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Checked 1999

Printed at
Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry
1946

Sri Aurobindo Circle - Second Number

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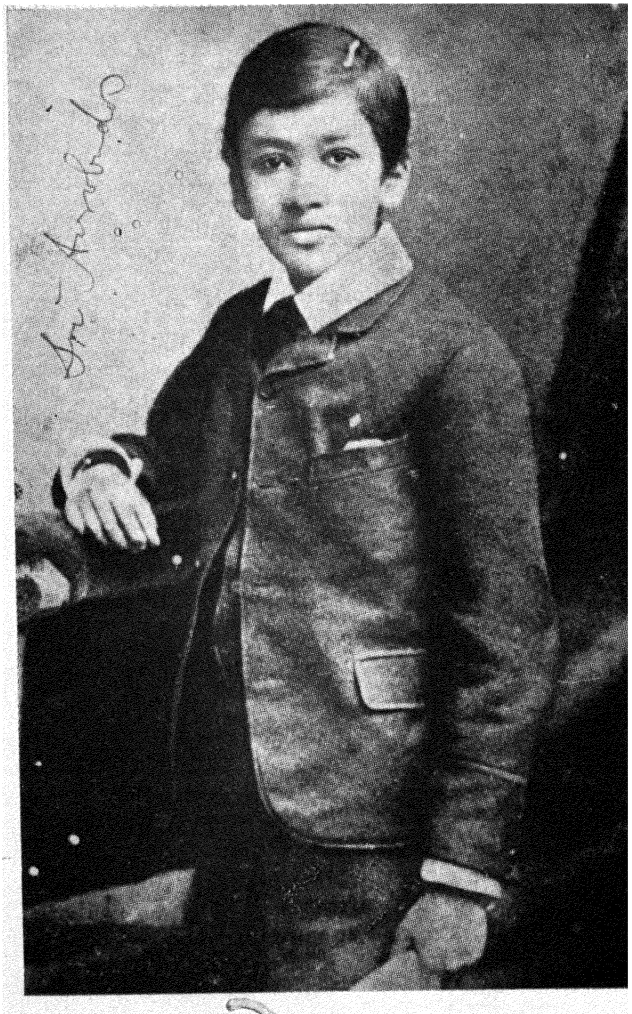
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The Mother

Poems



Sri Aurobindo
at the age of eleven

SRI AUROBINDO

A GOD'S LABOUR

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soil to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;
For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope
That lead to a failing edge;
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I cannot rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
"Thy hope is Chimera's head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

"Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas
And bound to life's iron doom?

"This earth is ours, a field of Night
For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the sacred Light
Or suffer a god's desires ?

'Come, let us slay him and end his course!
Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
And the curb of his wide white peace."

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried "Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate."

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gods of mind
And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alleys blind
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

9—1—1936

ARJAVA (J. A. CHADWICK)

INVOCATION TO SUPERMIND

O height beyond the stature of the mind,
  O width outreaching finite heart's embrace,
    Poised puissance on the limits of the world,
Enlighten us; we would no more be blind.
  We seek ourselves behind each comely face,
    And bind the myriad detail sense-unfurled
To one bright spear-point, and therewith we trace
Swift utterance which no thought-fetters bind.
Shining lance, far above rifted woe,
  Reveal to earth the ending of our quest;
  When thou to the Holy Logos shall be pressed,
    The Hidden Love behind all universe
Sends ruby fire and ever-living flow,—
    And night is fading, dreams of self disperse.

LATE TWILIGHT AND SOME MUSIC

Perfume too faint to stir the chords of dream—,
    The sough of tiny waves from pearl-grey sea—,
    Lustres of day, as pollen stains a bee,
Curdle the air to an opaline shadow-shot gleam.

Then, every furthest fibre being at rest,—
    The gates of inner hearing opened wide,—
    Bars of clear music through grey stillness glide,
Raising a rhythm-sun, re-goldening the west.

Glamour of Schubert, ring after golden ring
    Widen—and the heart with them—to far other clime,
    A sovran Beauty no more at odds with Time,
And the being's adoring that will gain bright plumage, puissant wing.

WITH JADE-WHITE PETALS

For the moon-pale feet of Laelia the still night sheddeth dew,
Or at noon in the white-rose garden—domed with a trance of blue-
Blossoms with jade-white petals before her feet are shed
And fall from the dreaming rose-trees, with never a leaf of red.

The foam-pale hands of Laelia that weave my web of dream,—
How they pluck white water-lilies afloat on a languid stream,
And how from the strings of a zither they slowly waken a strain
Lustrously pale as the starlight when the air has been washed by the rain.

In a moth-like silence I gather blooms of the night for her brow;
As in a shrine men proffer trophies with prayer and vow,
I would weave a crown of whiteness, a glimmer in the dream-charged air,
And raise it in suppliant hands to the dim darkness of her hair.

Your name is fading music upon my worship's mouth;
It spills in languorous fragrance from lilies of the South;
It is the odorous night-flower wherewith your locks are bound,—
Or the moon-pale soul of roses caught in a mesh of sound.

PETITION

When Night has opened her ten thousand eyes
And earth has muted those entangled cries,
Might such a silence on this heart descend;
Might inmost eyes awaken, day-trance end.

Cloud-darkened sky or vapours dank from earth
Bedim the growing vision, mar the worth
Of fairer reckoning. Enhance this will—
Make mind's own zenith clear—all swirls of passions still.

K. D. SETHNA

INVOCATION TO THE FOURFOLD DIVINE

O Void where deathless power is merged in peace!
O myriad Passion lit to one self-fire!
O Breath of some vast rose that breaks through form!
O Hush of gold by whom all truth is heard!
Consume in me the blinded walls of mind:
Wing far above dull thought my speech with flame,
Make my desire an infinite sky's embrace,
A joy that feels through every colour's throb
One single heart kindling the universe—
And by strange sleep draw heaven closer still,
Blotting all distances of space and time!

"O DIVINE ADORABLE MÈRE...."

No words can tell down what enkindled ways
Those unassuming footsteps earthward fare—
What mysteries inviolate make her bear
Beauty like benediction on her face! . . .
In vain the wilful visionary soar!
O not by keen conceiving is she known:
Our very self must mingle with her own!
Descend, O seer, from thy majestic top
Of azure contemplation, learn to implore,
With sightless awe and memory of sin,
Disclosure of the unutterable Grace
Whose image is her blissful countenance!
Enclasp her feet in prostrate ignorance,
With simple love sweeter than prayer or praise,
Till, from the measureless vacancy within,
A holy gleam is shed on the dark gaze,
And the still heart drinks heaven drop by drop.

O SILENT LOVE....

Because you never claim of us a tear,
O Silent Love, how often we forget
The eyes of countless centuries were wet
To bring your joy so near!

Forgive if I remember not the blaze,
Imperishable, perfect, infinite
Of far omnipotence from which you light
Your lamp of human face!

Make me a worship-vigil everywhere,
Slumber and wakefulness one memory
That you are God: O let each pore of me
Become a mouth of prayer!

NIRODBARAN

EARTH-CRY

Bright mystery of earth, O foam-washed shore
On the edge of time, you bring thoughts pale and sweet
Of happiness long lost, memories that bore
In its veiled bosom twilight's starry heart-beat!

These desert-tracts, as they lie lifeless, cold—
Strange melancholies buried in their sand—
Are like dry barren moments deeply scrolled
On endless canvas by an inscrutable hand.

Whence like a cry of fire night and day
Your soul climbs to the topless distant peaks
In the heart of solemn vastness holding sway
Lined with immutable silence's golden streaks.

Your body's faint murmur-falls slowly heard,
A dying warrior's last half-spoken word.

MOON-TOUCH

Under the white felicitous eye of the moon
My heart spreads slowly wings drunk with the infinite;
In wide, blue spaces of air, lost in a swoon,
It floats like a glad song from height to height.

Earth's narrow cage dwindles into a dot;
The hills and trees with their cool, emerald shade
Seem like old memory's fast vanishing spot
On life's horizon—of dim shadows made.

Now the star's fragrant breath runs in the veins
And lightning-tremors murmuringly flow:
One with the astral body's lambent glow
My flaming sight a new world-vision gains

Where all creation is a God-ward cry
In a vast plenitude of ecstasy.

DILIP KUMAR ROY

FAREWELL FLUTE

A flute of farewell calls and calls,
Farewell to earthly things:
But when shall I the message learn
That high-voiced music sings?

Earth's pleasures come like scented winds
Invite a mortal clasp:
I seek to keep them in my clutch,
Captives of a vain grasp!

How shall thy nectar fill this cup,
Brimming with passion's wine?
Only when the turn of day is done
Thy starry lamps can shine.

Ever to the eager cry of hope
Re-echoes the heart's lyre,
Will it answer to thy Song of songs
That climbs beyond desire?

Arise now in my shadowy soul
And let it sing farewell
To the near glow, the intimate voice,
Familiar conch and bell!

For little lights I crave no more,
Now shall I silently
Turn toward my heaven and greater home:
Thy far Eternity.

(Translated from Dilip's song by Sri Aurobindo on 4-3-1941)

RANI MAITRA

APPEAL

With thy world-bewitching Maya, Love!
Beguile me nevermore,
Absorb me in thy Beauty's bliss
The deep that knows no shore,
Thy viewless, quintessential Light
Rain on my eyes' dark-sore !

When thy Sun greets my house, why still
Must linger the haze of sleep ?
At the hour of Dawn whence these untimely
Siren Moonbeams creep?
With troths of coloured evening clouds
What Falsehood's tryst they keep ?

Havened at thy feet I lie in shade
(On my brow thy caress' seal)
The lamp thou hast lit so tenderly
Cherish—my flame's appeal:
Oh, sentinel my soul, abide
With me in woe and weal!

(Translated from Bengali by
Dilip Kumar Roy)

UNFAILING

O keep me as thou wilt: in peace
Or pain that knows no end,
Only may I feel in thee my one
True everlasting Friend!

Whenever I call for thee in heart,
Thou stand'st revealed there and thou art
Far dearer than the dearest in
Thy starry loveliness:
To this virgin truth I would be vowed
As night to day's caress.

I feel thy throb in every thrill
In joy's surcease thou art closer still:
Like the unfailing sun thou fall'st
On opening eyes to bless:
To this virgin truth I would be vowed
As night to day's caress.

Wounds may do hurt, bereavements blight,
Shadows may engulf all leap of light:
In the whip of thunder lurks thy flare's
All-transmuting grace:
To this virgin truth I would be vowed
As night to day's caress.

When death rings out life's play, O Sweet,
I shall be havened at thy feet,
My guiding-star on land and sea,
Thy ray no clouds efface:
To this virgin truth I would be vowed
As night to day's caress.

(Translated from Bengali
by Dilip Kumar Roy)

MINNIE D. SETHNA

ADORATION

Gold is lavished endlessly,
With every look of those ageless eyes.
Yet you know it not, the piteous
Who dream of reflected light from the skies.

Her faint smile as She passes by
Offers, unasked, a wealth of splendour.
Yet you walk by Her door, you narrow-visioned
And still for your futile treasures wander.

Each footstep of Her is a precious flower
Left for our clay-doomed minds to gather.
Oh you ignorant who pick them not
And let them die with the passing weather.

The earth-clods loosened in Her pathway
The sightless see them as useless dirt;
They dream not that the dust in my clenched fist
Is eternal manna for a hungry heart!

MY ALL

You have plucked my heart away.
How can I go with this hollow bleeding gap?
Parting is a revolt that rends my body—
My entrails are caught in a most cherished trap.

I am always in a wordless wonder
At the flooding endless peace You pour,
And like a tortured lake that is depth-dry
I drink in but thirst for more and more.

The magic circle at Your feet
Is everything in heaven to me;
I sit drawn inward to an intense point,
A point that is inexhaustible as the sea.

Your eyes are two chameleons—
When I am happy they throb like gold stars;
When, clutched by black despair, I search them
They fall fike a healing balm on my scars.

Your hand on my burning head is life-reviving snow;
Your feet to me reveal every summer hue;
Why should I roam when all the glorious seasons
And all my rivers and hills are merged in You?

LION AND DEER

A deer of lightning comes and goes;
Flitting it plays,
Swift-limbed, spotted with silver rose—
A bodied golden grace.

It moves and hovers in green woodland,
A beauty-born thing;
On flaming heels that can hardly stand,
Its gait is a flash and a spring.

A lion of thunder and hungry fire
Paws with redhot nail
Groaning in the caverns of desire
By the side of the mystic veil.

The red beast runs through the rocky ways
Like a power of wild flame;
One sees a burning giant face
Move in a dreadful game.

When the screen is rent by a moment's slit
And shows where two lands end,
The lion-fire and the deer of light
Run and flame and blend.

But the veil blocks them then and there,
And still the drama goes on—
On a stage that is swept with noise and flare;
For each longing fire is alone.

The giant beast leaps up and roars,
A hunger ever-burning,
The slender prey swerves back from its course
In a flight of fear and yearning.

One day, the two of themselves shall tire
And lie tossing on earth,
Till comes with help the secret Fire
To release their painful birth.

At its beckoning life's weird and muddy
    Mystic veil has vanished,
The struggle-weary earthly body
    In motionless peace is banished.

Then by the stroke of heaven's crimson flower
    From either body shall rise
An angel of beauty, an angel of power
    And kiss each other's eyes.

The lips of thunder, the lips of lightning
    In an ecstasy mixed and dense
Cling, a married splendour widening,
    And smite with a touch of intense

Immensity,—through my heart they enter
    And my soul they force
With sun-power wine and honey-star tender
    At vision's close and source.

THE NIGHT OF SILENCE

Hark, the voice of silence, call of the midnight bird:
    The tune shakes the root of the dumb sleepy earth,
It climbs above spreading its echoes through the stirred
    Ways of heaven and jingles with stars of marvel-mirth.

The veil of mystery slowly lifts with the ethereal sounds;
    The unknown beauty of night opens to the solemn vast
Infinitude: the dream-rose garland of love surrounds
    The maiden on her velvet couch—an expectancy cast

Like lightning among the blind foldings of cloudy time;
    The delivered consciousness of the imprisoned thirst for light
Brims now with song of celestial streams, the joyous chime
    Glows with an inner moon-rise melody, gold and white,
Drenching the desert-dark of the world; O Immortal lore
    Of mortal birth, like the bright-winged bird with you I soar.

The Virtues

Once upon a time there was a stately palace which had in its very centre a secret sanctuary; but none had yet crossed its threshold. Besides, even its outermost galleries were hardly accessible to mortals. For the palace stood on a very high cloud and at all times very few indeed were they who could discover the way to it.

It was the palace of Truth.

One day, a feast was given there; not for men but for beings very different from them, gods and goddesses, small and great, who are worshipped on earth under the name of "Virtues"

The vestibule of this palace was a great hall. Its walls and floor and ceiling, luminous by themselves, shone over again with thousand sparkling fires.

It was the hall of Intelligence. The light was very dim near the ground and had a beautiful deep blue sapphire colour: it became more and more bright towards the ceiling from which were hung, like so many chandeliers, girandoles of diamond whose thousand facets darted dazzling rays all round.

The Virtues arrived separately, but soon formed into groups according to their sympathies, all happy to find themselves together once in a way at least, they who are usually so dispersed through the world and worlds, so isolated amidst a crowd of alien beings.

Sincerity presided over the festival. She was dressed in a transparent robe, like limpid water, and held in her hand a cube of the purest crystal through which things could be seen as they were, very different indeed from what they usually appear to be, for their images are reflected there without deformation.

By her, like two faithful guards, stood Humility, respectful and proud at once, and Courage, his forehead held high, his eyes bright, a firm and smiling mouth, a calm and decisive air.

Close to Courage, hand in hand, stood a woman wholly veiled: only her piercing eyes were visible shining through the veils. It was Prudence.

In the midst of all, coming and going from one to another and yet seeming to remain constantly close to everyone was Charity, at once vigilant and calm, active yet discreet: she left in her passage through the groups a trail of white and soft light—this light emitted and sifted

by her, came to her in a subtle and, to most eyes, invisible radiation from her best friend, her inseparable companion, her twin sister, Justice. And around Charity pressed like a bright escort Kindness, Patience, Gentleness, Deference and many others.

All were there, at least they thought so.

But, behold, suddenly there appears on the golden threshold a new-comer.

It was with great difficulty that the guards on duty at the gates had agreed to admit her. Never till now had they seen her and there was nothing in her appearance that could impress them.

She was, indeed, very young and frail, dressed in a white robe, very simple, almost poor. She came a few steps, with a timid, embarrassed air. Then, obviously at a loss to find herself in the midst of such a crowded and brilliant company, she stopped, not knowing towards whom to go.

After a short colloquy with her companions Prudence came away, at their request, and advanced towards the unknown guest. She cleared her throat a little, as people who are embarrassed usually do, in order to reflect a little and then turned to her and said:

"We, who are assembled here in this palace, we all know one another by our names and our merits, we are surprised to see you come. You appear to be a foreigner, at least, we do not seem to have ever seen you. Would you have the goodness to tell me who you are?"

The new-comer then answered with a sigh:

"Alas ! I am not astonished that I seem a foreigner in this palace. I am so seldom invited anywhere. My name is Gratitude."

THE MOTHER

(Translated from the French by Nolini Kanta Gupta)

Letters from Sri Aurobindo

I

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE DIVINE

It seems to me that these differences of valuation come from the mind laying stress on one side or another of the approach to the Divine or exalting one aspect of realisation over another. When there is the approach through the heart, through Love and Bhakti, the highest culmination is in a transcendent Ananda, an unspeakable Bliss or Beatitude of union with the Divine through Love. The school of Chaitanya laid especial and indeed sole emphasis on this way and made this the whole reality of Krishna consciousness. But the transcendent Ananda is there at the origin and end of all existence and this is not and cannot be the sole way to it. One can arrive at it through the Vasudeva consciousness, which is a wider, more mentalised approach—as in the method of the Gita where knowledge, works, bhakti are all centred in Krishna, the One, the Supreme, the All, and arrive through the cosmic consciousness to the luminous transcendence. There is the way too described in the Taittiriya Upanishad, the Vedanta's Gospel of Bliss. These are certainly wider methods, for they take up the whole existence through all its parts and ways of being to the Divine. If less intense at their starting-point, a vaster and slower movement, there is no reason to suppose that they are less intense on their summits of arrival. It is the same transcendence to which all arrive, either with a large movement gathering up everything spiritual in us to take it there in a vast sublimation, or in single intense uplifting from one part, a single exaltation leaving all the rest aside. But who shall say which is profounder of the two? Concentrated love has a profundity of its own which cannot be measured; concentrated wisdom has a wider profundity, but one cannot say that it is deeper.

Cosmic values are only reflections of the truth of the Transcendence in a lesser truth of time experience which is separative and sees diversely a thousand aspects of the One. As one rises through the mind or any part of the manifested being, any one or more of these aspects can become more and more sublimated and tend towards its

supreme transcendental intensity, and whatever aspect is so experienced is declared by the spiritualised mental consciousness to be the supreme thing. But when one goes beyond mind all tends not only to sublimate but to fuse together until the separated aspects recover their original unity, indivisible in the absoluteness of all made one. Mind can conceive and have experience of existence without consciousness or Ananda and this receives its utmost expression in the inconscience attributed to Matter. So also it can conceive of Ananda or Love as a separate principle; it even feels consciousness and existence losing themselves in a trance or swoon of Love or Ananda. So too the limited personal loses itself in the illimitable Person, the lover in the supreme Beloved, or else the personal in the Impersonal, the lover feels himself immersed and losing himself in the transcendental reality of Love and Ananda. The personal and the impersonal are themselves posited and experienced by mind as separate realities and one or other is declared and seen as supreme, so that the personal can have *laya* in the Impersonal or, on the contrary, the impersonal disappears into the absolute reality of the supreme and divine Person—the impersonal in that view is only an attribute or power of the personal Divine. But at the summits of spiritual experience passing beyond mind one begins to feel the fusion of all these things into one. Consciousness, Existence, Ananda return to their indivisible unity, Sachchidananda. The personal and the impersonal become irrevocably one, so that to posit one as against the other appears as an act of ignorance. This tendency of unification is the basis of the supramental consciousness and experience; for cosmic or creative purposes the supermind can put forward one aspect prominently where that is needed but it is aware of all the rest behind it or contained in it and does not admit into its view any separation or opposition anywhere. For that reason a supramental creation would be a manifold harmony, not a separative process fragmenting or analysing the One into parts and setting these parts over against each other or else putting them contradictorily against each other and having afterwards to synthetise and piece them together in order to arrive at harmony or else to exclude one or all of the parts in order to realise the indivisible One.

You speak of the Vaishnava school emphasising the personal felicities, as in the classification of the bhavas, and you say that these are short and quick feelings and lack in vastness and amplitude. No doubt, when they are first felt and as they are felt by the limited consciousness in its ordinary functioning and movement; but that is only because the emotional in man with this imperfect bodily instrument acts largely by spasms of intensity when it wants to sublimate and cannot maintain either the continuity or the extension or the sublimated paroxysm of these things. But as the individual becomes cosmic (the

universalising of the individual without his losing his higher individuality as a divine centre is one of the processes which leads towards the supramental Truth), this disability begins to disappear. The truth behind the Dasya or Madhura or any other bhava or fusion of bhavas becomes a vast and ample continuous state,—if, by chance, they lose something of their briefer intensities by this extension of themselves, they recover them a thousandfold in the movement of the universalised individual towards the Transcendence. There is an ever enlarging experience which takes up the elements of spiritual realisation and in this uplifting and transforming process they become other and greater things than they were and more and more they take their place by sublimation first in the spiritual cosmic, then in the all-embracing transcendent Whole.

The difference of view between Shankara and Ramanuja and on the other side Chaitanya about Krishna arises from the turn of their experience. Krishna was only an aspect of Vishnu to the others because that ecstatic form of love and bhakti which had become associated with Krishna was not for them the whole. The Gita, like Chaitanya, but from a different viewpoint regarded Krishna as the Divine himself. To Chaitanya he was Love and Ananda, and Love and Ananda being for him the highest transcendental experience, so Krishna too must be the Supreme. For the writer of the Gita Krishna was the source of Knowledge and Power as well as Love, the Destroyer, Preserver, Creator in one, so necessarily Vishnu was only an aspect of this universal Divine. In the Mahabharata indeed Krishna comes as an incarnation of Vishnu, but that can be turned by taking it that it was through the Vishnu aspect as his frontal appearance that he manifested; for that the greater Godhead can manifest later than others is logical if we consider the manifestation as progressive,—just as Vishnu is in the Veda a Younger Indra, Upendra, but gains upon his elder and subsequently takes place above him in the Trimurti.

