but that "most of them who have attempted to construct a philosophy have ended by elaborating some form of idealism." Can we not say that this very clearly shows the trend of modern physics? But what the learned professor does not realise is the fact that physics has not yet reached any finality and that naturally any philosophy based on a slowly evolving scheme must be progressive. So the consistency that is claimed for any complete system of philosophy cannot be expected from a philosophy developed on scientific foundation.

Professor Stebbing, after quoting a passage from one of Eddington's books, remarks, "this passage admirably illustrates how wide is the divergence between Eddington's conception of Natural Law and that of the nineteenth century. I do not wish to minimise the importance of this change in the point of view, still less do I wish to deny that there is nothing in the whole system of laws of physics that can not be deduced unambiguously from epistemological considerations. To do so would be a mere impertinence in a

layman. Moreover, I must confess that the form in which Eddington has cast the great work from which the quotation is taken is delightful to me. But I am forced to ask whether, granting that such a deduction from 'Epistemological considerations' be possible, there is any reason to believe that the mind is the stuff of the universe. The answer, I think, is that there is not" (p. 207). Well, Professor Stebbing cannot deny the liberty to anybody of thinking that there is. Still less can she demand that everybody will agree with her view or claim that only her opinion is the reasonable one.

Professor Stebbing has made capital out of the illustrations or analogies used by Eddington by examining them in all details. The same illustrations may have different aspects and to drive a point home, stress may have to be laid only on the aspect in question and not on the illustration as a whole. The same illustration may be used to explain quite a different point. Explanations should not be taken as definitions. Practically the same remark applies to the use of words, as Eddington himself says, "A correspondent has pointed out to me that in various places in the *Nature of the Physical World* the word 'space' occurs with four different meanings. I think he expected me to feel penitent. But the word *has* these meanings; in as much as my correspondent was by no means diffident in telling me what I really meant in each place, I inferred that in this instance my attempt to convey exact thought in exact language had succeeded" (N. P. Sc., p. 279).

Professor Stebbing complains that 'it is difficult for the common readers to keep his head at the bewildering multiplications of worlds', such as, the familiar world, the external world, the scientific world, the spiritual world and has devoted a whole chapter on it. There is hardly any cause or excuse for bewilderment if the words are read with reference to the context. Professor Stebbing, who appears to have gone through quite a large volume of

scientific literature should have realised that scientific conceptions relate to a number of different levels and that one should therefore not expect 'greater accuracy or profundity in a description than that of the level to which it belongs'. That is why it is very difficult indeed to speak consistently of the physical universe or "the universe as it is conceived in modern physics." The world of protons and electrons with waves of radiation is probably the nearest that physics has got to the objective reality but contents without laws governing them do not make a complete picture and physics has not yet succeeded in working out a completely satisfactory system of law on this basis. The deepest level of ideas in physics regarding matter is the conception of wave which replaces, so to say, electron and proton and thus a scheme of symbols connected by mathematical equations has been formulated which has so far proved most successful in scientific prediction. But physics does not propose any interpretation of these symbols, which are, as it were, shadowing the real objective world.

On the question of free-will also, Professor Stebbing has been unfair to Eddington. Because Eddington very explicitly states, "The indeterminist is sometimes said to postulate 'something like free will' in the individual atoms. *Something like* is conveniently vague... But if it is suggested that we postulate psychological characters in the individual atoms of the kind which appear in our minds as human free-will, I deny this altogether" (N. P. Sc., p. 86). After making an adverse criticism, Professor Stebbing very strangely remarks, "Nevertheless I do not wish to deny that Heisenburg's discovery has some bearing upon 'the problem of free will' (p. 180). But why does she deny others the right to say so?