I cannot say much about the Vaishnava idea of the form of Krishna. Form is the basic means of manifestation and without it it may be said that the manifestation of anything is not complete. Even if the Formless logically precedes Form, yet it is not illogical to assume that in the Formless Form is inherent and already existent in a mystic latency, otherwise how could it be manifested? for any other process would be the creation of the non-existent, not manifestation. If so, it would be equally logical to assume that there is an eternal form of Krishna, a spirit body. As for the highest Reality it is no doubt absolute Existence, but is it only that? Absolute Existence as an abstraction may exclude everything else from itself and amount to a sort of very positive zero; but Absolute Existence as a reality who shall define and say what is or is not in its inconceivable depths, its illimitable Mystery? Mind can ordinarily conceive of the Absolute

Existence only as a negation of its own concepts spatial, temporal or other. But it cannot tell what is at the basis of manifestation or what manifestation is or why there is any manifestation at all out of its positive zero—and the Vaishnavas, we must remember, do not admit this conception as the absolute and original truth of the Divine. It is therefore not rigidly impossible that what we conceive and perceive as spatial form may correspond to some power of the spaceless Absolute. I do not say all that as a definite statement of Truth, I am only pointing out that the Vaishnava position on its own ground is far from being logically or metaphysically untenable.

8-11-1936

II

DIVINE GUIDANCE

The question you have put raises one of the most difficult and complicated of all problems and to deal with it at all adequately would need an answer as long as the longest chapter of *The Life Divine*. I can only state my own knowledge founded not on reasoning but on experience that there is such a guidance and that nothing is in vain in this universe.

If we look only at outward facts in their surface appearance or if we regard what we see happening around us as definitive, not as processes of a moment in a developing whole, the guidance is not apparent; at most we see interventions occasional or sometimes frequent. The guidance can become evident only if we go behind appearances and begin to understand the forces at work and the way of their working and their secret significance. After all, real knowledge—even scientific knowledge—comes by going behind the surface phenomena to their hidden processes and causes. It is quite obvious that this world is full of suffering, and afflicted with transience to a degree that seems to justify the Gita's description of it as "this unhappy and transient world," *anityam asukham*. The question is whether it is a mere creation of Chance or governed by a mechanical inconscient law or whether there is a meaning in it and something beyond its present appearance towards which we move. If there is a meaning and if there is something towards which things are evolving, then inevitably there must be a guidance—and that means that a supporting Consciousness and Will is there with which we can come into inner contact. If there is such a Consciousness and Will, it is not likely that it would stultify itself by annulling the world's meaning or turning it into a perpetual or eventual failure.

This world has a double aspect, it seems to be based on a material Inconscience and an ignorant mind and life full of that Inconscience: error and sorrow, death and suffering are the necessary consequences. But there is evidently too a partially successful endeavour and an imperfect growth towards Light, Knowledge, Truth, Good, Happiness, Harmony, Beauty, at least a partial flowering of these things. The meaning of this world must evidently lie in this opposition; it must be an evolution which is leading or struggling towards higher things out of a first darker appearance. Whatever guidance there is must be given under these conditions of opposition and struggle and must be leading towards that higher state of things. It is leading the individual, certainly, and the world, presumably, towards the higher state, but through the double terms of knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, death and life, pain and pleasure, happiness and suffering; none of the terms can be excluded until the higher state is reached and established. It is not and cannot be ordinarily a guidance which at once rejects the darker terms; still less a guidance which brings us solely and always nothing but happiness, success and good fortune. Its main concern is with the growth of our being and consciousness, the growth towards a higher self, towards the Divine, eventually towards a higher Light, Truth and Bliss; the rest is secondary, some times a means, sometimes a result, not a primary purpose.

The true sense of the guidance becomes clearer when we can go deep within and see from there more intimately the play of the forces and receive intimations of the Will behind them. The surface mind can get only an imperfect glimpse. When we are in contact with the Divine or in contact with an inner knowledge or vision, we begin to see all the circumstances of our life in the new light and observe how they all tended, without our knowing it, towards the growth of our being and consciousness, towards the work we had to do, towards some development that had to be made,—not only what seemed good, fortunate or successful but also the struggles, failures, difficulties, upheavals. But with each person the guidance works differently according to his nature, the conditions of his life, his cast of consciousness, his stage of development, his need of further experience. We are not automata but conscious beings and our mentality, our will and its decisions, our attitude to life and demand on it, our motives and movements help to determine our course: they may lead to much suffering and evil, but through it all, the guidance makes use of them for our growth in experience and consequently the development of our being and consciousness. All advance, by however devious ways, even in spite of what seems a going backwards or going astray, gathering whatever experience is necessary for the soul's destiny. When we are in close contact with the Divine, a protection can come which helps or directly guides or moves us; it does not throw aside all

difficulties, sufferings or dangers, but it carries us through them and out of them—except where for a special purpose there is need of the opposite.

It is the same thing though on a larger scale and in a more complex way with the world movement. That seems to move according to the conditions and laws or forces of the movement through constant vicissitudes, but still there is something in it that drives towards the evolutionary purpose, although it is more difficult to see, understand and follow than in the smaller and more intimate field of the individual consciousness and life. What happens at a particular juncture of the world-action or the life of humanity, however catastrophical, is not ultimately determinative. Here too one has to see not only the outward play of forces in a particular case or at a particular time but also the inner and secret play, the far-off outcome, the event that lies behind it all. Falsehood and Darkness are strong everywhere on the earth, and have always been so and at times they seem to dominate; but there have also been not only gleams but outbursts of the Light. In the maze of things and the long course of Time, whatever may be the appearance of this or that epoch or movement, the growth of Light is there and the struggle towards better things does not cease. At the present time Falsehood and Darkness have gathered their forces and are exrtemely powerful; but even if we reject the assertion of the mystics and prophets since early times that such a condition of things must precede the Manifestation and is even a sign of its approach, yet it does not necessarily indicate the decisive victory—even temporary—of the Falsehood. It merely means that the struggle between the forces is at its acme. The result may very well be the stronger emergence of the best that can be; for the world-movement often works in that way. I leave it at that and say nothing more.

17-2-1942

III

ON McTAGGART'S STATEMENTS ABOUT LOVE

I have heard of McTaggart as a philosopher but am totally unacquainted with his thought and his writings, so it is a little difficult for me to answer you with any certitude. Isolated thoughts or sentences may easily be misunderstood if they are not read against the background of the thinker's way of looking at things taken as a whole. There is always, too, the difference of standpoint and approach between the spiritual seeker or mystic who (sometimes) philosophises and the intellectual thinker who (sometimes or partly) mysticises. The one

starts from a spiritual or mystic experience or at the least an intuitive realisation and tries to express it and its connection with other spiritual or intuitive truth in the inadequate and too abstract language of the mind; he looks behind thought and expression for some spiritual or intuitive experience to which it may point and, if he finds none, he is apt to feel the thought, however intellectually fine, or the expression, however intellectually significant, as something unsubstantial, because without spiritual substance. The intellectual thinker starts from ideas and mentalised feelings and other mental or external phenomena and tries to reach the essential truth in or behind them; generally, he stops short at a mental abstraction or only a derivative mental realisation of something that is in its own nature other than mental. But if he has the true mystic somewhere in him, he will sometimes get beyond to at least flashes and glimpses. Is it not the compulsion of this approach (I mean the inadequacy of the method of intellectual philosophy, its fixation to the word and idea, while to the complete mystic, word and idea are useful symbols only or significative flash-lights) that kept McTaggart, as it keeps many, from the unfolding of the mystic within him? If the reviewer is right, that would be why he is abstract and dry, while what is beautiful and moving in his thought might be some light that shines through in spite of the inadequate means of expression to which philosophical thinking condemns us. However, subject to this rather lengthy caveat, I will try to deal with the extracted sentences or summarised thoughts you have placed before me in your letter.

Love the main occupation of the selves in absolute reality: This seems to me a little excessive. If instead of "the main occupation" it were said "an essential power", that might pass. I would myself say that bliss and oneness are the essential condition of the absolute reality, and love as the most characteristic dynamic power of bliss and oneness must support fundamentally and colour their activities; but the activities themselves may not be of one main kind but manifold in character.

Benevolence and sympathy: In mental experience benevolence and sympathy have to be distinguished from love; but it seems to me that beyond the dividing mind, where the true sense of oneness begins, these become at a higher intensity of their movement characteristic values of love. Benevolence becomes an intense compulsion imposed by love to seek always the good of the loved, sympathy becomes the feeling out of love to contain, participate in and take as part of one's own existence all the movements of the loved and all that concerns him.

Love is authentic and justifies itself completely whether its causes be great or trivial: That is not often true in human practice; for there the destiny of love and its justification depend very much as a rule (though not always) on the nature of the cause or object. For

the object of love is trivial in the sense of its being an inadequate instrument for the dynamic realisation of the sense of oneness which McTaggart says is the essence of love, then love is likely to be baulked of its fulfilment. Unless, of course, it is satisfied with existing, with spending itself in its own fundamental way on the loved without expecting any return for its self-expenditure, any mutual unification. Still, of love in its essence the statement may be true: but then it would point to the fact that Love at its origin is a self-existent force, an absolute, a transcendent (as I have put it), which does not depend upon the objects—it depends only on itself or only on the Divine; for it is a self-existent power of the Divine. If it were not self-existent, it would hardly be independent of the nature or reaction of its objects. It is partly what I mean when I speak of transcendent Love—though this is only one aspect of its transcendence. That self-existent transcendent Love spreading itself over all, turning everywhere to contain, embrace, unite, help, upraise towards love and bliss and oneness, becomes cosmic divine Love; intensely fixing itself on one or others to find itself, to achieve a dynamic unification or to reach here towards the union of the soul with the Divine, it becomes the individual divine Love. But there are unhappily its diminutions in the human mind, human vital, human physical; there the divine essence of Love easily becomes mixed with counterfeits, dimmed, concealed or lost in the twisted movements born of division and ignorance.

Love and self-reverence: It sounds very high, but also rather dry; this "emotion" in the lover does not seem to be very emotional, it is a hill-top syllogising far above the flow of any emotional urges. Self-reverence in this sense or in a deeper sense can come from Love, but it can come equally from a participation in Knowledge, in Power or anything else that one feels to be the highest good or else of the essence of the Highest. But the passion of love, the adoration of love can bring in a quite different, even an opposite emotion. Especially in love for the Divine or for one whom one feels to be divine, the Bhakta feels an intense reverence for the Loved, a sense of something of immense greatness, beauty or value and for himself a strong impression of his own comparative unworthiness and a passionate desire to *grow* into likeness with that which one adores. What does come very often with the onrush of Love is an exaltation, a feeling of a greatening within, of new powers and high or beautiful possibilities in one's nature or of an intensification of the nature; but that is not exactly self-reverence. There is a deeper self-reverence possible, a true emotion, a sense of the value and even the sacredness of the soul, even the mind, life, body as an offering or itself the temple for the inner presence of the Beloved.

These reactions are intimately connected with the fact that Love, when it is worthy of the name, is always a seeking for union, for

oneness, but also in its secret foundation it is a seeking, if sometimes only a dim groping for the Divine. Love in its depths is a contact of the Divine Possibility or Reality in oneself with the Divine Possibility or Reality in the loved. It is the inability to affirm or keep this character that makes human love either transient or baulked of its full significance or condemned to sink into a less exalted movement diminished to the capacity of the human receptacle. But there McTaggart brings in his saving clause, "When I love, I see the other not as he is now (and therefore really is not), but as he really is (that is, as he will be). The rest of it that "the other with all his faults is somehow infinitely good— at least for his friend" seems to me too mental to convey anything very definite from the standpoint of the spiritual inner values. But the formula quoted also is not over-clear. It means, I suppose, something like Vivekananda's distinction between the apparent Man and the real Man; or it coincides up to a point with the saying of one of the early teachers of Vedanta, Yajnavalkya, "Not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear (or, friend— for the wife is only the first of a list), but for the sake of the Self (the greater Self, the Spirit within) is she dear". But Yajnavalkya, a seeker of the one (not the plural) Absolute, would not have accepted the implication in McTaggart's phrase; he would have said that one must go beyond and eventually seek the Self not in the wife or friend—even though sought there for a time, but in its own self-existence. In any case there seems to be here an avowal that it is not the human being (what he now is) but the Divine or a portion of the Divine within (call it God if you will or call it Absolute) that is the object of the love. But the mystic would not be satisfied like McTaggart with that "will be",— would not consent to remain in love with the finite for the sake of an unrealised Infinite. He would insist on pushing on towards full realisation, towards finding the Divine in Itself or the Divine Manifest; he would not rest satisfied with the Divine unconscious of itself, unmanifested or only distantly *in posse*.

There is where the parallel with the Ishta Devata which you suggest would not hold; for the Ishta Devata on whom the seeker concentrates is a *conscious* Personality of the Divine answering to the needs of his own personality and showing to him as in a representative image what the Divine is or at least pointing him through itself to the Absolute. On the other side, when I spoke of the self-absorption of the Divine Force in its energising, I was trying to explain the possibility in a Divine Cosmic manifestation of this apparently inconscient Matter. I said that in the frontal movement there was something of the Divine that had thrown itself into material form with so much concentration that it became the motion and the form which the motion of Force creates and put all that was not that behind it,— even, but in a greater

degree and more permanently, as a man can concentrate and forget his own existence in what he is doing, seeing or making. In man himself, who is not inconscient, this appears in a different way; his frontal being is unaware of what is behind the surface personality and action, like the part of the actor's being which becomes the role and forgets entirely the other more enduring self behind the actor. But in either case there is a larger self behind, "a Conscient in things inconscient", which is aware both of itself and of the self-forgetting frontal form or creature. Does McTaggart recognise this conscious Divine within? He makes too little of this Absolute or Real Self which, as he yet sees, is within the unreal or less real appearance. His denial of the Divine comes from the insistence of his mind and vital temperament on the friend as he is, even though his higher mind may try to escape from that by the idea of what his friend will be; otherwise it is difficult to understand the stupendous exaggeration of his thesis that the love for friends is the *only* real thing in life and his unwillingness to give God a chance, lest that should take away the friend and leave the Divine in his place.

I do not quite seize what is his conception of the Absolute. How can it be said that a society (?) of distinct selves are collectively the Absolute ? If it is meant that where there is a union of conscious liberated selves there is the presence of the Divine and a certain manifestation is possible,—that is intelligible. Or if by society is meant only that the sum or totality of all distinct selves is the Divine and these distinct individual selves are portions of the Divine, that would be an intelligible (pantheistic) solution. Only, it would be a Divine All or some kind of Cosmic Self or Spirit rather than the Absolute. For if there is an Absolute—which intellectually one is not bound to believe except that something in the higher mind seems imperatively to ask for it or feel it is there—it must surely exist in its own absolute right, not constituted, not dependent for its existence on a collectivity of distinct selves, but self-existent. To the intellect such an Absolute may seem an indefinable *x* which it cannot grasp, but mystic or spiritual experience always leads to it and whatever may be the gate of experience through which one gets the first glimpse of it, it is there even though not fully grasped in that opening experience.

Your experience of it was, you say, that of an irruption of the Infinite into the finite—of a greater Power descending upon you or uplifting you to itself. That indeed is what it is always to the spiritual experience—and that is why I speak of it as the Transcendent. It reveals itself as such a descending and uplifting Power or a descending and uplifting Love—or Light, Peace, Bliss, Consciousness, Presence; it is not limited by its manifestation in the finite,—one feels it, the Peace, the Power, Love, Light or Bliss or the Presence in which all these are,

to be a self-existent infinity, not something constituted by or limited to our first sight of it here. McTaggart's love of friends remained the *only* real thing for him, I suppose, he had not this glimpse. But once this irruption has taken place, this descent and uplifting, that is bound to become in the end the one thing real, for by that alone can the rest find its own lasting greater reality. It is the descent of the Divine Consciousness and the ascent or uplifting into it of which we speak in our Yoga. All else can only hold, make good, fulfil itself if it can lift itself to be a part of this divine realisation or of its manifestation, and, to do that, it must accept a great transformation and perfection. But the central realisation must be the one central aim, and it is that realisation only which will make other things, all that is intended to be made part of it, divinely possible.

21-1-1932

IV

CANALISATION OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Of course, K's view about the canalisation of Niagara is my standpoint also. But for the human mind it is difficult to get across the border between mind and spirit without making a forceful rush or push along one line only and that must be some line of pure experience in which, especially if it is the bhakti way, one gets easily swallowed up in the rapids (did not Chaitanya at last disappear in the waters?) and goes no farther. The first thing is to break into the spiritual consciousness, any part of it, anyhow and anywhere, afterwards one can explore the country, to which exploration there can hardly be a limit; one is always going higher and higher, getting wider and wider; but there is a certain intense ecstasy about the first complete plunge which is extraordinarly seizing. It is not only the Bhakta's rapture, but the Jnani's plunge into the Brahma-Nirvana or Brahmananda or release into the still eternity of the Self that is of that seizing and absorbing character — it does not look at first as if one could or would care or need to get beyond into anything else. One cannot find fault with the Sannyasi lost in his *laya* or the Bhakta lost in his ecstasy; they remain there probably because they are constituted for that and it is the limit of their leap. But all the same it has always appeared to me that it is a stage and not the end; I subscribe fully to the canalisation of the Niagara.

Adhikara is of course a matter of the psychology and the soul and the nature, it has nothing to do with any outer or artificial standards.

Then as to the Avatar and the symbols. There is, it seems to me, a cardinal error in the modern insistence on the biographical and historical, that is to say, the external factuality of the Avatar, the incidents of his outward life. What matters is the spiritual Reality, the Power, the Influence that come with him or that he brought down by his action and his existence. First of all what matters in a spiritual man's life is not what he did or what he was outside to the view of the men of his time (that is what historicity or biography comes to, does it not?) but what he was and did within; it is only that that gives any value to his outer life at all. It is the inner life that gives to the outer any power it may have, and the inner life of a spiritual man is something vast and full and, at least, in the great figures, so crowded and teeming with significant things that no biographer or historian could ever hope to seize it all or tell it. Whatever is significant in the outward life is so because it is symbolical of what has been realised within himself and one may go on and say that the inner life also is only significant as an expression, a living representation of the movement of the Divinity behind it. That is why we need not enquire whether the stories about Krishna were transcripts, however loose, of his acts on earth or are symbol-representations of what Krishna was and is for men, of the Divinity expressing itself in the figure of Krishna. Buddha's renunciation, his temptation by Mara, his enlightenment under the Bo-tree are such symbols, so too the virgin birth, the temptation in the desert, the crucifixion of Christ are such symbols, true by what they signify, even if they are not scrupulously recorded historical events. The outward facts as related of Christ or Buddha are not much more than what has happened in many other lives — what is it that gives Buddha or Christ their enormous place in the spiritual world? It was because something manifested through them that was more than any outward event or any teaching. The verifiable historicity gives us very little of that, yet it is that only that matters. So it seems to me that K is fundamentally right in what he says of the symbols. To the physical mind only the words and facts and acts of a man matter; to the inner mind it is the spiritual happenings in him that matter. Even the teachings of Buddha and Christ are spiritually true not as mere mental teachings but as the expression of spiritual states or happenings in them which by their life on earth they made possible (or even dynamically potential) in others. Also evidently sectarian walls are a mistake, an accretion, a mental limiting of the Truth which may serve a mental, but not a spiritual purpose. The Avatar, the Guru have no meaning if they do not stand for the Eternal; it is that that makes them what they are for the worshipper or the disciple.

It is also a fact that nobody can give you any spiritual realisation which does not come from something in one's true Self, it is always the

Divine who reveals himself and the Divine is within you; so He who reveals must be felt in your own heart. Your query here simply suggests that this is a truth which can be misinterpreted or misused, but so can every spiritual truth if it is taken hold of in the wrong way—and the human mind has a great penchant for taking Truth by the wrong end and arriving at falsehood. All statements about these things are, after all, mental statements and at the mercy of any mind that interprets them. There is a snag in every such statement created not by the Truth that it expresses but by the mind's interpretation. The snag (what you call the slip) lies not in the statement itself which is quite correct, but in the deflected sense in which it may be taken by ignorant or self-sufficient minds enamoured of their ego. Many have put forward the "own self" gospel without taking the trouble to see whether it is the true Self, have pitted the ignorance of their "own self" —in fact, their ego—against the knowledge of the Guru or made their ego or something that flattered and fostered it the Ishta Devata. The snag in the worship of Guru or Avatar is a sectarian bias which insists on the Representative or the Manifestation but loses sight of the Manifested; the snag in the emphasis on the other side is the ignoring of the need or belittling of the value of the Representative or Manifestation and the substitution not of the true Self one in all but of one's "own self" as the guide and light. How many have done that here and lost the way through the pull of the magnified ego which is one of the great perils on the way! However that does not lessen the truth of the things said by K,—only in looking at the many sides of Truth one must put each thing in its place in the harmony of the All which is for us the expression of of the Supreme.

8-2-1936

V

SUPERSTITION

It is quite true that the word "superstition" has been habitually used as a convenient club to beat down any belief that does not agree with the ideas of the materialistic reason, that is to say, the physical mind dealing with the apparent law of physical process and seeing no further. It has also been used to dismiss ideas and beliefs not in agreement with one's own idea of what is the rational norm of supraphysical truths as well. For many ages man cherished beliefs that implied a force behind which acted on principles unknown to the physical mind and beyond the witness of the outward reason and the senses. Science

came in with a method of knowledge which extended the evidence of this outer field of consciousness and thought that by this method all existence would become explicable. It swept away at once without examination all the ancient beliefs as so many "superstitions"—true, half-true or false, all went into the dust-bin in one impartial sweep, because they did not rely on the method of physical Science and lay outside its data or were or seemed incompatible with its standpoint. Even in the field of supraphysical experience only so much was admitted as could give a mentally rational explanation of itself according to a certain range of ideas—all the rest, everything that seemed to demand an occult, mystic or below-the-surface origin to explain it was put aside as so much superstition. Popular beliefs that were the fruit sometimes of imagination but sometimes also of a traditional empirical knowledge or of a right instinct shared naturally the same fate. That all this was a hasty and illegitimate operation, itself based on the "superstition" of the all-sufficiency of the new method which really applies only to a limited field, is now becoming more and more evident. I agree with you that the word superstition is one which should be used either not at all or with great caution. It is evidently an anachronism to apply it to beliefs not accepted by the form of religion one happens oneself to follow or favour.

The growing reversal of opinion with regard to many things that were then condemned but are now coming into favour once more is very striking. In addition to the instances you quote a hundred others might be added. One does not quite know why a belief in graphology should be condemned as irrational or superstitious; it seems to me quite rational to believe that a man's handwriting is the result of or consistent with his temperament and nature and, if so, it may very well prove on examination to be an index of character. It is now a known fact that each man is an individual by himself with his own peculiar formation different from others and made by minute variations in the general human plan,—this is true of small physical characteristics, it is evidently equally true of psychological characteristics; it is not unreasonable to suppose a correlation between the two. On that basis cheiromancy may very well have a truth in it, for it is a known fact that the lines in an individual hand are different from the lines in others and that this, as well as differences of physiognomy, may carry in it psychological indications is not impossible. The difficulty for minds trained under rationalistic influences becomes greater when these lines or the data of astrology are interpreted as signs of destiny, because modern rationalism resolutely refused to admit that the future was determined or could be determinable. But this looks more and more like one of the "superstitions" of the modern mind, a belief curiously contradictory of the fundamental notions of Science. For Science has believed,

at least until yesterday, that everything is determined in Nature and it attempts to find the laws of that determination and to predict future physical happenings on that basis. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that there are unseen connections determining human events in the world and that future happening may therefore be predictable. Whether it can be done on the lines of astrology or cheiromancy is a matter of enquiry and one does not get any further by dismissing the possibility with a summary denial. The case for astrology is fairly strong; a case seems to exist for cheiromancy also.

On the other hand, it is not safe to go too hastily in the other direction. There is the opposite tendency to believe everything in these fields and not keep one's eyes open to the element of limitation or error in these difficult branches of knowledge—it was the excess of belief that helped to discredit them, because their errors were patent. It does not seem to me established that the stars determine the future—though that is possible, but it does look as if they indicate it—or rather, some certitudes and potentialities of the future. Even the astrologers admit that there is another element of determination in man himself which limits the field of astrological prediction and may even alter many of its ascertained results. There is a very tangled and difficult complex of forces making up any determination of things in the world and when we have disentangled one thread of the skein and follow it we may get many striking results, but we cannot rely on it as the one wholly reliable clue. The mind's methods are too rigid and conveniently simple to unravel the true or whole truth whether of the Reality or of its separate phenomena.

I would accept your statement about the possibility of knowing much about a man from observations of a small part of his being, physical or psychological, but I think it is to go too far to say that one can reconstruct a whole man from one minute particle of a hair. I should say from my knowledge of the complexity and multiplicity of elements in the human being that such a procedure would be hazardous and would leave a large part of the Unknown overshadowing the excessive certitude of this inferential structure.

I suppose we cannot go so far as to deny that there is such a thing as superstition—a fixed blind belief without any ground in something that is quite unsound and does not hang together. The human mind readily claps on such beliefs to things which can be or are in themselves true, and this is a mixture which very badly confuses the search for knowledge. But precisely because of this mixture, because somewhere behind the superstition or not far off from it there is very usually some

real truth, one ought to be cautious in using the word or sweeping away with it as a convenient broom the true, the partly true and the unfounded together and claiming that the bare ground left is the only truth of the matter.

17-1-1937

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When I wrote that sentence about "a fixed blind belief", I was not thinking really of religious beliefs, but of common popular ideas and beliefs. Your feeling about the matter, in any case, is quite sound. One can and ought to believe and follow one's own path without condemning or looking down on others for having beliefs different from those one thinks or sees to be the best or the largest in truth. The spiritual field is many sided and full of complexities and there is room for an immense variety of experiences. Besides, all mental egoism,—and spiritual egoism—has to be surmounted and this sense of superiority should therefore not be cherished.

21-1-1937

PS. A sincere, whole-hearted and one-pointed following of this Yoga should lead to a level where these rigid mental divisions do not exist for they are mental walls put round one part of Truth and Knowledge so as to cut it off from the rest, but this view from above the mind is comprehensive and everything falls into its place in the whole.

VI

SPIRITUAL VALUE OF POETRY

It won't do to put excessive and sweeping constructions on what I write, otherwise it is easy to misunderstand its essence. I said there was no reason why poetry of a *spiritual character* (not any poetry like Verlaine or Swinburne or Baudelaire's) should bring *no realisation at all*. That did not mean that poetry is a major means of realisation of the Divine. I did not say that it would lead us to the Divine or that anyone had achieved the Divine through poetry or that our "new poetry" can lead us straight into the sanctuary.

My position is perfectly clear and there is nothing in it against reason or common-sense. The word has a power—even the ordinary written word has a power. If it is an inspired word it has still more power. What kind of power or power for what depends on the nature

of the inspiration and the theme and the part of the being it touches. If it is the Word itself,—as in certain utterances of the great Scriptures, Veda, Upanishads, Gita,—it may well have a power for a spiritual impulse uplifting even certain kinds of realisation: to say that cannot contradict human experience.

The Vedic poets regarded their poetry as *mantras*, they were the vehicles of realisation for others. Naturally, these were illuminations, not the settled and permanent realisation that is the goal of Yoga—but they could be steps on the way or at least lights on the way. I have had in former times many illuminations, even initial realisations while pondering over verses of the Upanishads or the Gita. You yourself know that some of your poems deeply moved people who had the tendency towards spiritual things. Many have got openings into realisation while reading passages of the *Arya*—which are not poetry, have not the power of spiritual poetry—but it shows all the more that the word is not without power even for the things of the spirit. In all ages spiritual seekers have expressed their aspirations or their experiences in poetry, and it has helped themselves and others. Therefore there is nothing absurd in my assigning a spiritual or psychic value and effectiveness to poetry of a psychic or spiritual character.

Sri Aurobindo—A New Age of Mystical Poetry

I

Every poet is in essence a Platonist. No poet but feels he is serving a sacred mission beyond his own self, the mission of some perfect beauty waiting to be revealed. He may be as poignantly personal and fired with the body's hunger as Sappho and Catullus, yet the urge to his lyrical self-expression is not merely the joys and griefs of a personal libido: it is also an aspiration for a flawless magic of verbal form. Sappho and Catullus were not lovers grown vocal and nothing more: they were pre-eminently idealists of speech, their passion was for an irreproachable word-music and they perpetuated their loves in a language whose phrases and rhythms gave their personal desires a faultless mould wrought by a functioning of the senses, the feelings and the thoughts as though some concealed godhead were taking body through each poem. By answering that mysterious call of inspiration and not just the voice of Atthis or Lesbia, Sappho and Cattullus wrote poetry. Whether they were intellectually conscious of serving a divinity in which they believed, is immaterial. All that was necessary for art was that they should be conscious of an overwhelming urge to fashion a piece of utter and unsurpassable beauty.

We have actually in Lucretius a poet who was an atheist and yet embodied the godlike presence which makes poetry the revelation that it is. Such a paradox is possible because inspiration does not depend on the intellect's arguing for God and against God: inspiration is beyond the mind's logical machine, and if there is the right susceptibility in the depths of a man's nature, it rushes through, no matter how averse to religious belief may be his outward mind. The unreligious concepts of the mind it seizes as though with superhuman hands and builds out of them "topless towers" of loveliness. What is more, it envelops these concepts with a sort of cosmic grandeur that only differs from the infinitude haunting the religious spirit by being dark instead of luminous, an empire of everlasting night and death instead of an empire of everlasting day and life. Lucretius's *summum bonum* is the acceptance of that unconscious eternity to which our flesh returns after the brief interval of living, the

immense inanimate within which our few feverish years seem to make a small noise and cease to be. A profound awe, a solemn sense of universal Nature blindly and inexorably at work in its immeasurable reaches of space and time, pervade his philosophical epic like a religion *manqué*, even as the presence of an "unweeting" power, absolute and endless in "crass casualty", is perceived in the world of Thomas Hardy. The atheisms of Lucretius and Hardy are really special forms, heroic or morbid according to temperament, of the mystical belief all ages have had in an utter Unknown that rules above the desires and imaginings of men the totality of things: the Greeks called it *Ananke*, the Fate and the Necessity that is greater than even the Gods. Steeped in the conception of that dark Supreme, poets like Hardy and Lucretius create their masterpieces and disclose in spite of themselves where inspiration really comes from. It is also significant that even atheists like them break forth on occasion into chants about living forces more than human, one divine Spirit or many divine or at least supernatural presences. Thus Lucretius at his most inspired hails as all-fostering Venus, "delight of Gods and men", the procreative energy that is abroad in Nature; he invokes it as a Goddess to aid his exploration of "the secret ways of things". Hardy brings in a whole troop of presiding powers, spirits of pity and irony pressing onward from above the Napoleonic drama depicted in *The Dynasts*. An instinct of the true source of the magnificence that is poetic expression appears to have compelled both the Roman poet and the English to conjure up an atmosphere of the Divine and the Superhuman around their highest moments, an instinct aligning itself with the inward impulsion that led Homer to appeal to his *Thea* and Milton to cry "Sing, Heavenly Muse".

A sense of the mysterious Divine is always leaping out in this manner through great poetry. In general, it is the unformulated background whose presence is felt primarily in the perfection of word making a sheer absolute, an unsurpassable ultimate of beauty which can be perceived as much in what is intellectually understood to be an atheistic passage as in one that yields mystical meaning. Because of the touch of this absolute and ultimate we respond to poetry as to a statement of incontrovertible truth, an expression that compels belief as if by a God's dictate, even though what is stated and expressed may run quite counter to our own accepted notions about the universe. We may be scientifically-minded and see nothing beyond a swirl of electrons; still when A. E. sounds his crystal note of the Undying Ones that are not clay, we feel caught up into a realm of crowned souls, a world of wizardry uncharted by Planck and Schroedinger. And paradoxical though it may seem, our firmest faith in A.E.'s occult "Candle of Vision" will not drive back the shadow that falls upon us from Housman's exquisite agnosticism: like a final truth the omnipotence of the

dust encompasses us through his lyrical inevitabilities of despair and denial. Every mood that finds faultless poetic Form lords it over us like a deity. What invests it with that gospel-glow is not merely our willingness to make-believe. The true aesthetic response is no playful assent to a pleasing verbal legerdemain; it is a seizure of the being by a magic and a mystery that has no scar of defect, it is a surrender by us, willy-nilly, to an assault from some realm of archetypes. In order to realise the assault, we do not need a Gabriel's trumpet like D. H. Lawrence's cry to the Mexican eagle;

> You never look at the sun with your two eyes.
> Only the inner eye of your scorched broad breast
> Looks straight at the sun.

Poetry in a subdued style will serve equally. If we take those lines from W. H. Davies's poem to the moon—

> Though there are birds that sing this night
> With thy white beams across their throats—

it is inadequate to say we have merely a sense of pleasure produced by significant sounds arranged in a cunning pattern. We may even call that pleasure, as I. A. Richards does, a rest, a balance, an integration of our impulses so that they are no more in conflict among themselves. We still leave unmeasured the effect of Davies's subtly beautiful picture of the moon inspiring the nightingales. Indeed there seems no point in speaking of beauty if the terms "pleasure, rest, balance, integration" are enough. Beauty in its full and final meaning implies a Form through which some absolute perfection impinges on us. Virginia Woolf, in her biography of Roger Fry, quotes from a letter by that famous art-critic to Robert Bridges: "One can only say that those who experience the aesthetic emotion feel it to have a peculiar quality of 'reality' which makes it a matter of infinite importance in their lives. Any attempt I might make to explain this would probably land me in the depths of mysticism". Modern art-critics fight shy of those depths, yet they cannot help hovering on their verge. Even Richards, with his equilibrium of impulses, is pointing to a quality in art which lifts us for the moment above the turmoil of want and desire, striving and seeking and frustration, and which gives the feeling of an ultimate wherein we can repose with a positive peace distinguished from inactive irresolution or unconsciousness: in short, a quality which is a kind of second cousin to that of mystical experience. Unless we describe poetry as a window opening through Form on the Divine, on a realm of archetypes, we shall never convey accurately the secret of its spell.

Yes, through Form and not Matter. But by Form we must not understand exclusively the turn of phrase and the movement of rhythm: the language-mould is all in all but it comes fused with a cast of consciousness—a form of vision and a form of emotion. Metrical speech without that vivid cast is the ghost of poetry Neither does mere substance of consciousness, however weighty or recondite, make on us the art-impact that is revelation: the consciousness has to take a particular pattern before it can become the poetic word. The philosophy of Epicurus is the substance, the matter, of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura,* but not till it has been stamped with the Lucretian sight and feeling, no less than shaped into the Lucretian word and rhythm, is the force of the archetypal received by us. Form in that fourfold sense has the archetypal touch which Matter by itself lacks just as much as do emptily resounding language and mechanically modulated metre. And it is because Form is the priest of the poetic revelation that all substance of consciousness, even the most profane, can be brought by the poet to stand before us like a godhead which will brook no "Nay" to its utterance. What is the source of poetry's convincing charm? Not the ideas expressible by the intellect and endlessly debatable by the logical faculty but a gleam and image, a hint and echo of some reality living hidden from us in its own self-world of absolute loveliness and holding there a manifold harmony of truth which our ideas cut up into a thousand conflicting aspects. As soon as flawless Form is achieved, that hidden reality shines out; it cares not if the Matter of a poem be spiritual or secular, God-affirming or God-denying, covered with holy incense or reckless rose-leaves. If somehow the path of inspiration keeps clear in a poet, the archetypes journey along it and the mysterious Divine trysts with the human.

Explaining Art as a journey and a tryst by the Highest, we are led—while we depreciate by no jot the perfection of poems that are concerned with things mortal—to prepare a special place for the *lyra mystica.* For, if the archetypal touch is everywhere through the Form of poetry, the mystic who invokes the Muse to convert his intuitions into song becomes her instrument in a double way: both Matter and Form are lit up by the archetypal. Openly, and not through themes that are no more than human, the Divine presses forward through the mystic's inspiration to lay hands on the world. Not the acme of the fictitious in the poet's mind, calling for a peak of make-believe in ours, but an immediate revealing of what is revealed remotely by other kinds of verse: this is mystical inspiration. When the Matter is remote from mysticism, the poetic value gets no less: the Form determines that value. But provided the Form remains equally intense, a mystical immediacy in the Matter renders poetry a revelation *in excelsis* of the Real and the True. All great poetry has a body that is divine, but mostly the soul

of it is divine with a human mask; the mystical poet's work is the unmasking of the divine spirit in that divine body.

The unmasking, however, is no simple and uniform act. Nor is it determined alone by a poet's individual style. Herbert has a religious simplicity, at once piquant and passionate; Crashaw a rich sensuousness kindling into spirituality; Donne a nervous intricate power troubling the Unknown; Vaughan a half-obscure half-bright straining beyond thought into mystical vision; Patmore a pointed polished ardour of the intellect for the veiled Wonder; Francis Thompson a restless and crowded and colourful heat of response to "the many-splendoured Thing". All of them have flights of fine poetry, but their styles, standing out one from another, have yet a common element: the mask on the face of the Divine Spirit is diversely thinned and made translucent instead of being removed. Their unmasking is indirect. Only at rare moments something of the sheer reality shows itself. These poets have considerable vividness of mystical meaning: what they do not have enough is the language and rhythm of the mystical planes. The mystical planes are classified by Sri Aurobindo broadly as occult, psychic and spiritual. The occult language and rhythm have something of a Coleridgean, Blakean or Yeatsian stamp. They are not always instinct with the Divine, they have often a Celtic atmosphere, weird or fairylike. But when the mystical vision and emotion possess them, they transmit baffling buried heavens of Beauty like Yeats's

> Throne above throne where in half sleep,
> Their swords upon their iron knees,
> Brood her high lonely mysteries.

The psychic speech has a deeply delicate radiance moving the heart to some far sweetness or suffusing it with an exquisite ecstasy of God's love. Its yearning cry is heard in Blake's

> Ah, sunflower! weary of Time

as well as in Geoffrey Faber's

> O moon, that your light had lips and hands!

while the note of fulfilment steals into Robert Nichols's picture of "the Secret Garden" when the unseen gardener goes through it:

> Humbled and hushed and happy falls each bird.

Vaughan hints the psychic plane in his image of the paradise felt by him in childhood:

> That shady city of palm trees.

The spiritual inspiration, as distinguished from the occult and the psychic, has a wide-winging power: Sri Aurobindo calls it "overhead" because it arrives as if by a descent from spaces of light above the mind-level. Often it gets mixed with planes that are but mental: then its typical afflatus gets considerably subdued and comes out in no more than a few scattered breaths. Read carefully Vaughan's

> I see them walking in an air of glory,
> Whose light doth trample on my days,
> My days which are at best but dull and hoary,
> Mere glimmerings and decays.

The impression as a whole is of an excellent thinning and translucence of the Divine's mask, but a steadier scrutiny unravels three strains of poetry. The third line is nothing save a thinking-out, an ideative statement just lifted from prose-level by a stir of sight and a musical breath. The first and last lines have a more felicitous, more intense articulation: still they are the imaginative mind tossing its ideas into the Unknown, theirs is not the true freedom, the large radiance, the direct throb of what is above imaginative mysticism. Only the second line of the quatrain—"whose light doth trample on my days"—breaks somewhat loose from the tether of thought and contacts a consciousness more than mental. Perhaps the really accurate description of it is not that it ceases to be thought but that its thinking is taken up into a spiritual clarity and amplitude. This is more than a thinning or translucence of the mask: it begins to remove it, though the removal is partial, just by one-fourth, we might say. Beyond this liberation from mental into spiritual thought a purer mystical intensity awaits the poet, but it is no more than once in a long while that English singers attain it. A magnificent unmasking by one-half is done by Vaughan himself:

> I saw Eternity the other night
> Like a great ring of pure and endless light
> All calm as it was bright.

The thing-in-itself is sensed, the spiritual mystery is mirrored in an eye from which all effort of thought has fallen away, the effort that is the mask between the human and the Divine. It may not yet be the most intimate expression of the mystical: the intimacy grows as the thought-effort falls further and further away, but here it has sunk sufficiently far to let the Spirit disclose in some super-conscious ether of keen illumination its own being-stuff through a significant symbol of the complete and the unending. We feel the power of the disclosure not

only in the vision and the word but also in the rhythm. The rhythm has a vibrant wideness belonging to a consciousness that is not human though caught in language through a human medium.

Poetry packed with a mask-removing quality is holy scripture in a special way. Whatever wakes in us a feeling of the Divine is scriptural and yet there is a sense in which the ancient Vedas and Upanishads stand apart from the other bibles of the world. The latter have a good deal of moving God-intoxicated lyricism, also a mass of forceful God-haunted meditation, but the note of the Indian *Rishis* is infrequent in them as in the majority of mystical poetry written hitherto in English or for that matter any language save Sanskrit. No poet has proved a constant channel of its peculiar intensity. It is sporadic, almost accidental, in English literature. Where, however, it appears, it bears an unmistakable halo. It may not mention even the name of God, it may speak of things that lie about us every day, and yet we recognise in it a spiritual creativity of the most puissant order. Put beside lines with a similar drift of meaning but drawn from less supernormal "planes" of consciousness, it is as if a prophet instead of his ministers, wonderfully gifted though they might be, stood before us and laid a transfiguring hand in benediction on our heads. A great minister is what we meet in Browning's

Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of.

Fine poetry, this, and suggestive of the Unknown through a symbol of night; but it is the poetry of imaginative thought, it does not come sheer from a mystical plane. Harindranath Chattopadhya's

The silence of the midnight many-starred

has a more ample "atmospheric" touch; nevertheless, it is a touch of something splendid and secret rather than concretely mystical or spiritual. Wordsworth's much simpler line,

The silence that is in the starry sky

conveys the unknown and the ineffable in an intense intimacy, a state of high trance seems to be made actual, a lofty consciousness glimmering beyond mere imaginative thought makes its presence felt because both the expression and the rhythm come straight from a Vedic and Upanishadic source. A Rishi or a prophet is this line, the Divine in the act of unmasking.

Though not so impressive as the verse quoted from Vaughan it has a profounder vibration. If Vaughan's unmasking took place in a high

ether of keen illumination, Wordsworth's is part of a yet higher domain from the mystical standpoint: a more penetrating spirituality is here, not keenly illuminative so much as raptly intuitive, not shedding the Divine's radiance upon us but rather making us enter into it and dwell in its midst. What may obscure from us its extraordinary revelation is precisely that entry and indwelling: the light that is above the mind is here like home, a natural and familiar thing: the line makes no "display" of the Spirit's marvellousness, it simply gives it to us with an utterly unassuming intimacy. I do not mean that the intuitive speech is always divorced from richness: it can have a rich body as in another night-vision of Chattopadhyaya's:

> The diamond dimness of the domed air.

It can, however, dispense with the impressive and complex, since its essence is independent of that quality. The same intuitively vibrant simplicity as in the line of Wordsworth already quoted is in the one with which he companions it:

> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

Without openly saying anything, it presents to us through a familiar symbol a peace of in-drawn power of some lordly consciousness stretching wide across earth's being and into the Beyond or standing as a firm imperturbable intermediary between the terrestrial and the transcendental. Perhaps equally poetic are Abercrombie's

> Tall hills that stand in weather-blinded trances
> As if they heard, drawn upward and held there,
> Some god's eternal tune,

but the direct spiritual rhythmic turn is absent. Apt and euphonious language carrying a mystically pointed thought and image is achieved by Abercrombie: what Wordsworth has done is to catch, in the very rhythm of the line, "some god's eternal tune" instead of speaking about it. The result is that the sleep he does speak of has the stuff of some god's experience while Abercrombie's weather-blinded trances are only a felicitous thought-reflection of the godlike.

It is the rhythm that most decisively distinguishes one plane of conscious being from another. For, rhythm is not just a play of ordered sound; it is the thrill of the consciousness translating itself into sound-vibration. That thrill gives us more than the mood: it gives too the psychological level on which the mood arises. And the poetic outbursts of the various levels differ not in degree but in kind. Difference in

degree would imply poetic superiority and inferiority, whereas the fact is that each level can have its perfection of poetic outburst. Difference in kind enables us to see how the quotation from Wordsworth, without necessarily being superior *qua* poetry to that from Abercrombie, is more close to the hidden Divine by deriving its rhythm from a more spiritual plane. And it is also by a different kind of rhythm, more even than of vision and expression, that we perceive how that line of Wordsworth's is still not the intensest spirituality. The Divine is unmasked by it three-fourths and not whole. Beyond the intuitively intimate, there remains the complete identity. Poetry can descend into us from a level where the spiritual light does not merely carry us into the midst of the deific but makes us one with it. Then we have an expansion of the meaning to a supreme massiveness of immeasurable suggestion, an endlessness of overtone and undertone as though the line which seems to terminate went really sounding on from everlasting to everlasting because what it embodies is, without any mask at all, the Divine, the Deathless, the Infinite. When on a sudden a sonnet of Shakespeare's breaks into that extraordinary phrase:

> the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,

our mind loses its customary bearings and flounders in a strange element we can scarcely plumb. The phrase is a grand intrusion in Shakespeare, the rhythm and rapture of another world than his tense quivering sonorities of sensation and passion. Not that those sonorities are absent or that a mystical idea deeper than any he was otherwise capable of has made its appearance. The phrase has a fathomlessness of word-suggestion and sound-suggestion other than the significant breadth and vivid plangency of not only his usual inspiration but also of lines like ,

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we may.