Criticism of Jeans is mainly based on what he has written on the last chapter of his book, the *Mysterious Universe*. About this chapter Jeans remarks in the preface of the book. "The last chapter stands on a different level. Everyone may claim the right to draw his own

conclusions from the facts presented by modern science. This chapter merely contains the interpretations which I, a stranger in the realms of philosophical thought, feel inclined to place on the scientific facts and hypotheses discussed in the main part of the book. Many will disagree with it—it was written to this end." This certainly is not the attitude of a man who deliberately wants to mislead people. Jeans further clarifies his position when he says, "Differences only arise when physicists take to speculation either about the future progress of science or about the ultimate problem of human free-will which of course lies beyond the province of physics" (N. B. Sc., p. 285). Again, "Yet the essence of the present situation in physics is not that something mental has come into the new picture of nature, so much as that nothing non-mental has survived from the old picture" (Ibid, p. 287).

Whenever Jeans or Eddington has entered into the speculative part of his writing, he has done so with a clear warning and thus has left no ground for people being misled. In spite of that they are misled! Who is to blame for that? Has not the book of Professor Stebbing misled people into believing that Jeans and Eddington are not reliable, that they are mere entertainers, that their thinking is confused and that they cannot even be counted as scientists? Though Professor Stebbing herself regards them as great scientists and speaks of Eddington as 'an original thinker of the first rank', yet those laymen who have been misled by her book proclaim just the opposite. But happily truth has a greater appeal than falsehood and therefore in spite of the determined attempt by some to decry Jeans and Eddington, their writing is steadily gaining ground. Serious students take no notice of such attempt.

We completely fail to understand how Jeans and Eddington can be accused of misleading even theologians and preachers, not to speak of philosophers. None of them has made any attempt to base religion on science

On the other hand Eddington very emphatically says, "It is probably true that the recent changes of scientific thought remove some of the obstacles to a reconciliation of religion with science; but this must be carefully distinguished from any proposal to base religion on scientific discovery. For my own part I am wholly opposed to any such attempt" (Science and the Unseen World, p. 45).

At the very end of her book Professor Stebbing makes a startling remark. She states, "The common reader may well pause to ask why there is such anxiety to 'put Mind into Nature' and to regard chairs as 'abstractions'. The world is what it is How does it help us to be told that 'the scheme of things' is created by God or imposed by Mind if we find it to be 'sorry'?....." (p. 212).

We need not go very far back, even recent history clearly shows how concentration only on the material values of things, led mankind into the most appalling tragedies and has brought civilisation almost to the verge of destruction. It is to be admitted that people with materialistic inclination, not to speak of thorough-going materialists, who practically dominate all spheres of activity today draw their inspiration mainly from science. They will have radically to change their outlook on problems of life, if science can push materialism completely out of sight by smashing the very bed-rock on which its philosophy is founded and thus open the way to spiritual truth. That will indeed be a great contribution to human progress.

Finally we record with regret that

the book is marred by a very aggressive tone throughout. Much of the author's criticism is based on what Eddington seems to think or hint and on her own readings between the lines. She has sometimes even fathomed Eddington's intentions! Criticism can be done in a decent, courteous and friendly way. Captious criticism may impress a certain section of people but it does not at all appeal to those who seriously seek truth and knowledge. It is often forgotten that exposition, intended to give an insight into the most recent theories and ideas of physics and their philosophical implications, requires from its readers some knowledge of the subject at least up to a certain standard. Then the reader will not be misled as Prof. Stebbing has not been misled. It is very gratifying to note that even hostile criticism, deliberate misrepresentation and twisting of matters has never succeeded in dragging Jeans and Eddington down to the level of such critics and also that they have always met criticism with dignity and good humour so characteristic of them. Eddington with a detachment of a true scholar and seeker after truth remarks, "For the most part I am content to think that if my contentions are of value they will find their proper level without continual parental intervention to save them from determined opponents—and sometimes from over-enthusiastic friends." It must be admitted that it is largely due to the untiring efforts of Jeans and Eddington that we notice to-day an awakening of genuine interest for science among common people.

—J. B

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