This is as penetrating in thought, the idea of it moves as puissantly upon our pulses: what it lacks is the immense profundity and wide supernatural presence which the words about the prophetic world-soul possess. The poetry is equally perfect, yet its plane of inspiration is not quite the same as of the Dreamer of things to come. There is something in common—Shakespeare's habitual thinking with his senses and his nerves and his entrails—but, merging in it or absorbing it, an immediacy of some spiritual vastitude is there, whose vibration of consciousness is dissimilar to what is native to the thought-thrill and

the passion-gusto that are Shakespeare's wont. The unmasking of the secret Divine is direct instead of indirect and the revelatory impulse is from a plane where the Spirit stands wholly bare. If we can hold the "feel" and rhythm of it intensely within us, we shall distinguish that utter "wholeness" from the high spirit-stuffed ideation of Frederic Myers's urge to

> Leap from the universe and plunge in Thee

or Wordsworth's apostrophe to the unclouded soul of innocent clairvoyant childhood—

> Thou over whom thy immortality
> Broods like the Day,

as well as from that astonishing spirit-illumined line of Rimbaud's:

> Millions d'oiseaux d'or, O futur vigueur! —

a line whose prophetic superhuman *élan* is perhaps just caught in the rendering:

> Millions of golden birds, O vigour unborn!

Shakespeare's accidental unmasking of the Divine by a Word one with some cosmic Truth-Consciousness exceeds as spiritual poetry the large magnificence deepening into mystery that we contact in even that Wordsworthian Being

> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.

Wordsworth seems here on the verge of the unmasking by identity; only a certain difference in the basic rhythm keeps the verse Spirit-intuitive instead of Spirit-identical. Possibly I am wrong, since it is very difficult to mark shades in a field so little explored, and Wordsworth here may be employing the accent which is at the top of the Vedic and Upanishadic grade and which the *Rishis* called the *Mantra*. There is, however, no doubt that the Mantra is uttered by a contemporary Indian poet writing in English in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, Dilip Kumar Roy, when he coins that phrase about God's guardianship:

> His sentinel love broods o'er the universe.

A modern English poet who died too young and whose work though published awaits the recognition it deserves utters it also through a

vision of the grandiose triviality of the Cosmos in comparison to the unmanifest Divine:

> This patter of time's marring steps across the solitude
> Of Truth's abidingness, Self-blissful and alone.

It was John Chadwick, known to his friends in India as "Arjava" who wrote those profoundly haunting lines. A disciple of Sri Aurobindo's he drew at several places in his work from the planes which his Master is the first to embody *en masse* in a poetic language that stands on a par with the plenary apocalypse of the Vedas and Upanishads and surpasses it in an application of the luminous look not only to what is beyond the world and calls the soul thither but also to what the soul can call down from there to transform and fulfil earth-life.

II

Sri Aurobindo's mystical inspiration is a New Age of poetry. The New Age consists to some extent in a fuller emergence of the occult and the psychic, either pure or mingled with the mind's thought-stuff; to a greater extent in a blending of the occult, the psychic and the mysticised mental with the overhead afflatus; to the largest extent in the overhead afflatus sheer and undisguised, rising higher and higher towards the *Mantra* and frequently attaining it. Everywhere, Sri Aurobindo brings out living symbols from the mystical planes—a concrete contact with the Divine's presence. Even when realities that are not openly divine are viewed, the style is of a direct knowledge, direct feeling, direct rhythm from an inner or upper poise: the mundane scene and the supra-mundane principalities and powers are given their image and value and secret life-throb as realised from a consciousness aware directly of the supreme Spirit. That consciousness covers all phenomena with significances and suggestions which the mere mind cannot adequately gauge. It is necessary, therefore, for us readers to develop our aesthetic sense to a pitch subtler than in our normal response to poetry; else we shall often get no more than a run of disconnected flashes or, worse still, a jostle of grandiose abstractions; in either case we shall miss the concrete revelation, the living actuality. A two-fold method of approach is desirable. There must be as much as possible a stilling of ourselves, an indrawn hush ready to listen to the super-normal speech; and we must help the hush to absorb successfully the new tone by reading the verse aloud. All poetry requires to be read aloud for the final force of its meaning to go home and the deepest implications to be evoked. But in Sri Aurobindo's work the ear's

attention is all the more needed because we have not merely to get out of him the subtle secret of his meaning : we have also to get something which will convey to us a "feel" of reality without the meaning being adequately grasped by our mind. His poetry is drawn from regions so far behind or beyond the human level that the mind is frequently baffled and even when it sees the drift of the significance it fails to hold it enough to experience the concreteness of what is implied. To experience that substantiality the rhythm is of paramount help, for it makes the state of consciousness that is a-thrill in the poem live and vibrate within us, however difficult it may be for the intellect to pierce into that state. The substantiality, the harmony and consistency, the massed grandeur of the many-sided mystical vision and experience disclose themselves with a seizing directness when the poem is read aloud—a seizing directness which is likely on occasion to be absolutely absent if only the eye dwells on the words and notes their meaning without letting in their haunting body of sound. The sound of mystical poetry, especially of the overhead order, is three-fourths of its efficacy : hence the old custom of audibly uttering the *Mantra* in order to liberate in one's being the godhead held within the words. This is not to say that spiritual poetry is glorious gibberish—it has a massive vision and an ample meaning, but the main gate of entry for these things into us is the rhythm, the sound-reflex of their hidden life-throb, their inner force of existence. Once the rhythm has transmitted to us that throb and that force, the eye will open wider and wider and our thought begin to shape itself according to the truth of the Spirit.

The ear's importance can be easily shown by reading a stanza like the following from Sri Aurobindo's quantitative* Alcaics, *Jivanamukta* first with the eye alone and then loudly :

> 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.

Something in the vitality of the style is felt to build for us more than a philosophical structure, yet the full lift and ecstasy gets clipped,

* The quantitative system adopted by Sri Aurobindo founds itself in the view that a syllable's mass quantitatively increases both by the intrinsic length of a vowel and the weight of stress. Stress in English cannot be ignored ; it must be the main support of a foot. But together with it the intrinsic long, even if unstressed, must be given full voice-value. Their various combinations with of course a basic pattern subsisting subtly behind the variety, must be reckoned the genuine English quantitative metre. There is no place in English, except in rare cases, for a quantitative increase due to a cluster of consonants in a word, much less to any cluster following a word : the stress switches away the voice too much from all unstressed syllables that are not intrinsic longs, to let any appreciable quantity accumulate.

so to speak, unless we roll out the lines with a deliberate in-toning. The slowly breaking suspense at the start, the sudden speeding up, the strange mixture of calm widening and intense penetrating, the grave and ample revealing movement, the tremendous tranced poise—all these become a profound sensation to the soul when the words ring forth in the spaces of consciousness. A latent faculty deeper than thought and imagination is struck awake. The stresses, quantities, vowel-adjustments, consonant-combinations become instruments in the hands of an overhead inspiration to create in us a rhythm of being, an emotional vibration, a soul-stir that echo the self-experience of a divine plane. That self-experience lives most strongly in the second and fourth lines, a powerful pulsing away of mind and heart into the Divine's depth, a quiet plucking and largening out of them, from human nature into the Divine's height. When these lines are made resonant by the voice the concrete suggestions of words like "into" and "breast" and "seated" and "above" are perceived as no poetic devices but exact modes of rendering Yogic realisations.

Audible reading, repeated many times, would also tend to save us from falling foul of a poem like *Thought the Paraclete*, where Sri Aurobindo works into a novel quantitative scheme the experience of an upward movement of the mind as an intermediary between our consciousness and the Unknown. He depicts the mind as caught up into layer after layer of what is beyond, leaving behind in the consciousness here a superb calm unbounded by the brief and the finite, a sense of some ultimate Self without personal confines. The poetic expression is packed with symbols and visions straight from the spiritual planes:

> The face
> Lustred, pale-blue-lined of the hippogriff,
> Eremite, sole, daring the bourneless ways,
> Over world-bare summits of timeless being
> Gleamed; the deep twilights of the world-abyss
> Failed below. Sun-realms of supernal seeing,
> Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss
> Drew its vague heart-yearning with voices sweet.
> Hungering, large-souled, to surprise the unconned
> Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond,
> Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
> Climbing high far ethers eternal-sunned,
> Thought the great-winged wanderer paraclete
> Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune.
> Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune.

The ordinary critic is likely to be puzzled. He cannot quite lump it with Surrealism as a chaotic transcription of the Subconscious, for

there are evident a process and a *denouement*; but this control and guidance of the abnormal paints no picture that can be understood like Francis Thompson's imaginatively gorgeous bravado:

> Across the margent of the world I fled,
> And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,

or his prophetic flourish:

> Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
> From the hid battlements of Eternity.

Sri Aurobindo is not mentally conceiving and visualising: he is recording realities that belong to some Super-Nature, without any effort to clothe his perceptions in emblems we can readily recognise from our contacts with the universe around. He is writing as a Yogi, letting spiritual facts seen in dimensions other than our universe take shape in poetry, and the poetry springs from those dimensions, throbbing with the strange tangibilities there and not throughout aided by an interpretative glow from our experience of material objects, Poetry must always be objective in order to convey a feel of actuality. but the outward world we know by our physical senses is not everything: Yoga reveals subtle senses that put us in touch with other worlds, other outwardnesses as real as those to which we are habituated and considerably divergent from them inspite of a certain correspondence between the two. The mind lifted by Yoga towards the Eternal does not just shoot up ideas, does not just think of the Divine and imagine what the Divine must be like. It clearly separates from the body, rises as a distinct entity into a new consciousness and a series of supra-physical worlds. Passionate with God-hunger it is a living creature inwardly lit by a lust for the Eternal's empyrean, "pale-blue-lined" and wearing a symbolic form to its own inner eye according to what aspect of the consciousness has winged upward: the hippogriff —half-horse and half-eagle — is a form of this kind and no arbitrary futuristic figuration. And the worlds explored by that dynamic denizen of the inner being are real, concrete, objective. Sri Aurobindo transmits his experience of them to us in words charged with the very vision and vibration of the consciousness pervading those worlds. That is why the shapes and scenes are so incalculable, so bewildering—until we draw ourselves back from our habitual mind into a receptive hush and quicken that hush by reading aloud the strangely worded and strangely rhythmed lines. The rhythmical scheme is not any of the accepted metres—the stresses and the quantities are a pattern demanding all sorts of unusual word-combinations and sound-effects; the

massed accents and lengths call for an abundant use of the compound, and the necessity to hold together in short but accurate phrases the manifold grandeurs of Super-Nature amply justifies it. Seerhood and vitality are constant features of the style, and they possess us most forcefully through an audible reading. Whether we fully understand or no, the pictures and the sound-suggestions make an impact as of undeniable reality:

> Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss

is a line of extreme subtle-sensuous energy, as is also

> Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,

and they strike upon the aesthetic faculty in us with a splendour of poetry equal to the best of Francis Thompson and an immediacy of mystical perception more direct and concentrated than anything he could command.

A mystical immediacy akin to *Thought the Paraclete's* in symbol-colour but directed towards a different end meets us in another quantitative experiment by Sri Aurobindo — *Flame-Wind*. Here too the mental imagination does not hold the seat of honour. It comes to the fore, however, in important places as interpreter, so that the bulk of the poetry which is constituted by an excitement of the occult and a smoulder of the psychic, with widening puissances blown into them from the overhead spiritual, is not quite removed from the accent of Thompson:

> A flame-wind ran from the gold of the east,
> Leaped on my soul with the breath of a sevenfold noon.
> Wings of the angel, gallop of the beast!
> Mind and body on fire, but the heart in swoon.
>
> O flame, thou bringest the strength of the noon,
> But where are the voices of morn and the stillness of eve?
> Where the pale-blue wine of the moon?
> Mind and life are in flower, but the heart must grieve.
>
> Gold in the mind and the life-flame's red
> Make of the heavens a splendour, the earth a blaze.
> But the white and rose of the heart are dead.
> Flame-wind, pass! I will wait for Love in the silent ways.

The style here joins hands in some respects with such Thompson-utterances as

> I said to Dawn: Be sudden — to Eve: Be soon;
> With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
> From this tremendous Lover,

and the one about Nature:

> Let her, if she would owe me,
> Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky and show me
> The breasts o'her tenderness.

Where it differs is essentially in a certain directness of the symbol: Thompson, for all his power and poignance, gives the impression of trying to suggest the supernatural by similes and metaphors moulded from natural appearances, his images remain images, his "young skiey blossoms" and "blue bosom-veil of sky" are a figurative play of beautiful ideas whereas Sri Aurobindo's "pale-blue wine of the moon" and his "white and rose of the heart" come as statements of actualities, bearing directly the concreteness of some occult, psychic or spiritual truth. This difference does not lie only in the particular phrases, it is focussed in them by the light and atmosphere of the entire poem, by the plane on which it moves. With a more simple economical beauty and energy than Thompson's, the symbols of Sri Aurobindo take on a direct life, become themselves mystical states of being and consciousness instead of their hints and echoes. Thompson takes five lines to give us his Hound of Heaven:

> Still with unhurrying chase,
> And unperturbèd pace,
> Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
> Came on the following Feet,
> And a Voice above their beat —

five lines poetically necessary for building the constant mighty accumulating pursuit, but none of them has the sheer direct supernatural impetus of Sri Aurobindo's

> Wings of the angel, gallop of the beast!

It may be said that Thompson's general meaning is more clear and in that sense his style is the more direct of the two. Yes, but the directness is not of the mystical species; it is nearer the intellect's explanatory method. Sri Aurobindo is not devoid of that method; no poem of his is pure Dada, in fact no poem worth the name can abolish connection between its parts and dispense with being felt as a whole by the understanding. The intellect by itself may not be able to get the full "hang", it must take the aid of the imagination, the visionary and the aesthetic powers; still, if the work has "form" it cannot be absolutely blank and chaotic in the impression made by its parts as well as by its

totality on the intellect. The mind has many types of logic, it knows how to link section to section and embrace the linked sections as a single organic unit by means not always strictly argumentative *à la* Aristotle, it has also a Platonic dialectic, driven forward by pregnant analogies, suggestive similarities, picturesque parables in which the constructive artist with his harmonising eye and proportioning hand runs side by side with the abstract deducer. In poetry the Platonic dialectic keeps abstract deduction very much in the shade and develops the artistic sequence by devices not easily assimilable in prose: poetry often "argues" by alliteration and cadence, "clinches" by rhyme, at least by echo, and jumps from point to point by merging differences through metaphor and transferred epithet or even through transfigured punning. Its logic is more imaginative than intellectual, but logic it certainly has—a relation, a synthesis, a fusion, a unity. In mystical poetry of the Aurobindonian order this logic goes further away from the intellectual method than in Thompsonian inspiration, and that extra distance is due to the planes from which Sri Aurobindo creates—planes of God-realisation held by his consciousness in their own substance and atmosphere instead of being reflected in normal human ignorance as happened with Thompson. Hence the mystical planes are directer in his work than in that Catholic poet's and such a phenomenon makes for less kinship to intellectual directness since the contents of those planes are not quite like Nature and life as known to us, their behaviour is alien, their laws unexpected and the logic of their interconnection and harmony more difficult to grasp. However, it must be remembered that a greater mystical directness does not imply an inferiority in Sri Aurobindo's intellect to Thompson's: the intellect can be richer and mightier at the same time that one is more mystically direct but it will not deploy itself on its own level or cast its argumentative tendency on the poetic performance, it will surrender itself to the mystical consciousness and allow its resources and movements to be marshalled by that consciousness Nor is the mystic's distance from intellectual directness to be confused with the complicated density or obscurity resulting from a many-strained, multi-motioned play of the intellect as in Donn, Browning and sometimes Thompson. That distance consists simply in the revelation of secret presences and experiences straight from the hidden planes which are charged with the Superhuman and the Divine—the revelation that is carried to its closest and its widest by Sri Aurobindo in the still unfinished epic growing daily under his hand—*Savitri*.

Flame-Wind is a sort of half-way house between the mystical poetry of the past and the unique Aurobindonian afflatus. It is not an extreme example of the naked light of the occult, the psychic, the spiritual, and its meaning is brought out with a considerable degree of reliance on the

mind's ordinary method of speech. Its meaning, of course, is that Sri Aurobindo is for an integral union with the Divine, a wholeness fulfilling every part of him: he will not rest with a sudden dynamic realisation of the Spirit-seized mind ruling the body and driving the life-impulse with superhuman energy of thought and will, yet without those subtle delicate influences of the Divine that are received when the being is bent not only on God-knowing but also on God-loving, on playing the devotee and saint as well as the sage and prophet. This meaning, however, unfolds for all its reliance on the mind's ordinary method of speech less through a number of illustrative images concretising the ideas than through touches on our imagination from objects and beings belonging to other dimensions than the world from which a poet usually borrows his figures. The rhythm too has something of another space and time. All poetry imposes a new space and time on our world, mixing "unknown modes of being" with things that are familiar: that is why it is full of magic and mystery. Even a subtle fancy like Stephen Spender's

> Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
> Drinker of horizon's fluid line

suggests a strange entity living in an uncommon world interpenetrating and exceeding the outward physical and even the inward mental to which we are accustomed, but neither the meaning nor the rhythm takes us deep into the mystical spheres that are contacted in their concrete substance and form by Sri Aurobindo's poetry. That substance and form need not be always a definite symbol, a walking out into our midst by a hippogriff; it can just as well be a particular state of consciousness conveyed vividly by the impact of words plucked from the unknown and the deific, as in Sri Aurobindo's phrase:

> My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight.

Before speaking of the complete and sustained outburst of this style, with its "overhead" uniqueness, in *Savitri*, it will perhaps not be out of place to look at a poem conveying the Yogic process of which a part is the coming down of the new inspiration from its spiritual altitudes. *Descent* is written in Sapphics, the only experiment in English comparable to those of Swinburne and John Addington Symonds. The classical Sapphic quatrain has in three lines a spondee and a dactyl between a single trochee at the beginning and two at the end, while the fourth line is a dactyl followed by either a spondee or a trochee Swinburne uses often a trochaic instead of a spondaic foot and introduces a few other minor variations here and there; Symonds does likewise but he mostly keeps a spondaic close in the last line. Sri Aurobindo

follows Swinburne rather than Symonds, adding, however, the privilege of a more marked modulation anywhere of the dactyl in the first three lines by an anti-bacchius, cretic or molossus; at one place he substitutes their terminal trochee with a spondee and the dactyl of the last line with a cretic; at one or two points he employs elision to get his effect right. The values he ascribes to his syllables are, of course, quantitative according to the system illustrated at length in his hexameters. We have in *Descent*, therefore, not a strict imitation of the Greek pattern but a living response to it by English prosody without sacrificing the basic spirit and rhythm-movement of the original. Over and above technical departures there is also one in the lyrical quality which demands notice. Swinburne and Symonds retain, almost throughout, Sappho's poignant picturing tone, at once simple in expression and rich in sound-texture. Sri Aurobindo, though preserving the gorgeous-sounding yet clear-phrased power of Sappho, introduces in the poignancy and the picturisation another note which is due not alone to the theme and experience being different. Sappho was passionate in a piercingly human way of love; Sri Aurobindo the mystic and the Yogi has turned the cry of the heart towards the mystery of God, but this difference in the emotive trend need not diminish any essential warmth and indeed with an integral Yogi like Sri Aurobindo it does not; what is non-Sapphic in his verse is not the mysticising of the lyricism so much as on occasion a style that is Pindar rather than Sappho. A genaral Pindaresque atmosphere is not inconsistent with the Sapphic style: Pindar is intensely religious, a priest of the God's when he is not intensely secular, a celebrant of games and feasts, but that is a matter of temperament and it can express itself in a style of *sèvere douceur*, of grave delicacy, as in Simonides among the Greeks and Wordsworth among the English and as in Sappho herself at certain moments when she is more the artist conscious of self-consecration to the divine Muse than the lover shaken by the human beauty of an Anactoria. The non-Sapphic element in Sri Aurobindo's poem is not just the religious temperament of Pindar but something of the grandiose uplift and triumphant crash of sound that is in Pindar's odes. Blended as it is with Sri Aurobindo's usual self-mastery this magnitude and momentum goes free of the intricate violence of word and image accompanying it in Pindar, balancing it fearfully on the verge of the grotesque and the monstrous and even at times toppling it over. The best of Pindar's style and Sappho's is in *Descent*, coloured by a mystical experience of the "overhead" type:

> All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,
> Soul and body stir with a mighty rapture,
> Light and still more light like an ocean billows
> Over me, round me.

Rigid, stone-like, fixed like a hill or statue,
Vast my body feels and upbears the world's weight;
Dire the large descent of the Godhead enters
Limbs that are mortal.

Voiceless, thronged, Infinity crowds upon me;
Presses down a glory of power eternal;
Mind and heart grow one with the cosmic wideness;
Still are earth's murmurs.

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions
Blaze in my spirit.

Slow the heart beats rhythm like a giant hammer's;
Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,
Ecstasy's chariots.

All the world is changed to a single oneness;
Souls undying, infinite forces, meeting,
Join in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,
Rhythm of the Deathless.

Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal,
Light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom
Clasping for ever.

Read aloud, the poem shows a pervading overhead tone which forms an overwhelming mass in stanzas four and five. Their poetic quality is on a par with the two stanzas in Symonds's translation, where Sappho's crystalline keenness finds an English equivalent : hearing Atthis "silverly" laughing Sappho's heart quivers and her voice is hushed:

Yea, my tongue is broken and through me and through me
'Neath the flesh palpable fire runs tingling;
Nothing see my eyes, and a noise of roaring
Waves in my ear sounds;

Sweat runs down in rivers, a tremor seizes
All my limbs, and paler than grass in autumn
Caught by pains of menacing death I falter,
Lost in the love-trance.

If physical passion could have a mysticism of its own, it is well nigh here, rendering in terms of sensuality the Aurobindonian

> Light and still more light like an ocean billows
> Over me, round me.

The " roaring waves," in Sappho's ear, which bring her the love-trance and afterwards the music whereon her experience floats through the ages, transfigure themselves on Sri Aurobindo's plane into " a torrent of rapid lightnings " by which knowledge of the deathless Divine leaps on the human consciousness and by whose thronged and glittering invasion the revelatory speech of the overhead spiritual is born :

> Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
> Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,
> Ecstasy's chariots.

These three lines make a most magnificent picture, Vedic and Upanishadic in its symbolism and the sound-strokes of the words leave reverberations that are mantric : the impulsion of the supreme Spirit is poetised in language and rhythm which are themselves received from the immense Overworld known to the ancient *Rishis*. They are the aptest and most inwardly representative summing-up possible of the afflatus that creates Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* and of the impression left by that afflatus on the sensitive reader.

III

When we speak of *Savitri* we speak of a unique adventure in poetic creation. From a certain standpoint the only parallel to its development is the second part of Goethe's *Faust*. Goethe kept it with him for several decades, adding to it, revising it, making it run along with the growth of his own mind, and the last touch was given just a few days before his death. Here the parallel ends. Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is not merely a work drawn out over a great number of years: it is a work re-written more than half a dozen times and each time re-written not simply because of poetic defects. Each version might be poetically satisfying: the difference was of the plane of consciousness from which the writing took place. Nor was Sri Aurobindo growing and maturing only as Goethe did during the composition of the second part of *Faust*; he was moving from plane to plane of Yoga. Not alone the ideas and the emotions were undergoing a change and richness to ripeness as with Goethe: the very stuff of consciousness was turning increasingly from

human to superhuman. *Savitri* was originally composed with a good deal of the kind of inspiration which flows through Sri Aurobindo's early narratives *Urvasie* and *Love and Death*, the inspiration of the life-force with its surge of passion and emotion, the mind energy with its lucid or recondite sweep of thought and here and there an outbreak of occult sight, a piercing by the bright poignancies of the psychic, a lifting into the large ideation of the Higher Mind. In *Savitri* the last three elements were more active than before, since the poet was now deep in Yoga. More frequent too were sudden visitations by the rhythm which passes through lines like the one from *Love and Death:*

> Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind,

or the vision of that other from *Urvasie:*

> Time like a snake coiling among the stars.

But Sri Aurobindo soon struck beyond the level from which he had written the original poem. He grew master—at all moments and not solely in the trance-state—of the plane the traditional Yogas posit above the mind-centre in the brain, the famous "thousand-petalled lotus" of spiritual light. A recast was made in the terms of this poise of consciousness. Another became necessary when he rose to an illumination yet more profound—and whenever definitely higher levels were his he infused the poem with fresh values of significance and sound. Sometimes, from one and the same level differing versions were set forth — on every occasion the scope extended and the writing laden with more matter. The last few, spread across thirty-five years or so, have been such ramifications and ' pithings". The very final, which for want of leisure is still incomplete and unpublished, is an endeavour to be comprehensive to the maximum with a continual command of the intense and immense spiritual directness of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

The ancient Indian scriptures are pervaded by an ever-present awareness of a living Infinity, an illimitable Oneness deploying itself in a myriad modes, remaining not only transcendental and static but throwing itself out in a cosmic dance, a dance that is divine on the higher planes but shot with shadows on the lower. On the lower there is a tremendous hide and seek, the soul has to pierce through masks and meet its own white truth. Once the piercing is done, the light is seen even here as ubiquitous and all Nature as secretly bathed in an ether of bliss. The Vedas and the Upanishads were chanted by those in whom the veil of division had fallen away. They spoke from the depths of the all-suffusing Spirit and from the heights of the Spirit's Truth-world whose dim reflex is in our space and time. These scriptures, therefore, brim with a concrete seeing and complex manifesta-

tion of forms the mind cannot wholly explain but which seize at once the inner heart, or a mighty burst of harmonious intuitions in which the mind discovers the consummation, the absolute of its own fumbling concepts. In either case, what is found is, as it were, three-dimensional —far from the merely abstract : there is a solid touch of revelation, a burning throb of realisation. All poetry deals in the tangible and the pulsing ; but here what is supposed to be immeasurably remote comes intimately near, impinges on our members and affects our blood-stream. The whole body of us seems to thrill to the Eternal, feel itself as a play of the Eternal, in contact with the Eternal's luminous stuff, the Eternal's rhythm of vastitude. Yes, a new stuff of being, a new rhythm of experience press to incarnate themselves, so that our limited consciousness may not view the Beyond as from behind unbreakable glass but find windows and doors flung open in the crystal walls of the imagination for the breath of the shining Mystery to blow in and our mind and heart to rush out. That gigantic intercommunion and that boundless freedom are what the Vedic and Upanishadic poetry is composed of. It is these things that are also *Savitri*.

But Sri Aurobindo brings again and again the accent and vibration of the *Mantra* and a general mantric atmosphere playing round whatever other overhead planes find voice, to convey him to a goal further than any the Vedas and the Upanishads envisaged. His poetry traverses regions on which the steps of the ancients never fell. The afflatus of the planes from which the *Rishis* chanted serves him to reveal a knowledge unattained by the *Rishis*. *Savitri* is at the same time a harking back and a springing forward. Its very conception shows this double movement. In the *Mahabharata* the story of Savitri depicts a fight between love and death somewhat similar in outward intention to the episodes of Priyumvada and Ruru as well as Urvasie and Pururavas which Sri Aurobindo had already poetised. The *Mahabharata* relates that when Savitri chose Satyavan for her bridegroom she was told of the prophecy that his life would be short and that soon she would be widowed. She stuck to her choice, resolved within herself to pit her love against the fatality by which she was being dogged. Knowing the heartbreak concealed for her behind the rapture of love she faced the future : hers was the hope of triumphing over the dread Adversary of man's existence. At the back of this tale of conjugal devotion armed with an extreme Will to Life, Sri Aurobindo intuited a wealth of symbol; for the name "Savitri" the Rig Veda had given to the supreme creative consciousness emblemed forth as the Sun. It means the Truth-force of the divine Light, and by analogy "Satyavan" would mean that Light's Truth-being. So the carrying away of Satyavan by Yama the God of Death and the combat of Savitri's heart and mind with that inscrutable darkness were felt by

Sri Aurobindo to be hinting vaguely the effort celebrated in the Vedic hymns to reclaim by means of Yoga what they called the lost Sun, the divine Light that has got submerged in a material Nature which seems to begin as a blind unconsciousness and out of which evolve various forms of Ignorance struggling to live and see. In Sri Aurobindo's poem the term Death regains its Vedic and Upanishadic connotation. Death, in the Vedas and the Upanishads, is the world's ignorance of its own divine Self: the falling asunder of the body and the blowing out of its little day are only the most external aspect of the mortal Night that has hidden from us our own Godhead. But Sri Aurobindo does not rest with this connotation. He goes beyond the old Indian idea of what God-attainment is. The *Rishis* spoke of liberating the soul from its bondage and of the liberated soul bringing the light of the Infinite into its erstwhile prison. They, however, put a limit to that enlightenment. A certain mixture of shadow was accepted as inevitable. At rare moments a flashing doubt about this grey inevitability escapes their lips: Earth then appears to be a divine Mother waiting for some final apocalypse of herself. But the vision of that perfect life is never clearly held before the consciousness: fugitive symbols of its possibility float down from the high trances of the seers without yielding their inmost essence or becoming dynamic. Though sufficient support is given to regarding the cosmic scene as a field for manifesting the Spirit, complete spiritual fulfilment is said to come only after the gross body has been doffed and a status reached outside the cosmic round of rebirth. According to Sri Aurobindo, the Supreme must be possessing the basic and perfect reality, the flawless archetype, of everything set going in our space and time. To couple with a liberation into the Self of selves an attainment of this archetypal Truth and to evolve the divine counterpart of each side of our complex constitution is the full aim of Yoga: in such an aim, even the gross body with its energies cannot be neglected as untransmutable into a luminous and immortal vehicle. Consequently, Sri Aurobindo, while reading the Vedic and Upanishadic sense in the term Death, does not overlook its common physical sense which *Mahabharata* kept in view. Unlike the old scriptures, he refuses to recognise the physical breaking-up as an unescapable destiny. The Aurobindonian Yogi does more than transmute his inward instruments: he conquers too the limitations imposed on the corporeal frame at present, by age, disease or accident: he incarnates a divine body-archetype, his very stuff of matter flowers into a miraculous novel substance. So Savitri, fighting Satyavan's death, is in Sri Aurobindo's hands an avatar of the immortal Beauty and Love plunging into the trials of terrestrial life and seeking to overcome them not only in herself but also in the world she has embraced as her own: she is out to put an utter end to earth's estrangement from God. Her story grows, a poetic

structure of incident and character, in which he houses his special search and discovery, his unique exploration of hidden worlds, his ascent into the deific ranges of the Spirit and his bringing down of their power to divinise man's total nature.

The technique of *Savitri* is attuned to the scriptural conception at work. It accepts the principle of metre and does not cut any modernistic zig-zag of irregularity. Sri Aurobindo is not an enemy to free verse, but he does reject the free verse that has no underlying rhythm to unify its wanderings. A unifying norm, no matter how inexplicit, is the *sine qua non* of successful poetry, particularly in rendering "overhead" values. For, unity of measure is not just our mind's arbitrary demand: Nature operates on such a basis, all her multiplicities have fundamental types behind them—individuals grounded in species, species grounded in genera. A wide variation playing upon a persistent pattern is her creative mode everywhere. The overhead planes hold that basic oneness most intensely. Conscious being there does not forget as in our lower hemisphere the universal Self: every movement is fraught with awareness of the Infinite. The principle of metre translates most strikingly into speech Nature's law of manifestation, the Spirit's method of self-deployment: the Many modulating upon the basis of the One. *Savitri* adopts the iambic five-foot line of English blank verse as the most apt and plastic for harmonies like those of the Vedas and the Upanishads. Its blank verse, however, has certain special characteristics affining it still further to them. It moves in a series of blocks formed by a changing distribution of correctly proportioned sentence-lengths —lengths of one line, two lines, three or four or five lines, many lines. Scarcely any block breaks off in the middle of a line; the sentence seldom makes a full pause except when its last line is complete. Hence the blocks, connected as they are, have still an independence, a kind of self-sufficient structure like stanzas distinct without being equally long. And what applies to the sentence-unit applies in a general way to every part of it. Each line-unit seems itself a block on a small scale—telling in its own mass and force as if it could stand in *vacuo* and at the same time join in a concordant sentence-totality to develop the story and its spiritual perspective. Though enjambment is not avoided on any strict principle, it is less ingenious and precipitate than in *Urvasie, Love and Death* or *Baji Prabhou*. The scriptural mood demands a graver, more contained movement. To such a mood end-stopping comes with greater naturalness. But Sri Aurobindo does not make a fetish of end-stopping. What he does is a most careful moulding of the individual line so that it may not merely serve the broad scheme as in much present-day verse but be as well a power and perfection in its own rights, without of course the least rhythmic monotony occurring in the passage and impairing the vitality of the broad scheme.

The power and perfection of each line of *Savitri* lies in utter faithfulness to the fact, the atmosphere, the life-throb found on the overhead planes. Not that the poetry refuses to descend anywhere: there are lines which the ordinary mind recognises as akin to its coinage, but these are deliberately introduced as helpful connecting-links between flight and flight on the supernormal levels. Even these have usually a vague breath of the Overworld about them. In any case they are so few that the generalisation about overhead power and perfection is practically unaffected. From the very start we have the full grip on profound realities, the expanse and richness of a revelation beyond the mental meaning. *Savitri*, like *Ilion*, that experiment by Sri Aurobindo of three hundred and odd lines in the quantitative hexameter, begins with a picture of darkness passing into day: here it is the last dawn, in Satyavan's life, a phenomenon packed with significance of the immortal light which Savitri has to win for earth by challenging the decree of death so long accepted by man. The daybreak of *Ilion* combines the spirit of Greek myth and epic with the spirit of Indian Yoga. It is a vision charged with the illumination of the occult Orient but naturalising itself to the atmosphere of heroic Hellas. *Savitri* knows no such tempering: its mysticism is naked to the depths, the Orient shows its true inward colour, India's Yogic antiquity lives again to fill out with enormous rhythmic suggestions the Aurobindonian message. But the poem's prelude is too long to quote in uninterrupted sequence; only a number of "views", brief or extended, can be set together to limn the chief features of the symbolic dawn:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge....
The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still.
Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred;
Something that wished but knew not how to be
Gave room for an old tired want unfilled
At peace in its subconscient moonless cave
To raise its head and look for absent light,
Straining closed eyes of vanished memory,
Like one who searches for a bygone self
And only meets the corpse of his desire....
As if a childlike finger laid on a cheek
Reminded of the endless need in things
The heedless Mother of the universe,
An infant longing clutched the sombre Vast.
Insensibly somewhere a breach began.
A long lone line of hesitating hue

Like a vague smile tempting a desert heart
Troubled the far rim of life's obscure sleep....
A thought was sown in the unsounded Void,
A sense was born within the darkness' depths,
A memory quivered in the heart of Time—
As if a soul long dead were moved to live.
But the oblivion that succeeds the fall
Had blotted the crowded tablets of the past,
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt
And old experience laboured out once more.
All can be done if the God-touch is there;
A hope stole in that hardly dared to be
Amid the Night's forlorn indifference.
As if solicited in an alien world
With timid and hazardous instinctive grace,
Orphaned and driven out to seek a home,
An errant marvel with no place to live,
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.
The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.
One lucent corner windowing hidden things
Forced the world's blind immensity to sight....
Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first
Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns,
Outpoured the revelation and the flame.
The brief perpetual sign recurred above.
A glamour from the unreached transcendences
Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,
A message from the unknown immortal Light,
A blaze upon creation's quivering edge,
Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours.
An instant's visitor the godhead shone:
On Life's thin borders awhile the Vision stood
And bent over earth's pondering forehead curve.
Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss
In colour's hieroglyphs of mystic sense,
It wrote the lines of a significant myth
Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,
A brilliant code penned with the sky for page.
Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed,
Of which our thoughts and hopes are signal flares,

A lonely splendour from the invisible goal
Almost was flung on the opaque Inane.
Once more a tread perturbed the vacant Vasts.
Infinity's centre, a Face of rapturous calm
Parted the eternal lids that open heaven,
A Form from far beatitudes seemed to near.
Ambassadress twixt eternity and change,
The omniscient Goddess leaned across the breadths
That wrap the fated journeying of the stars
And saw the spaces ready for her feet.
Once she half-looked behind for her veiled sun,
Then, thoughtful, turned to her immortal work.
Earth felt the Imperishable's passage close.
The waking ear of Nature heard her steps
And wideness turned to her its limitless eye,
And, scattered on sealed depths, her luminous smile
Kindled to fire the silence of the worlds.
All grew a consecration and a rite.
Air was a vibrant link between earth and heaven;
The wide-winged hymn of a great priestly wind
Arose and failed upon the altar hills;
The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky....

The impression is at first as of music afar and above—beautiful but not very distinguishable in its notes. There is, however, a pervading intensity which cannot be missed even at a distance: the notes may not be clear at once but they are no blur, they stand fully formed, diminished without being dissolved. A little concentrated hearing—and the music takes a grip on us, stirring strange secret places within to echo the rhythms that float down and to mirror the visions that fall across gigantic spaces. When our consciousness grows receptive enough, we observe that the spiritual and the material move here as one. Most of us who, when the night had run a long course but was still thick, have waited in the ambiguous atmosphere with our faces to the East, have had an inkling of a vigil by some cosmic Ignorance and have been faintly filled with the unplumbed prevision of a deific change because of both a tendency in the gloom and a beckoning from some masked splendour. Also, when watching daybreak, we have felt a deific revelation in the making, a beauty that was too great to be borne by earth-eyes and was soon lost in the familiar bright outlines of our world. Either of these two perceptions is caught by Sri Aurobindo with the utmost suggestive precision; we face occurrences, we might see with our physical eyes and touch with our physical hands. It is the combined sense of the closely possessed and the supremely illimitable that is the mark of true overhead poetry. For, the Spiritual is never tenuous or empty: it is dense and rich, containing the essence of all that we regard

as substantial: whatever has shape and colour can therefore interpret it, bring it to a focus for our minds, be its revelatory figure. But shape and colour so often tend to overlay the Spirit's secret values. Sri Aurobindo's art is free from that tendency: he nowhere loses in the terms of Nature the stuff of Super-nature. A striking example of his success are the lines:

> A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
> That glowed along a fading moment's brink
> Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
> A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.

A keen atmosphere of Super-nature bathes what we are accustomed to look upon as natural objects—hand, panel, hinge, gate. And they are thus bathed not merely by being used as metaphors. There has happened a merging of them in realities of planes beyond the earth, a spiritual concreteness fuses with their material concreteness and makes them affect our senses with forms instinct with an unearthly significance. Perhaps it will be easiest to appreciate this art of mystical fact by noting the lines immediately preceding the above:

> Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
> A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.
> The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
> Persuaded the inert black quietude
> And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.

It is possible to play the critic and ask: "Should there not be a restraint in the double adjective? On top of a general teeming of single qualifiers, two epithets are put before a noun in the same way twice in three lines here and two lines further one more pair of similarly yoked adjectives is seen in 'pale enchanted light': would it not be an improvement if some variety were introduced and a less obvious method followed?" Sri Aurobindo, in a private letter, makes a most enlightening statement on the point at issue: "If a gradual wealth-burdened movement is the right thing, as it certainly is here in my judgment, the necessary means have to be used to bring it about — and the double adjective is admirably suited for the purpose. Do not forget that *Savitri* is spiritual poetry cast into a symbolic figure. Done on this rule, it is really a new attempt and cannot be hampered by old ideas of technique except when they are assimilable. Least of all by a standard proper to a mere intellectual and abstract poetry which makes 'reason and taste' the supreme arbiters, aims at a harmonised poetic intellectual balanced expression of the sense, elegance in language, a sober and

subtle use of imaginative decoration, a restrained emotive element. The attempt at mystic spiritual poetry of the kind I am at demands above all a spiritual objectivity, an intense psycho-physical concreteness. According to certain canons, epithets should be used sparingly, free use of them is rhetorical, an 'obvious' device, a crowding of images is bad taste, there should be subtlety of art not displayed but severely concealed—*Summa ars est celare artem.* Very good for a certain standard of poetry, not so good or not good at all for others. Shakespeare kicks over these traces at every step, Aeschylus freely and frequently, Milton wherever he chooses. Such lines as

> With hideous ruin and combustion down
> To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
> In adamantine chains and penal fire

or

> Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brain
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge

(note two double adjectives in three lines in the last)—are not subtle or restrained or careful to conceal their elements of powerful technique, they show rather a vivid richness or vehemence, forcing language to its utmost power of expression. That has to be done still more in this kind of mystic poetry. I cannot bring out the spiritual objectivity if I have to be miserly about epithets, images, or deny myself the use of all available resources of sound-significance. The double epithets are indispensable here and in the exact order in which they are arranged by me. The rich burdened movement might be secured by other means, but a rich burdened movement of any kind is not my primary object, it is desirable only because it is needed to express the spirit of the action here; and the double epithets are wanted because they are the best, not only one way of securing it. The 'gesture' must be 'slow miraculous'—if it is merely miraculous or merely slow, that does not create a picture of the thing as it is, but of something quite abstract and ordinary or concrete and ordinary —it is the combination that renders the exact nature of the mystic movement, with the 'dim appeal' completing it, so that 'gesture' is not here a metaphor but a thing actually done. Equally a 'pale light' or an 'enchanted light' may be very pretty, but it is only the combination that renders the luminosity which is that of the hand acting tentatively in the darkness. That darkness itself is described as a quietude which gives it a subjective spiritual character and brings out the thing symbolised, but the double epithet 'inert black' gives it the needed concreteness so that the quietude ceases to be something abstract and becomes something concrete, objective but still spiritually subjective.

Every word must be the right word, with the right atmosphere, the right relation to all the other words, just as every sound in its place and the whole sound together must bring out the imponderable significance which is beyond verbal expression. One can't chop and change about on the principle that it is sufficient if the same mental sense or part of it is given with some poetical beauty or power. One can only change if the change brings out more perfectly the thing behind that is seeking for expression—bring out in full objectivity and also in the full mystic sense. If I can do that, well, other considerations have to take a backseat or seek their satisfaction elsewhere."

A free diversity of style is practised by Sri Aurobindo to attain his goal. He does not immure himself in any one formula—not even the formula of lavish technique which he has defended. Where the spiritual mood and situation demand it, he can be quite sparing in epithet and image and sound. And not only differences in the texture of style does he exploit: he has in addition different tempers of it. The texture consists in simplicity or complexity, austereness or lavishness, concision or diffusion: the temper lies in a particular receptive attitude and exploratory process of the visioning word. One sort of temper may run through many sorts of texture, for its quality resides behind the obvious characteristics of the word-body. Roughly, there are four kinds of temper that can be described to some extent, while a fifth eludes all analysis and is the inmost circle of style, the magic of inevitability at its diamond point. The other kinds also be inevitable, but here is, as it were, the sheer quintessence of their inevitabilities and we can say about it when we meet it that there it is but what exactly it is we cannot say. In the field of the definable style-tempers we have first the visioning word doing no more than equate itself to a mood and a situation: it accepts the mood, acknowledges the situation and gives them a just expression with any style-texture the poet is moved to adopt. Thus Sri Aurobindo writes :

> Something that wished but knew not how to be,

or,

> All can be done if the God-touch is there.

This stylistic temper is mixed with a second type in the lines about "an old tired want" being given room

> To raise its head and look for absent light,
> Straining closed eyes of vanished memory
> Like one who searches for a bygone self
> And only meets the corpse of his desire.

Now the visioning word is not merely just, not merely equated to its contents: it has pressed out of them a vigorous subtlety: it does not

stop with a felicitous possession of their appearance, it goes under the skin, so to speak, and startles them into throwing up effective suggestions of their inner vitality. A third temper of style is shown us, infused into the second, when Sri Aurobindo comes with

> A long lone line of hesitating hue
> Like a vague smile tempting a desert heart
> Troubled the far rim of life's obscure sleep.

The visioning word has begun to quicken with an inside glow—there is, besides the vividness and the subtlety from under the skin of mood and situation, a kindling in which many nuances from within arise and play and merge, the pulse of things becomes a gleaming varied flow of intense significances and not only a strong suggestive leap. This process arrives at its acme in a passage like:

> A glamour from the unreached transcendences
> Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,
> A message from the unknown immortal Light,
> A blaze upon creation's quivering edge,
> Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
> And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours.

Nor is the process, of which I have spoken, the sole element in the above passage. Joined with it is another which bears the visioning word in a spelled exaltation of deep discovery, a fourth temper of style instilling into the theme a rapt self-transparency of meaningful design and vital inwardness. It is not easy to disengage this temper: more than the rest it must be felt by an instinct, for it is nearest the absolute style which refuses to be analysed. That absolute style is in the exquisite lines already cited about the fixing of "a gate of dreams". There it comes into being with a kinship to the third temper, while it confronts us with a kinship to the fourth in the poignant wizardry of:

> Air was a vibrant link between earth and heaven;
> The wide winged hymn of a great priestly wind
> Arose and failed upon the altar hills;
> The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky,

or the august enchantment of:

> Infinity's centre, a Face of rapturous calm
> Parted the eternal lids that open heaven.

It can also have a kinship to the first and second tempers. The first seems quietly alchemised into it by

> An errant marvel with no place to live.

One of the lines from a group omitted in our quotation of Savitri's prelude illustrates a mighty mutation into it from the second:

> The abysm of the unbodied Infinite.

Of course this indefinable super-inevitable style is poetically the *ultima thule*, just as the *Mantra* is spiritually so. But in an epic of great length it cannot be present everywhere "neat"; nor can the *Mantra*. And the very plan of *Savitri*, comprising as it does the entire expanse of evolution into deity and covering most subjects of philosophical search and every possible aspect of mystical living, demands for the richness and completeness of the treatment variation of style-temper no less than of style-texture and inspiring plane. The only condition which cannot be waived is the overhead afflatus: it must be there in one form and degree or another if a direct poetising of the Divine is to be accomplished.

A direct poetising of the Divine runs through *Savitri* from end to end. But that does not imply a rejection of human interest: what is implied is an "unmasked" pervasion and interpretation of it by the beyond-human. In fact the human element is unavoidable, since the figure from which the poem derives its name is the divine Consciousness descended into flesh. Her work is among terrestrial creatures: it is among their joys and travails that she awakes on that fateful morning. Trees and animals and humans hold her in their midst, an Immortal prisoned in mortality, the high potencies of her soul wedded to a living that is but a slow dying:

> At first life grieved not in her burdened breast...,
> In a deep cleft dug by silence twixt two realms
> She lay remote from grief, unsawn by care,
> Nothing recalling of the sorrow here.
> Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved
> And sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom
> And recognised the close and lingering ache
> Deep, quiet, old, made natural to its place.

The origin of these lines is not the sheer overhead, they have not the masterful seeing through an amplitude of light. Still, they have a general overhead influence and their difference from fine poetry of the

mental order can be marked if we put side by side with their last three verses a snatch from Keats which has a similar motive. In *Hyperion* an action almost identical with Savitri's is given to Thea, the companion of Saturn during his fallen days:

> One hand she pressed upon that aching spot
> Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
> Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain.

Sri Aurobindo has a more profound tone; the language is charged with suggestions that go below the thought-meaning; the tragedy of a luminous soul enduring the darkness of earth, taking upon itself the heartbreak that is mortal existence, finds voice in the very rhythm, so to speak, of that ancient heartbreak. The emotion in the excerpt from Keats does not draw upon this intense psychic sadness, it neighbours it in the phrase, "that aching spot where beats the human heart", but passes on to the imaginative idea of the Immortal's pain instead of plumbing the actual pathos of the entombed sweetness. Nor is there in it the sense of the height from which the celestial sweetness has fallen: the mere words, "though an Immortal", convey no more than the conception, while Sri Aurobindo infuses into his less explicit yet keener turns some breath of the overhead atmosphere. The poetic seeing is from some psychic centre, and therefore not sweepingly large, yet like a sharp flame the poetry rises to touch the air of the Overworld and burn a little with a colour beyond its own mood.

This phenomenon plays in and out of *Savitri*. At times an occult feature joins in and assumes prominence, as when Savitri is further described as remembering the wrestle, within her heart, of huge dim figures—earth and love and doom—and then the image of some cryptic greatness emerges, with a psychic effluence of sweetness and light falling across the dread and the secrecy and with also a hidden sense of the Spirit's overhead amplitude, but the main impression is of the puzzling occult:

> At the sombre centre of the dire debate
> A guardian of the unconsoled abyss
> Inheriting the long agony of the globe,
> A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain,
> Stared into space with fixed regardless eyes
> That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.

A similar composite inspiration of three-planed poetry is offered us a little later when another vision, picking up the abyss-element, is brought forward, a vision even more mysterious whom Sri Aurobindo gives no name:

One dealt with her who meets the burdened great....
Assigner of the ordeal and the path
Who uses in this holocaust of the soul
Death, fall and sorrow for the spirit's goads,
The dubious Godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.

But in these lines there is a crescendo ot the overhead seizing the occult and the last three are tremendous both in sight and vibration. They conjure up from royal heights of the overhead the scene of the earth-drama in which Savitri is the chief protagonist. The rhythm travels with a huge intensity and makes us actually hear the workings of the divine mysteries which the language puts into the picture of Savitri as well as of the dark evolving universe she has come to help. Just as we compared Keats's lines with Sri Aurobindo's in order to feel the latter's *differentia*, so we can best note the peculiar overhead envelopment and absorption of the occult by comparing to the style and the sound here those of the famous *finale* of Francis Thompson's sonnet *The Heart.* Thompson recalls the act of that fierce Roman patriot Sextus Curtius who jumped, horse-backed and full-armoured, into the deep trench which according to the augurs had to be filled with what Rome deemed most precious if she was to escape heavenly punishment. Thompson creates an image magnificently profound about the human heart's unrealised grandeur:

The world, from star to sea, cast down its brink —
Yet shall that chasm, till He who these did build
An awful Curtius make Him, yawn unfilled.

As sheer poetry this is equal to the Aurobindonian lines and the spiritual word-significance is as admirable. Word-significance, however, is not the sole ingredient of poetry. There is what Sri Aurobindo calls the imponderable significance beyond verbal expression. The rhythm set up by the words brings it home and awakes in us the reality they strive to portray. Thompson's rhythm, like his expression, has grip and strength, it shakes up broad tracts of the mind but except a little at the end it does not break through the mind into the infinite overhead. A precisely moulded and forcefully imaged thought goes winging through us, stirring mystical suggestions with the aid of an historical incident. We are moved by the brilliant originality which enlarges that incident and strikes into it an inward spiritual truth, yet save for the effect produced by the sound and the meaning of the words "awful" and "yawn" we miss the cosmic unfathomable reverberations Sri

Aurobindo induces in some concealed spaciousness of divine being. Technically we might say that the second line in Thompson fails to be overhead because of the crowdedly repetitive clipped sounds "till" and "did" and "build". The overhead rhythm needs a different art — and behind the art a different psychological disposition. Thompson's opening line has nothing markedly counter to the overhead art; somehow the right psychological disposition is still lacking. In the last line he is on the verge of both, yet comes short because there is not the overhead lift completing the semi-overhead wideness; so the imponderable significance beyond verbal expression is much less spiritual than in Sri Aurobindo's

> And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.

Unmistakably mantric seems this note — and that too in full cry. The pinions of the *Mantra* beat often in *Savitri*, but everywhere they are not completely unclosed to occupy the entire line. They mingle with wafts of other overhead utterances — the Spirit ideative or illuminative or intuitive. The Spirit in nothing else than its identity is difficult to sustain for more than a few lines. Though in the Dawn-description it is a frequent presence, even there it is interspersed with less direct substantiality of the Spirit. The passage, however, where the avatarhood of Savitri is painted keeps the unalloyed *Mantra* ringing for dozens of lines! It is worth special attention both for this reason and for being poetically the longest and most comprehensive mystical portrait in all literature.

To lead from darkness into light, from ignorance of God to knowledge of Him is the work assigned by many poets to woman. There is the praise by Goethe of the Eternal Feminine calling us onward and upward. And there is Dante's music about the *santo riso*, the saintly smile, of Beatrice which guided him from the sins of the flesh to the soul's ecstasy of worship. Crashaw wrote a hymn in honour of St. Teresa, lauding her devotion to Christ and her transforming influence on men. Francis Thompson made a shrine for Alice Meynell: she was the religious calm-centre to the storm of his much-tossed and vagrant career. Wordsworth imagined how the "overseeing power" of Nature would build up the child Lucy into a woman aglow with a soulful beauty and character that would be in tune with pantheistic harmonies of wind and water. But none of these poets has left us a sustained mystical portrait. A few phrases pregnant with mysticism are all we have from them in the midst of a general diffused suggestion of goodness or else of religious zeal. There is also the imaginative picture drawn by Shelley from brief glimpses of Emilia Viviani in a convent, no nun herself but kept as a charge of the nuns by a tyrannical parent. Who among us, in the days of youthful dreaming, has not been intoxicated by

the romantic idealism shot with Platonic mysticism in the apostrophe ?

> Seraph of Heaven ! too gentle to be human,
> Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
> All that is insupportable in thee
> Of light and love and immortality !
> Sweet benediction in the eternal Curse !
> Veiled glory of the lampless Universe !

or in the description ? —

> ....the brightness
> Of her divinest presence trembles through
> Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
> Embodied in the windless heaven of June,
> Amid the splendour-winged stars, the Moon
> Burns inextinguishably beautiful.

But such passages are rare in *Epipsychidion*: most of the poem is idealistically romantic rather than mystically Platonic. And even in the exceptional places the mysticism is not what I have designated as direct. The language is of the poetic intelligence visited by the rapture and radiance of an occult sphere of mentality behind it: both vision and rhythm are, for all that occult visitation, indirect in their mystical import and impact: they are the outward mind thrilling to the occult yet rendering it in terms not altogether native to it. Indirect also are the excellent lines by a poet of our own day, Robert Hugh Benson, depicting a contemplative of St. Teresa's Order:

> She moves in tumult ; round her lies
> The silence of the world of grace ;
> The twilight of our mysteries
> Shines like high noonday on her face ;
> Our piteous guesses, dim with fears,
> She touches, handles, sees and hears.
>
> In her all longings mix and meet ;
> Dumb souls through her are eloquent ;
> She feels the world beneath her feet
> Thrill in a passionate intent ;
> Through her our tides of feeling roll
> And find their God within her soul.

It is again the poetic intelligence speaking—with a difference in two respects from Shelley's passages. First, the inner mind has contributed a certain intuitive intimacy of touch on mystical experience rather than

a wash of bright and colourful vision. Second, the emotion does not so much rise upward to echo something of the wide overhead power as plunge inward to contact a little the profound delicacy of the psychic.

All that is indirect in Shelley and Benson grows a directness the most complete and at a stretch not found in either the Vedas and the Upanishads, when Sri Aurobindo builds up the portrait of Savitri as one in whom the Godhead of Love finds perfect incarnation. Everything in her pointed to a nobler kind than the human:

> Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
> Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
> Winging through worlds of splendour and of calm
> O'erflew the ways of Thought to unborn things.
> Ardent was her self-poised unstumbling will,
> Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
> Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.
> As in a mystic and dynamic dance
> A priestess of immaculate ecstasies,
> Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault,
> Moves in some prophet cavern of the Gods,
> A heart of silence in the hands of joy
> Inhabited with rich creative beats
> A body like a parable of dawn
> That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
> Or golden temple-door to things beyond.
> Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;
> Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
> Even in earth-stuff and their intense delight
> Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives.
> A wide self-giving was her native act;
> A magnanimity as of sea or sky
> Enveloped in her greatness all that came.
> Her kindly care was a sweet, temperate sun,
> Her high passion a blue heaven's equipoise.
> So deep was her embrace of inmost help,
> The whole world could take refuge in her single heart
> The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell.
> Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air,
> Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath
> Spiritual that can make all things divine:
> For even her gulfs were secrecies of light.
> At once she was the stillness and the word,
> A continent of self-diffusiug peace,
> An ocean of untrembling virgin fire.
> In her he met a vastness like his own;
> His warm high subtle ether he refound
> And moved in her as in his natural home.

It is not necessary to understand the passage in detail in order to feel its magnificence. The phrases have an enormous weight of vision that strikes us to our knees, as it were, impressing us with a finality we dare not question. The rhythm has an overpowering fidelity to the inner thrill of the experience suggested and symbolised. Here are the figures and values of a superhuman state of consciousness at the very top, breaking upon us in their own stuff and vibrancy through the medium of language. This is not the mind imagining the highest it can beyond itself. This is an Overmind actually holding all the magnitudes that are pictured; its vision is from within, composed of its own substance and lit up with its own vast vitality. As a result, the pictures are at once extra-immediate and extra-remote: they make, as A. E. Housman would have said, an impact upon our solar plexus as no mental reflection of mystical realities can, but while convincing us of their living concreteness they dodge our mental apprehension by refusing to yield their meanings easily and to affine themselves to what our thought can size up. To adopt Sri Aurobindo's own turn, the ways of thought are overflown, worlds of splendour and calm above the human level are crossed and unborn things reached. Not that everything is difficult to conceive: Savitri's "magnanimity", "kindly care" and "inmost help" reach us through emblems that are not resistant to analysis, though we shall be deprived of a considerable amount of their stimulus unless we use the Eye behind the eye and the Ear behind the ear to sense that the elemental or cosmic analogies and metaphors with their supporting breadth of phrase and sonance are no eloquent exaggerations but are accurately intrinsic to the special nature of Savitri's 'self-giving". The "sea of white sincerity" too is within our imaginative grasp and so, again, in this era of the psychoanalysed subconscious are the gulfs which are "secrecies of light". A no less Overmind intuitiveness the language and rhythm of the lines where they are mentioned above, and it would be poor justice to them if we did not thrill to the rapturous wideness drowning all thought in the one case and in the other the ecstatic opening of depth beyond depth unsounded by the Freudian intellect; but we are able to adapt ourselves without much strain to the general vision. The two lines driving home Savitri's being at the same time the stillness and the word—

> A continent of self-diffusing peace,
> An ocean of untrembling virgin fire.

have an expressive force more hard to absorb. Savitri's word-aspect could have been served well enough by being called an ocean of virgin fire and her stillness-aspect a continent of peace without the two epithets "untrembling" and "self-diffusing". As soon as the fire is

"untrembling" and the peace "self-diffusing", the intense movement is seen as superbly steady, the extreme rest as gigantically spreading its influence. So in the very fact of movement there is rest, in the very fact of rest movement: the two are a single miracle most aptly figured to suggest, by their playing into each other's hands, the omnipotent essence of the Divine. Our mind has usually little experience of opposites meeting, much less coalescing; even Thompson's poetic idea—

> Passionless passion, wild tranquillities

falls slightly outside easy conception. Sri Aurobindo's direct mystical sight, packed with an inward sense of the superhuman, is still more enigmatic: it grips us by its intimacy with its object but we do not grip it enough by our ideative powers.

In the central picture of the passage—the nine lines, beginning with "As in a mystic and dynamic dance", which are perhaps Sri Aurobindo's grandest achievement in mantric poetry—there is no obstacle to our imaginatively realising how apt are the glorious figures— "a parable of dawn", "a niche for veiled divinity", "a golden temple-door" — for Savitri's body with its finite-looking beauty admitting us into a Presence that has no limit. Nor is there any bar to our conjuring up "a priestess of immaculate ecstasies." But what is "truth's revealing vault" inspiring and ruling her? Is the sky used here as a symbol of the light of Eternity? Evidently some infinitude of being that stretches above like a sky and is higher than our obscure and erring consciousness is meant. Yet immediately afterwards we have the "prophet cavern of the Gods": it is in a cavern that the priestess is moving and a cavern by definition cannot have a sky, it must be a closed place. The word "vault" is admirably dual and suits the cavern-suggestion no less than the sky-suggestion, but how are we to mingle the two? We must think of the cavern as having a "revealing" roof, which means really a roof that, instead of shutting out light, is one dense mass of light, Truth's own stuff. Such a cavern with such a roof is neither closed in nor dark: it is somewhat like our universe as viewed from the earth at midday, an immense "inverted bowl" of brightness under which we seem cooped. What special point is made by bringing in that cavernous view? The answer is that no other will present the profound secrecy of the world Sri Aurobindo is speaking of—a spiritual state which is to be entered by drawing the consciousness further and further away from outward phenomena as into a cavern but which, when entered, is discovered to be a boundless space of being, full of a knowledge capable of prophecy, a time-transcending knowledge which is a radiance poured from above where Truth is like some huge sun. This strange world appears to be a fusion of two levels. It is not quite removed from what

Sri Aurobindo elsewhere hints as "an aureate opening in Time." The "aureate opening" refers to the psyche, the gate of communication between our ignorant time-process and the splendour of the eternal Spirit: it is the authentic soul or divine spark as distinguished from the *élan vital* and the mind-force, behind and between which it is hidden and upon which it sheds its mystical influence. In Yoga the psyche is found at the back of that juncture of the *élan vital* and the mind-force—the emotional being whose physical effects we feel in the heart-region. It is the true heart of us, of which our emotional being with its physical counterpart is an outward diminished representation. It has its own experience of the Divine, exquisite and passionate, yet it has not in itself the amplitude and puissance as experienced in the overhead planes, the amplitude and puissance which attain their extreme in the consciousness whence the *Mantra* comes. This consciousness is implied in Sri Aurobindo's mention of Truth's inspiring and ruling vault as well as of the Gods in whose cavern the priestess is dancing. The spiritual state he describes is, therefore, a domain where the psyche has opened up to the Overworld and got suffused with the highest light. Savitri has an embodied emotional being that is not merely merged in the psyche: it is merged also in a denizen of the Overworld descended into the psyche and making the inspiration of that Height one with it. The double character is suggested again when the "heart of silence" is said to be in the "hands of joy." Usually in Yoga a poise free from aching desire is taken hold of and enveloped by a vast bliss that is independent of finite objects and circumstances, but here more is meant than this mystical experience: the in-drawn dedicated stillness caught by a masterful bliss as though with hands commanding and directing corresponds to the *samadhi*-wrapt priestess rhythmically swaying to the luminous and beatific will invading her from Truth's empyrean.

All this, of course, is just an effort at an imaginative re-creation of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual symbols. It can serve merely as a prop, it cannot deliver the full sense of them. Intuitive vision is the means to compass both their subjective and objective values, for they are plucked from Super-nature with an absolute loyalty to its extreme altitudes. We must go very far indeed from the imaginative intellect's grasp in order to feel their coherence and their living force. Without submitting ourselves in intuitive sympathy to an invasion from worlds of a Consciousness that is divine and deathless, ours will be a surface appreciation, at most admiring certain similes and felicitous turns of language, scarcely stirring to the hidden immensity of the revelation and its concrete mystical drive and scope. And if we do not read the passage aloud like a spell of superb potency and let the rhythm break through secret sound-spaces within us we shall never awake wholly to the fact that the entire description of Savitri and especially the part I

have been commenting upon is word and vibration charged with actual deific states—the highest spiritual plane with its own native accent.

Failure to tackle the *Mantra*, and in general all overhead poetry, in the right receptive way will lay its contents, more than those of any other type of mystical verse, open to the accusation of being what Yeats called "Asiatic vague immensities." For in it Asia's difference from the European dealing with God is most prominent. Europe finds its natural element in definite philosophical ideas, it governs even the Infinite by the laws of logic and constructs a self-consistent picture by following a single track of thought. Asia is at home in multiple tracks: though philosophers have tried to be logically bound down to systems clear-cut out of one dominant trend, the instinct is to give way to multitudinous incompatibilities harmonising and uniting in a supra-logical vision. Overhead poetry, particularly at its apex, is supra-logical vision embodied without the intellect playing the interpreter. Whatever is seizable by the intellect is an adaptation by the overhead planes of themselves to its mode and not its shaping of them according to its own desire and proclivity. Much must escape the intellect almost altogether and call for a very extended development of the faculties in us which respond to poetic values through intuition and rhythm-feeling. Large ambiguities, therefore, arise in the mind, especially the European. But, on the other hand, from the stadpoint of intrinsic character we may say that overhead poetry is the least exposed to the Yeatsian accusation, since in it the supra-logical seeing is mated with an expression springing from the very planes on which that seeing is inherent to consciousness. The expression is organic to the sight and consequently carries an authentic and convincing power. If the word and the rhythm are from elsewhere, there is for the reader either a medley that floats unconvincingly on the mind's surface or a spaciousness that can be reflected only by blurring its infinite contents. The many-sided nature of the Divine becomes "confused", the essential unity "thin": in short, both turn "vague". No matter how much we yield to the poetry through intuition and rhythm-feeling, the supra-logical will never quite achieve in non-overhead language the needed degree of directness, of substantial and detailed presence. We may get complete intellectual satisfaction and aesthetic pleasure—the meaning may stand out clear and the beauty may be vital and absolute; yet neither the meaning nor the beauty may do justice to what we cognise as pressing for poetic manifestation. The suggestive aura round the significant phrase and round the aesthetic form will not be enough dense and tense with the sheer Godhead.

Even the inspiration from the occult and the psychic is, in comparison to the overhead speech, attenuated in its suggestive aura. It has not the God-grip and the God-sweep of *Savitri's* accent. To get

that accent, however, is no facile task. A poet who has not himself reached the overhead planes can be occasionally a vehicle for their messages, but only if he lets nothing of his ordinary mind interfere. And in his case the ordinary mind must be understood to comprise not merely what has to be kept in abeyance in the writing of all genuine poetry; to get overhead inspiration we must regard as the ordinary mind the whole poetic urge too of the planes that are usually tapped. One who aspires for the speech of *Savitri* must be on guard against the very best he can achieve from another psychological level, unless of course that level has to be brought in for a special purpose like giving the reader an easy hold on an idea before lifting him into the spiritual reality to which the idea is a pointer. Where no such aim is present the natural tendency to create poetry from a more accessible plane must be closely watched. Look at the line:

Concealed because too brilliant for our eyes.

It occurs in an earlier draft of *Savitri* and is quite effective for expressing the excess of light which shuts out scrutiny. Stand it against the line Sri Aurobindo put in its place:

Veiled by the Ray no mortal eye can bear.

Instead of the striking and clever point the first version makes, we have a straight presentation of some high reality, the actual fact is before us without any explaining of its peculiar attribute, the attribute is concretely offered and an atmosphere of the spiritual brought up. The rhythm comes with a more inward thrill, a more intrinsically wide movement as if without the effort mental speech has to put forth for suggesting the ample and the majestic. Indeed it is the changed rhythm which, even more than the changed form of vision, produces the necessary directness—as can be proved by choosing a line in which the imagery can be kept intact and even the language unaltered in every word but only a small modification introduced in the rhythm and by that modification the living thrill transferred from spiritual to mental. This verse, for example, from *Savitri*—

The old adamantine vetoes stood no more

loses the overhead wideness of sound and with it the overhead experience that is caught by the words, if we write:

No more the old adamantine vetoes stood.

Apart from the undue emphasis "stood" gets by closing the line and occupying that final position divorced from "no more", the inner suggestion stops dead short with a staccato rhythm: the huge escape from ancient barriers lacks the profound spiritual thrill. Losing that thrill, the line drops in the directness which is born of the vision being coupled with the word-rhythm natural to the plane where the vision originates.

The coupling of the overhead vision with the overhead word-rhythm is the achievement *par excellence* of Sri Aurobindo. The former is rare enough, but at times it does occur in other mystical poets. There are a few snatches in Yeats, many in A. E., for Yeats, for all his attraction towards the unseen world, had no strong eye for the supremely spiritual. A. E. had a far closer acquaintance with it, yet he too did not go beyond the heart's lyrical God-drunkenness, the glamour of the Celtic mid-worlds and the mind's first few entranced steps above philosophy into direct touch on the Spirit. Though the Upanishads cast their light on him, the overhead accent visited him at scattered moments only and then also, as a rule, in a weakened form. The line—

> And by their silence they adore the lovely silence where He dwells

has something of it, tuned with extreme liquid beauty to a more delicate, more loosened note than is proper to the overhead. A greater intensity is in

> White for Thy whiteness all desires burn,

yet the rhythm and the vision do not hail from much above the eye and ear of spiritualised thought. Some tone of the overhead at its intuitive pitch is:

> Like winds and waters were her ways.
> They heed not immemorial cries;
> They move to their high destinies
> Beyond the little voice that prays.

What A. E. lacks on the whole in dealing with the ultra-mental afflatus is fullness of rhythm—his genuine seizures of it are often thin in sound-stuff and hence unable to drive home its varied cosmicity, so to speak. This is not to deny his poetic merit on planes where he can seize word and vision at once, nor his value as a mystical messenger. That he is not a frequent assured dweller on the Aurobindonian levels detracts nothing from his status as the most spiritual of English singers, the first among them to be a Yogi in the oriental sense.

Even in an oriental poet like Tagore the overhead language-stir is mostly absent. Tagore is the ideal mystic of the emotions—emotions

not feverishly uncontrolled and rendered a confusing flame as in so many devotee-poets of the West but harmoniously psychicised and tinged by the superb serenity which enters into all Indian mysticism—the calm shadow of the overhead. The overhead, however, is an undifferentiated influence in him, far and faint, never intimately known. It may be argued that after all his *Gitanjali* is prose-poetry and is thus prevented from the absolute overhead ring. But, though not so clearly as in poetry proper, that ring can still make prose its medium: Two of the most clearly overhead strains from the Upanishads retain something of their characteristic rhythm in Sri Aurobindo's translations in prose. Listen to this suggestion of the transcendental supra-cosmic Divine: "There the sun shines not and the moon has no splendour and the stars are blind. There these lightnings flash not nor any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shineth." Now hear what Yeats offers in his collaboration with Purohit Swami: "Neither sun, moon, star; neither fire nor lightning lights Him. When He shines, everything begins to shine. Everything in the world reflects His light." Evidently the attempt is to imitate the pithiness of the Upanishadic utterance, but where is the sonority accompanying the pithiness in Sanskrit, the sound subtly conveying the colossal Presence underlying the apparent concentrated points like the huge hidden bulk of an iceberg below the crystalline taperings that show above the sea's surface? Besides, Sanskrit is more naturally polysyllabic than English and the pithy statement in it does not appear bare and clipped. To make the English version equally polysyllabic would be to risk bombast; the same holds in translations from Greek and Latin. To compensate for the missing majesty a certain sweep of word and volume of sound have to be achieved by a special skill in phrase-formation and sentence-construction. Yeats is devoid of the true Upanishadic resonance as well as intonation in also his rendering of the stanza about the cosmic Divine: "Spirit is everywhere, upon the right, upon the left, above, below, behind, in front. What is the world but Spirit?" How poor in comparison to the Aurobindonian vividness and vibrancy: The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the south and to the north of us and above and below and extended everywhere. All this magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal." As prose-poetry it rises head and shoulders over the Yeats-Purohit team-work; but its most choice quality is the overhead breath—a quality which we might expect from an Indian like Tagore in the mystical prose-poetry of *Gitanjali*. Tagore, however, gets the overhead afflatus to a recognisable degree no more than once—in a semi-reminiscence of the Upanishad's verse about the Transcendental. As he originally wrote them, the words run: "There, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor

night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word." Yeats, in the *Oxford Book of English Poetry* edited by him, touched up the Tagorean sentences: "Where thine infinite sky spreadeth for the soul to take her flight, a stainless white radiance reigneth; wherein is neither day nor night, nor form nor colour, nor ever any word." Perhaps the Yeatsian tightening and connectivity add to the overhead intonation; the Irish poet's greater intimacy with the poetic potentialities of English seems to help out better the accent which the Indian has acquired.

The poetry written by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya before he turned Marxist and started versifying proletarian slogans is haunted by the Unknown as puissantly as anything composed by Tagore. His lyrics are a colourful subtlety that lays keen fingers on truths of the inner life, yet instead of plucking the word native to those truths the fingers bring back a creative impress for handling spiritually the speech of ideas and feelings in our normal mind and heart. Except in rare pieces there is very little of the Upanishadic inspiration. The Shelleyan "white radiance" of which Tagore gave an Indian avatar in the passage quoted from *Gitanjali* becomes in Chattopadhyaya:

> . . . the naked everlastingness
> That nor by pleasure nor by pain is stirred,
> Being a hush that bears no human word
> Nor deed nor dream nor passion as a burden.

Deeply inspired are these lines, a true echo by the poetic mind to the overhead harmonies. As poetry they are faultless; as word-rhythm capturing mystical vision, they come close to the overhead stuff Chattopadhyaya is handling but do not arise from it—as does, for instance, Sri Aurobindo's description of the Yogic self-release of Savitri's father, Asvapati, into the spiritual ether by breaking "the intellect's hard and lustrous lid":

> The toiling thinker widened and grew still,
> Wisdom transcendent touched his quivering heart:
> His soul could sail beyond thought's luminous bar;
> Mind screened no more the shoreless infinite.
> Across a void retreating sky he glimpsed
> Through a last shimmer and drift of vanishing stars
> The superconscient realms of motionless peace
> Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
> And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.

Speech and sound are sovereignly adequate to the concrete vision of the mystical altitudes. Not echoes but actual voices are reproduced. The emotional seeker and the philosophical seer are both transfigured, raised towards a mighty moving God-realisation and the profound

actuality of the experience conveyed in an accent leaping from its core. In the last three lines the *Mantra* is heard—and a remarkable technique of labials, sibilants, liquids, nasals and long vowels create at once hauntingly and lullingly, wideningly and envelopingly the impression of a single-mooded unthinkable infinitude of silence. But this technique succeeds because of a special inner rhythm, and it succeeds in a manner which is different from that of any similar outer technique normally possible to Chattopadhyaya. He too can surely bring about fitting effects of vowel and consonant and fill them with inspiration. What is typical here is that the inspiration carrying such effects is received by Sri Aurobindo by breaking completely the "lustrous lid" which divides the overhead from the ranges whence poetry usually springs.

The breaking of the "lustrous lid" is a very real spiritual experience. Upanishads speak of the face of Truth having a golden cover which has to be removed. This cover is composed of the concepts and percepts through which we ordinarily turn our sight towards the Divine. Our concepts and percepts are indeed means of knowledge, rays of Truth, but indirect ones: they acquaint us with the appearance of the Divine, not with the reality of Him; they constitute a brilliant formation like a shield or a lid which falls over the Divine's reality. The formation is not easy to break through: it is "hard" as well as "lustrous" and obstructs a new poise as if there were a mental skull corresponding to the physical. Influences of the Truth-Sun can percolate into the mind and produce now and then a perfect result if the poet trains himself to be sensitive to them. But a sustained stream of light can arrive only if the poet practises that self-training in a deliberate integral way. Yoga is the desideratum—and an important part of Yoga for the poet of the Spirit is a tuning-up to the overhead speech by constantly revolving within his consciousness the *Mantra* and its approximations. Even for the non-poet the *Mantra* and its approximations are a potent means for evolving man into superman: they are the Infinite and the Eternal in one of the most veilless forms of manifestation possible. Therefore, a gift to the world precious in the last degree is *Savitri*. It is also a gift appropriate in the extreme to the position of the giver himself. Philosophical statement lending logical plausibility to facts of the Spirit is necessary in a time like ours when the intellect is acutely in the forefront and Sri Aurobindo has answered the need by writing that expository masterpiece, *The Life Divine*. There too it is not the bare intellect chopping logic: a greater faculty executes deft and many-aspected designs of argumentation and through them appeals to some intuitive intelligence behind the seat of analytic and synthetic judgment. But since the method of logic is accepted, the language of abstract speculation, is used as a framework; this, though serving to hold the attention of the intellectuality of our day, lessens the impact of the

living Reality that is far removed from abstract speculation, be it ever so magnificent and cogent. To create a poetic mould equally massive and multiform as *The Life Divine* for transmitting the living Reality to the furthest bounds of speech—such a task is incumbent on one who stands as the maker of a new spiritual epoch. Without it he would not establish on earth in a fully effective shape the influence brought by him. All evolutionary influences, in order to become dynamic *in toto* must assume poetic shape as correlate to the actual living out of them in personal consciousness and conduct. In that shape they can reach man's inner being persistently and ubiquitously over and above doing so with a luminous and vibrant suggestiveness unrivalled by any other mode of literature or art. But scattered and short pieces of poetry cannot build the sustained and organised *weltanschauung* required for putting a permanent stamp upon the times. Nothing except an epic or a drama can, moving as they do across a wide field and coming charged with inventive vitality, with interplay of characters and events. Nor can an epic which teems with ultra-mental realisations be wholly adequate to its aim if it does not embody these realisations in ultra-mental word and rhythm. Hence, *Savitri* is from every angle the right correlate to the practical drive towards earth-transformation by India's mightiest Master of spirituality in his Ashram at Pondicherry. Next to his own personal working as *Guru* on disciples offering themselves for a global remoulding of their lives, this poem that is at once legend and symbol will be the chief *formateur* of the Aurobindonian Age. Out of its projected fifty thousand lines, about twelve thousand only are said to be ready yet in final version, but even that number is enough to give it a central place, for the whole length of *Paradise Lost* is exceeded and in no other art-creation so continually and cumulatively has inspiration, the lightning-footed goddess, "a sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops", disclosed the Divine's truth and beauty:

> Even was seen as through a cunning veil
> The smile of love that sanctions the long game,
> The calm indulgence and maternal breasts
> Of Wisdom suckling the child laughter of Chance,
> Silence, the nurse of the Almighty's power,
> The omniscient hush, womb of the immortal Word,
> And of the Timeless the still brooding face,
> And the creative eye of Eternity.
> From darkness' heart she dug out wells of light,
> On the undiscovered depths imposed a form,
> Lent a vibrant cry to the unuttered vasts,
> And through great shoreless, voiceless, starless breadths
> Bore earthward fragments of revealing thought
> Hewn from the silence of the Ineffable.

K. D. SETHNA

Papers on Social Reconstruction

I

It is one of the great errors of the human mind to take equality as identical with uniformity. When Rousseau started the revolutionary slogan "Men are born equal", men were carried away in the vehemence of the new spirit and thought that there was absolutely no difference between man and man, all difference must be due to injustice, tyranny and corruption in the social system. Rousseau's was a necessary protest and corrective against the rank inequality that was the order of the day. All men are, however, equal not in the sense that all material particles — sea sands or molecules or atoms, for example — may be equal, that is to say, same in dimension and mass and energy. That is the materialistic mechanistic view, imposed by the first discoveries and conclusions of modern Science, but which has lost much of its cogency in recent times even in respect of the physical world. All men are equal, not in the sense that all have the same uniform value, but that each has his own value. It is the recognition of the personal worth of each individual that gives him true equality with others and not the casting of all into the same mould and pattern, fitting all on to the Procrustean bed, which indeed would mean just the negation of equality. This variability is the very basis of a living equality. Physically all men have not the same height or weight or growth, even so internally too all have not the same magnitude of being or similar power of consciousness.

A social organisation must have two fundamental objects. The central purpose is to serve and help the individual. That is the first thing to be remembered. Organisation for the sake of organisation is not the end. Organisation for the sake of perpetuating a system, however laudable it may be, is not the end either. It is, as I say, by the service that an organisation renders to its individual members, and not merely by its mechanical order and efficiency that it is to be judged. This service, I have said, is twofold. First, each individual must find his proper vocation: the right man in the right place. The function of each man must be in accordance with his nature and character. Secondly, each person, while fulfilling his Dharma, (that is the right

word)' must be trained, must have the opportunity to grow and increase in his being and consciousness. First of all, a prosperous, at least an adequately equipped outer life, and then as adequate a *lebensraum* for the inner personality to have its free and full play and expression.

A totalitarian equality takes men as blocks or chunks of wood and also cuts and clips them as such, whenever and wherever needed, thrusts them indiscriminately into any nook and corner of the social framework for the sake of its upkeep and maintenance. It is something that is characteristic of a modern army — thoroughly mechanised — in which men are not different from the nuts and bolts of a machine, all forming a streamlined massive unity, where persons and individuals as such have no value or consideration, they are dumb and almost dead materials and when worn out just simply to be replaced by others. If it is to be compared to any living thing, we can think of only the regimentation that obtains in an ant-hill or a bee-hive.

Mechanical and totalitarian equality does injustice, to say the least, to the individual, for it does not take into account the variable value and the particularity of each individual. It usually gives him a position and function in the society to which his inner nature and character do not at all respond. The result of such indifference to individuality is evident also in a modern society based as it is on so-called freedom, that is to say, on open competition and struggle. The tragedy of a Bankim eking out his subsistence as a bureaucratic official is not a rare spectacle but the very rule of the social system in vogue. Indeed the so-called steel-frame of governmental organisation of our days sucks in all the best brains and few can survive this process of "evisceration, deprivation, destitution, desiccation and evacuation", to use the glowing and graphic words of T. S. Eliot, although in another connection; few can maintain or express after passing through this grinding or sucking machine their inner reality, the truth and beauty personal to them. The poet regrets

> Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire—

but why, why is it so? Because

> Chill penury repress'd their noble rage
> And froze the genial current of the soul—

The chill penury was nothing else than the uncongenial atmosphere which did not favour the growth of the soul, allow it to follow its own line of development and fulfilment.

At times a remedy was tried: the social pattern was sought to be constructed upon the principle of "Career open to talents"; this was a motto which the great Napoleon endeavoured to carry out in practice. Instead of claims of birth, age or position, he looked for real merit as the "Open Sesame" to the highest ranks involving the gravest duties and responsibilities. Even he, however, could not preserve or carry out fully his good intentions. The Imperator (the First Consul) tried the experiment, but the Emperor already slipped off from the ideal.

But to tell the truth, this remedy, even if successful, is not enough. Something radical is needed. Indeed it is because the radical cure is not sought and attempted that the disease continues or reappears even if held in abeyance for a time.

We have said individual or personal worth should be the chief concern of the social governance, to bring it to birth, to maintain and foster it its principal function. This means naturally freedom, but not the freedom that is demanded by the individualist as against the socialist or the collectivist. For their freedom means freedom for competition and rivalry, freedom for the egos, for selfish interests to fight and battle and survive who can. That is the motto of the competitive society in which we have been living for some time past. That system has become intolerable and hence all the seismic troubles in society today. What is needed is real freedom. For it is easy to see that under the competitive system the apparent freedom is only apparent, a make-believe. It is not freedom, that is to say, free choice and initiation that can work here, it is the pressure from rivals, the impact of adverse circumstances that determine one's will and choice. In the second place, it is not the deeper urges or capacities that are touched and awakened in this way, it is the superficial impulses and preoccupations that find a vent. Man is here only a link in a chain of reactions over which he has hardly any real control: one's decision is limited by conditions beyond one's reach, one's hands are forced, as the common phrase goes.

The problem then is this: how to arrive at the inner freedom, how to contact the inner man, the true person and personality? For we are aiming at nothing less than the Soul, the Self, the Divine in man, God's purpose in the Individual, the Individual as God's instrument. That is the *beau idéal*, so to say, in the human personality which all schemes of social reconstruction must have constantly in view.

The question now is to devise ways and means of materialising this ideal. Circumstanced as man is, in doubt and darkness with regard to his inner nature, one most often does not know one's true vocation; those who do know their minds and are sure of their "mission in life" are the fortunate few, and very few indeed they are. Of the vast majority, some discover themselves only at the fag-end of their life or

when they are already far too committed and in harness in alien fields and among alien faces; others do not discover themselves at all, they need no such revelation: these form the general mass in which the individuals have not developed so far as to come out into any bold relief, they are cast into the stereotype mould, moved more or less by the same general forces of nature and are indistinguishable from each other. It is upon this mass of uniformity that the totalitarian regimentation bases itself easily and naturally.

Still even if human nature in the mass is like this, what the totalitarian system does is to fix and eternise the mould. To admit Nature as it is and leave it at that, to arrange and organise things within that given framework, is, to say the least, only another form of the old *laissez faire* system. Take Nature as it is, but go farther and beyond. That is the problem of all human endeavour.

In ancient times too there were conscious attempts to build and remould human society. The Rishis were not merely spiritual seers, but creators of the social order also. They saw by their vision the inner truths of things, they found principles and laws, right principles and correct laws which establish peace and stability, on the one hand, no doubt, but on the other hand serve also as the frame for the growth and fulfilment of the individual being. The king with his executive body was there to see that the laws were observed and honoured. The later law-givers (the makers of codes, *smritis*) had not the direct and large vision of the Rishis, but they tried their best to maintain the laws as they understood them, elaborate them, change or modify wherever possible or needed under given circumstances. In ancient Europe too, it was Plato who envisaged the ideal Republic, a government of philosophers—the wise who are not actively engaged in the turmoil of life, but stand aloof and detached and can see more of the game and accordingly legislate all the better. In modern times also the rise of a Feuhrer or a Dictator seems to have been a psychological necessity: the mass consciousness is in sore need of a guide, and as the right guide is not easily available, the way of the false prophet is smooth and wide open. As a protection and antidote against such a calamity, we tried here and there to found and organise a government of all talents.

But, again who are the talents and where are they? For a modern society produces at best clever politicians, but very few great souls if at all, who can inspire, guide and create. Not a system or organisation, but such centres of forces, with creative vision and power, it is that mankind sorely needs at this hour. System and organisation come after, they can only be the embodiment of a creative vision.

II

The economic status is not the only or even the chief or real status of man in the society. This should be an obvious truth. To reform or rebuild the society it is not enough to find a new economic basis, however more equitable and efficient. A man's value does not depend upon his wages nor even upon his wage-earning capacity. A man's worth is not the function of his *labour*. To equate the two has been the capital error of "Das Kapital". That is not the Copernican revolution that is needed in the social body today.

Money was always a power and those who had money were always powerful in all ages and countries. Poverty annuls the entire host of good qualities you may have, says the Sanskrit proverb. Only this money power has been shifted from class to class or section to section in a society. In the modern age the demand and tendency is that those who are the first and immediate agents in the chain of the production of wealth should be given all the profit and all the advantage (barring of course the State itself which has the prior and major claim so long as it exists). The rest are considered as mere parasites. Those who do not thus directly produce or help in producing wealth are a burden upon the society and they have no justifiable place there: either they should change their vocation, declass themselves and become labourers or they must go to the wall, subsist somewhere somehow till they finally pass out of existence.

This theory of money power, in spite of its factual or practical truth, is not the whole truth. This is, I should say, the very old Ptolemaic social system, in a new garb, which turns round man as an economic—and physical—being. The Copernican system would view man chiefly as a psychological centre. A truly rational economic system can be based upon such an inner view of the situation. A merely economic view would take man as nothing more than a wage-earning machine and that will give the society and its government a mechanistic pattern. It will forget this simple truism that a man's worth is not and need not be always commensurate with his wage-earning capacity or even his *usefulness* as a citizen (in the way the atom bomb Scientists are proving useful today).

Personal value will mean then not productive value, but creative value, that is to say, the capacity to create values, that means the consideration of the psychological and moral make-up of the individual.

What is the thing in human society which makes it valuable, worthy of humanity, gives it a place of honour and the right to live and continue to live? It is its culture and civilisation, as everyone knows. Greece or Rome, China or India did not attain, at least accord-

ing to modern conceptions, a high stage in economic evolution: the production and distribution of wealth, the classification and organisation of producers and consumers, their relation and functions were, in many respects, what is called primitive. An American of today would laugh at their uncouth simplicity. And yet America has to bow down to those creators of other values, values that are truly valuable. And the values are the creations of the great poets, artists, philosophers, lawgivers, sages and seers. It is they who made the glory that was Greece or Rome or China or India or Egypt. Indeed they are the builders of Culture, culture which is the inner life of a civilisation. The decline of culture and civilisation means precisely the displacement of the "cultured" man by the economic man. In the present age when economic values have been grossly exaggerated holding the entire social fabric in its stifling grip, the cultural spirit has been pushed into the background and made subservient to economic and other cruder forces. That was what Julien Benda, the famous French critic and moralist, once stigmatised as "La Trahison des Clercs"; only, the "clercs" did not voluntarily betray, but circumstanced as they were they could do no better. The process reached its climax—perhaps one should say the very nadir—in the Nazi experiment and something of it still continues in the Russian dispensation. There the intellectuals or the intelligentsia are totally harnessed to the political machine, their capacities are prostituted in the service of a socio-economic plan. Poets and artists and thinkers are made to be protagonists and propagandists of the new order. It is a significant sign of the times how almost the whole body of scientists—the entire Brain Trust of mankind today, one might say—have been mobilised for the fabrication of the Atom Bomb. Otherwise they cannot subsist, they lose all economic status.

In the older order, however, a kindlier treatment was meted out to this class, this class of the creators of values. They had patrons who looked after their physical well-being. They had the necessary freedom and leisure to follow their own bent and urge of creativity. Kings and princes, the court and the nobility, in spite of all the evils ascribed to them, and often very justly, have nevertheless been the nursery of art and culture, of all the art and culture of the ancient times. One remembers Shakespeare reading or enacting his drama before the Great Queen, or the poignant scene of Leonardo dying in the arms of Francis the First. Those were the truly great classical ages and art or man's creative genius hardly ever rose to that height ever since. The downward curve started with the advent and growth of the bourgeoisie when the artist or the creative genius lost their supporters and had to earn their own living by the sweat of their brow. Indeed the greatest tragedies of frustration, because of want and privation, occur, not as much among the "lowest" classes who are usually considered as the poorest and the

most miserable in society, but in that section from where come the intellectuals, "men of light and leading", to use the epithet they are honoured with. For very few of this group are free to follow their inner trend and urge, but have either to coerce and suppress them or stultify them in the service of lesser alien duties, which mean "forced labour". The punishment for refusing to be drawn away and to falsify oneself is not unoften the withdrawal of the bare necessities of life, in certain cases sheer destitution. A Keats wasting his energies in a work that has no relation to his inner life and light, or a Madhusudan dying in a hospital as a pauper, are examples significant of the nature of the social structure man lives in.

It is one of the great illusions—or perhaps a show plank for prepaganda—to think or say that the so-called poorer classes are the poorest and the most miserable. It is not so in fact. Really poor are those who have a standard of life commensurate with their inner nature and consciousness—of beauty and orderliness and material sufficiency and yet their actual status and function in society do not provide them with the necessary wherewithals and resources. No amount of philanthropic sentimentalising can suppress or wipe off the fact that the poor do not feel the pinch of poverty so much as do those who are poor and yet are to live and move as not poor. It all depends upon one's standard. One is truly rich or poor not in proportion to one's income, but in accordance with one's needs and the means to meet them. And all do not have the same needs and requirements. This does not mean that the needs of the princes, the aristocrats, the magnates are greater than those of the mere commoner. No, it means that there are people, there is a section of humanity found more or less in all these classes, but mostly in less fortunate classes, whose needs are intrinsically greater and they require preferential treatment. There should be none poor or miserable in society, well and good. But this should not mean that all the economic resources of the society must be requisitioned only to enrich—to pamper—the poor. For there is a pampering possible in this matter. We know the *nouveaux riches*, the *parvenus* and the kind of life they lead with their fair share boldly seized. A levelling, a formal equalisation of the economic status, although it may mean uplift in certain cases, may involve gross injustice to others. The ideal is not equal distribution but rational distribution of wealth, and that distribution should not depend upon any material function, but upon psychological demands. Is this bourgeois economics ? Even if it is so, the truth has to be faced and recognised. You can call truth by the name bourgeois and hang it, but it will revive all the same, like the Phœnix out of the ashes.

If it is said that the proletarian—the manual labourer—is given economic freedom not for the sake of that freedom merely, but for the

sake of the cultural opportunity also that he will have in that way. None can demur to this noble and generous ideal, but what must not be forgotten in that preoccupation is the fact that there exists already a culturally predisposed class in the present society who also require immediate care and nourishment so that they may grow and flourish as they should. In our eagerness to take up the enterprise and adventure of reclaiming deserts and heaths and moorlands, there is a chance of our losing sight of the precious fertile lands, rich in possibilities, that we already possess. The economic status has to be improved for all who are adversely placed in the modern system, certainly; but for a real improvement based upon just and true needs, for an adjustment that will make for the highest good of the society, what is first required is to ascertain the psychological status which should alone, at least chiefly, determine the economic status.

In the old Indian social organisation there was at the basis such a psychological pattern and that must have been the reason why the structure lasted through millenniums. It was a hierarchical system but based upon living psychological forces. Each group or section or class in it had inevitably its appropriate function and an assured economic status. The Four Orders—the Brahmin (those whose pursuit was knowledge—acquiring and giving knowledge), the Kshatriya (the fighters, whose business it was to give physical protection), the Vaishya (traders and farmers who were in charge of the wealth of the society, its production and distribution) and the Sudra (servants and mere labourers)—are a natural division or stratification of the social body based upon the nature and function of its different members. In the original and essential pattern there is no sinister mark of inferiority branded upon what are usually termed as the lower orders, especially the lowest order. If some are considered higher and are honoured and respected as such, it meant simply that the functions and qualities they stand for constitute in some way higher values, it did not mean that the others have no value or are to be spurned or neglected. The brain must be given a higher place than the stomach, although all its support and nourishment come from there. Hierarchy means, in modern terms, that the essential services must pass first, should have certain priorities. And according to the older view-point, the Brahmin, being the emblem and repository of knowledge, was considered as the head of the social body. He is the fount and origin of a culture, the creator of a civilisation; the others protect, nourish and serve, although all are equally necessary for the common welfare.

Fundamentally all human society is built upon this pattern which is psychological and which seems to be Nature's own life-plan. There is always this fourfold stratification or classification of members in any collective human grouping: the Intellectual (taken in the broadest

sense) or the Intelligentsia, the Military, the Trader and the Labourer. In the earlier civilisations—when civilication was being formed—especially in the East,it was the first class that took precedence over the rest and was especially honoured; for it is they who give the tone and temper and frame of life in the society. In later epochs, in the mediaeval age for example, the age of conquerors and conquistadors, and of Digvijaya, man as the warrior, the Kshatriya, the Samurai or the Chivalry—was given the place of honour. Next came the age of traders and merchants, and the industrial age with the invention of machines. Today the labourer is rising in his turn to take the prime place.

As we have said, a normally healthy society is a harmonious welding of these four elements. A society becomes diseased when only one member gets inflated and all-powerful at the expense of others or whenever there is an unholy alliance of some against the rest. Priestcraft, the Church militant, Fanaticism (religious or ideological), Inquisition are corruptions that show themselves when the first principle, the principle of Brahminhood, becomes exclusive and brings in arrogance and ignorance. Similarly colonisation and imperialism of the type only too familiar to us are aberrations of the spirit that the second principle embodies—the spirit of the Kshatriya. Likewise financial cartels, the industrial magnates, the profiteer, the arriviste are diseased growths in the economic body of a modern society which has forgotten the true Vaishya spirit, that seeks to produce wealth in order to share and distribute fairly and equitably. The remedy of these ills society has suffered from is not the introduction of a fourth evil, the tyranny of the Fourth Estate of the proletariate. The Fourth was reduced, it is true, to a state of slavery and serfdom, of untouchability, at its *reductio ad absurdum*. The cure, we say, is not in blind revolt and an inauguration of the same evil under a new name and form, which means its perpetuation, but in the creation of a new life and soul, that can happen only with the creation of a new head and front Zeus-like that would give birth to the goddess of light and knowledge, inspirer of a true Brahminhood.

We repeat a fair and sure economic basis has to be found for the down-trodden, proletarian or other. For the proletariate is not the only unfortunate in the human society. There are whole groups of the unfortunate in the three other Estates also. Or perhaps if we like we can extend the meaning of the term "proletariate" and include in it all the less favoured sections of all the Four Orders.

As already stated the remedy is to be sought in the salvage of the individual. The present trend of social forces is towards movements in the mass. That was necessary perhaps; for larger, wider, indeed world-wide unities have to be found and established for the unification for the whole of humanity. But in the drive towards that goal Nature seems

to have overlooked for the moment the case of the individual, and naturally, man has been blind and onesided in his attempts to reform and rebuild society and the world. This neglected thread has to be taken up again and put back into the web of social life. The value of the individual, the worth and speciality of each person has to be found and recognised: indeed it is round that centre that society can best be reformed and remade. And this can only be done by a spiritual outlook. For the true individual is founded in the spirit, the spiritual consciousness; so long as man is limited to his body and life and mind and his functions solely determined by his earthly nature, so long he must needs be taken as a mere element in the mass, the cosmic mass. The true individual or person emerges only when something of man's spiritual being finds expression in these lower elements of his nature. And when man totally transcends his inferior sphere of existence and rises into his divine status where things are marshalled and organised through each individual truth-centre, then only there is the chance of a perfect social system descending upon earthly life.

Perhaps this is a far cry from the level of our normal humanity. But things have to be regarded and moulded from the highest heights; otherwise there will be no real solution, there can be only a temporary make-believe and a final frustration.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

Vedic Wisdom in the Vedanta

THE MYSTIC HONEY

The title of the subject would suggest that this short dissertation is intended to show that what is called Knowledge of the mystic Honey, the *Madhu-Vidya*, mentioned in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, does in sober truth form part of the wealth of Wisdom treasured in the hymns of the Rig Veda. True, this is so; but what is of greater moment to us is that the subject occasions the application of a fresh light, the light long lost, but recovered for us by Sri Aurobindo for the elucidation of the texts of the Rik-samhita. The Madhu Brahmana of the Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad is just an illustration of the truth that the sages of the Upanishads often draw their inspiration from the earlier wisdom of the Vedic seers; either they seek the support of the mystic tradition of their forefathers for their intuitions and conclude with the quotation of a Rik or two and mention a Rishi, or rediscover the hidden meaning of a hymn or verse addressed to a Vedic God and restate it concisely in the language of their age. These sages and thinkers of the original Vedanta, the Upanishads, are not, as are supposed by some moderns, apostates from the Vedic cult, worship and tradition, but are seekers of Self-Knowledge and God-Knowledge, endeavouring whenever necessary or possible to get at the secrets of the Vedic Wisdom, with their lives dedicated to the development of an inner Self-culture. Therefore in our pursuit of knowledge for a correct understanding of the Madhu Vidya of the Shatapatha Brahmana we adopt a positive method of interpreting the Riks quoted therein and shall scrutinise and see the relevancy of the Vedic verses being cited in the context. This certainly involves the rejection of certain theories in regard to the Veda and Vedanta propounded by western Orientalists and based to some extent on indigenous scholasticism represented by Sayana's great commentaries on the Brahmanas and Samhitas of all the Vedas. Even if we ignore these views and hold them as misconceptions partly due to temperamental inequipment, fanciful and fundamentally wrong in their starting assumptions, conjectural and hasty in their generalisations and conclusions, we must still recognise the fact that after all they are the special contributions of Vedic scholarship from the West, are improvements in their own way with the help of many branches of modern learning upon the information given by native Indian scholarship, by mediaeval commentaries on the most ancient texts of a remote pre-historic age.

Therefore it will be of no use to state, much less to examine the conclusions of modern scholarship concerning the subject of the Vedic hymns and Vedic seers; but even though we need not scrutinise the position of orthodox Indian schools of thought in regard to the original and most sacred scripture of ancient India, it is essential that we must know and bear in mind what it is and how it has for many centuries held sway over the learned classes. Great scholars, teachers and founders of various sects in India, not only the priests and pundits, have followed and admitted in practice as correct the long line of the ritualistic tradition springing from the Brahmanas. Though ritualism as a professed Vedic creed has for long existed as is evidenced by the texts of the Brahmanas it is Jaimini, the author of Mimamsa sutras who made it *the* Vedic creed; he gave it a definite shape basing it on a system of philosophic thought, propounded the theory that though *mantras* and *Brahmanas* form together the Veda, the former has value in so far as it subserves the purpose of rituals for which the Brahmanas are the sole supreme eternal authority! Since then the Upanishads which form part of the Brahmanas, treated by the Jaimini school as supplements subsidiary to the Brahmanas, *Vidhi-sesha* became the book of knowledge *Jnana-kanda*, in the later systems of philosophy, while the Brahmanas, the book of rituals, *Karma-kanda*, occupied the central part of the Veda with the *mantras* tagged to them for use in the ceremonials of the Vedic rites. This division of the *Karma* and *Jnana* portions became more and more pronounced until a tacit understanding among different schools of religio-philosophic thought was established with the stamp of approval recorded in the classical writings of original thinkers, of great philosophic teachers from Shankaracharya downwards.

The relegation of the mantras, verse or prose (Rik or Yajus) to the lumber-room was brought to prominence by their occasional display and convenient use with doubtful significance in the dominant ceremonial religion so much so that the Mimamsakas use the word *Shruti* to mean Brahmanas, while to the philosophers, the later teachers of the Vedanta, the term means the Upanishads. This is the position that has been in vogue for many centuries now.

While the Brahmanas (Karma-kanda) found their votaries in Jaimini and his followers with their rules of textual interpretation and theories of knowledge and queer notions of the Vedic rites and their efficacies and fruits, the Upanishads (Jnana-kanda) were taken up for enquiry by others, the doubtful texts were examined and reconciled, systematised and put into shape by the formulation of what is called the Vedanta Darshana of Badarayana who has had the fortune—shall we say misfortune—of having easily a dozen diverse interpreters some of whom are poles apart, irreconcilably opposed to one another. The *mantras*, the hymns of the Veda, Parent of the Brahmanas including the Upanishads

did not receive the attention of any one, separately as a body of original sacred texts; they became settled into oblivion as a living scripture, but continued to enjoy a respectable place as a sacred name, a hallowed memory in the minds of laymen and priests and pundits though not always for identical reasons. This neglected, rather unclaimed treasure, this soul of all that is sacred in the life and literature of the race, bearing the name *Veda* which means knowledge did at last claim the attention of an extraordinary scholar, Sayanacharya, of the fourteenth century who was well equipped with all that is necesary for undertaking the Herculean task. He has left to posterity a finished and complete commentary on all the Brahmanas and Mantra samhitas of which the Rik samhita presents insuperable difficulties for interpretation. But he overcomes them, gives generally a lucid exposition of the hymns assigning their place in the ceremonial worship and presents a harmonious whole of the plan of his work. The merits of this stupendous work of Sayana are many and so precious that his work is an indispensable help for Vedic studies. But there is a central weakness, a defect that is at the very foundation of the edifice that he has put up in his commentary on the Rik samhita. He shared the religious beliefs of his age, an age far removed from the times of the Brahmanas, not to speak of those of the hymns which he chose to explain. He followed and expounded the Mimamsa doctrine of ritualism as the soul of the Vedas, wrote his commentaries first on the Brahmanas and the Yajur Veda which is the Veda for sacrifice and began his commentary on the Rig Veda. He did so, as he himself explains in the introduction to his Rig-bhashya, because a finished commentary on the Brahmanas, the central part of the Veda for the ritualist, would facilitate his labours in explaining the Riks, obviously in such a way as to make them fit in with the Brahmana texts. In this endeavour he has proved a success beyond measure, a success that never crowned the previous efforts either of the Brahmanas themselves or later of the Mimamsakas. For the latter did not care to go into the meanings of the Riks referred to in the Brahmana passages and even when they had to know the sense of a *mantra*, they found it smooth-sailing as the ready-made explanation was given in the Brahmana texts with which alone they were concerned in constructing their rules of interpretation of scriptural texts. In a sense Sayana went far beyond the Brahmanas themselves; for it is doubtful if the latter were sure that they have correctly interpreted the Riks even for the purpose of rituals, and what is more, they have not taken up the whole body of the hymnal text for explanation and use in the sacrificial rites; above all, they seem to make an attempt to explain only select hymns and stress their significance in their own way without themselves claiming or voicing superiority in wisdom and authority over the *mantras*.

But Sayana's commentary on the Riks succeeds in establishing Ritualism as the sole and central creed of the Veda, founded on the eternal self-existent words and passages of the Brahmanas to which the mantras are the uncreated self-existent accessories. Therefore he explains verses, even when they are of spiritual and mystical import in a half-hearted manner and makes them fit into the context of a ritual and where he could not avoid the sense of the hymns which are avowedly spiritual he is frank and states, 'These verses convey spiritual ideas; other verses also can be similarly explained, but as they help us little in our purpose which is to substantiate the supremacy of sacrificial rites we need not trouble ourselves further in this direction.' It is beyond the scope of our subject here to recount the defects and virtues of Sayana's commentary. Suffice it to say that his work is indispensable for a student of the Veda for the invaluable help it gives—the numerous references, mention of ancient authorities, traditions, lexicon, legends, alternative meanings suggesting other possible senses of words, verses and hymns, elucidation of accents and points of grammar and construction of sentences in these ancient litanies of a remote antiquity. There are other commentaries on the Riks, but in fragments and are of little avail and importance before the weight and prestige of Sayana and the volume of his work.* Nevertheless the central defect of Sayana's work remains. It is the defect of a representative obscurantism of the time, unprogressive and narrow, vast erudition developing 'an extraordinary poverty of sense' attached to the hymns of the Vedic seers, enthroning in the heart of the Vedic Religion the external cult and worship of Nature Powers and performance of ceremonial rites for material benefits and other-worldly pleasures, a sublimated hedonistic doctrine before which refined ideals of an inner and higher life and spiritual knowledge have their facets disfigured or eclipsed and hidden in disgrace.

If we accept Sayana's interpretation of the hymns, it means that we also accept the underlying motive of his commentary to which we have already made clear reference. It means that all the sacred scriptures from the Vedas downwards, the *Agamas Shaiva, Vaishnava* and *Shakta*, the *Puranas*, the writings and teachings of great saints of the North, of the Nayanars and Alwars of the South, are all fanciful products of minds in fool's paradise when they sing the glory of the Veda as the store-house of all sacred knowledge. In short the universal reverence for the Vedas, their reputation as the repository of Divine Wisdom is a chimera, a phantasm without substance, a 'colossal myth'.

*Anandatirtha, known as Madhwacharya, earlier than Sayana has written a commentary on the first forty suktas of the Rik samhita. It is an interesting work pointing out that the Riks have to be interpreted in three ways and that the hymns are the fountain-head of all spiritual knowledge and God-knowledge.

THE RECOVERED LIGHT

Sri Aurobindo marks out a fresh line of approach to the study of the Vedic hymns. Under uncommon circumstances he made his entry into the world of Vedic wisdom, perceived with the discerning eye of light the revealing images of the Vedic Gods and Goddesses, chanced upon the hidden secrets of human speech as a living force and organic growth with the people of that original Epoch of the Rig Veda, opened the doors behind which lay open the covert meanings of the *mantras* of the Rik samhita. It is sufficient for our purpose to note just some of the salient features of the system of his interpretation as that will facilitate its application to the subject on hand; and more is not possible within the limits of the space we have set for ourselves here. We make no apology for giving relevant passages, where necessary, culled from Sri Aurobindo's own writings. "The Rishis arranged the substance of their thought in a system of parallelism by which the same deities were at once internal and external powers of universal Nature, and they managed its expression through a system of double values by which the same language served for their worship in both aspects. The psychological sense predominates and is more pervading, close knit and coherent than the physical." It is the latter sense—the physical and the external—that is more pervading than the spiritual, the inner and psychological, in the interpretations of Sayana on which European scholarship has based its theories of Nature-worship of primitive semi-civilised Aryans of the Rig Vedic times. Yet it is the spiritual and inner sense that is restored to the hymns in the writings of Sri Aurobindo on Veda and Vedic symbolism. For the Rig Veda belongs to an age when the social stage of the race was profoundly religious and imaginative in its religion as is always the case with human society in its beginnings—we may call it primitive—whether or not it is cultured, civilised and economically advanced. A strongly symbolic mentality governs its thought, customs and institutions; in fact "Symbolism and a wide-spread imaginative or intuitive religious feeling go together..... The symbol then is of something which man feels to be present behind himself and his life and his activities—the Divine, the Gods, the Vast and the deep Unnamable, a hidden, living and mysterious nature of things. All his religious and social institutions, all the moments and phases of his life are to him symbols in which he seeks to express what he knows or guesses of the mystic influences which are behind them and and shape and govern them."

This is the background against which the language and substance of the hymns and the seers and the Gods of the Rig Veda have to be approached for a sensible appreciation and understanding. "The Vedic

deities are names, powers and personalities of the universal Godhead and they represent each some essential puissance of the Divine Being. They manifest the Cosmos and are manifest in it. Children of the Light, Sons of the Infinite, they recognise in the soul of man their brother and ally and desire to help and increase him by themselves increasing in him so as to possess his world with their light, strength and beauty. The Gods call man to a divine companionship and alliance; they attract and uplift him to their fraternity, invite his aid and offer theirs against the Sons of Darkness and Division. Man in return calls the Gods to his sacrifice, offers to them his swiftnesses and his strengths, his clarities and his sweetnesses and receives them into his being and their gifts into his life."

The Gods, then, are not simply "poetical personalities of abstract ideas or of psychological and physical functions of Nature. To the Vedic seers they are living realities; the vicissitudes of the human soul represent a cosmic struggle not merely of principles and tendencies but of the Cosmic Powers which support and embody them. These are the Gods and the Demons. On the world-stage and in the individual soul the same real drama with the same personages is enacted."

This, in sum, is the vision that Sri Aurobindo presents to us in his studies of the Rig Veda. But when we take up the texts we must remember what he has pointed out, that the Rik samhita as we have it 'represents the close of a period', not its commencement, not even some of its successive stages.' A sufficiently long period must have elapsed before there could be settled such an invariable fixity of thought and substance with depth, richness and subtlety, couched in a finished metrical form marked by a constant masterful skill in technique.

It is this line of interpretation that eminently fits into the texts of the earlier Upanishads which make reference to the Veda or Vedic seers, and quote occasionally for their conclusions verses from the hymns of the Rik Samhita. For the Brahmanas and the Upanishads are the record of a powerful revival which took the sacred text and ritual as a starting-point for a new statement of the spiritual thought and expression. If the Brahmanas represent the conservation of forms, the Upanishads the revelation of the soul of the Veda.

THE MADHU BRAHMANA

The Madhu Brahmana of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, not the same as the Madhu Vidya of the Chhandogya (III. I.) contains certain Riks which we are called upon to consider here. When we apply to them the principles underlying the line of interpretation that we adopt for reasons already stated and keep in mind the significant sense of the

Vedic names and words and the right conception of the Gods, we will find no difficulty in appreciating the propriety of introducing the Riks at the conclusion of the short discourse that the Upanishad gives in praise of the mystic honey, the *Madhu*. Before enquiring into the meaning and drift of the Vedic verses in the Vedanta, it is necessary that we must know the subject-matter of the Madhu Brahmana; as well as the legends grown around it as recorded in the Shatapatha Brahmana; we can then examine and trace the legends to their source in the hymns and see to what extent they are in fact supported by the Riks themselves; for the Brahmanas often quote a tradition or legend to find some explanation for certain hymns or verses which are used as parts of the Vedic rites of which the Soma sacrifice is the most important and indispensable for the performance of others, such as Ashwamedha. There is a ceremony introductory to the Soma Yaga, called *Pravargya* with which is closely associated the Madhu Vidya. And here is the legend connected with what is called the Pravargya ceremony.

Indra taught the sage Dadhyan, son of Atharvan, the secret of Pravargya Vidya and Madhu Vidya, saying that in case he revealed this knowledge to others his head would be cut off. The twin Gods, Aswins, overheard this and called upon Dadhyan to teach them the forbidden knowledge. To escape Indra's punishment they cut off the sage's head and replaced it with a horse's head with which the sage revealed the Vidyas to the Aswins. When Indra was apprised of this breach of faith on the part of the sage, with his thunderbolt he cut off the sage's head which was the horse's; thereupon the Aswins restored to Dadhyan his own head (Shatapatha Br. XIV. 1.4). Wherever Dadhyan and Aswins are mentioned in the Riks, Sayana refers to the Pravargya and Madhu Vidyas and recalls this story. There is another story about the sage and though it is not connected with Pravargya we shall mention it here with a purpose which will be presently evident, as it is quoted from another Brahmana by Sayana in his commentary (R. V. I.84-13, 14.).

When Dadhyan, son of Atharvan lived, the Asuras were frightened and subdued by his very sight, but occupied the whole earth the moment he departed to Swarga. Indra desired to know what happened to him and if anything of him was left behind on earth. As a result of the enquiry, he caused a search made for the horse's head with which he taught the Aswins the Pravargya Vidya and the Madhu Vidya. It was at last found in Sharyanavat (Kurukeshtra) and with the bones of the skull Indra destroyed the Asuras. Such stories from the Brahmanas may have some meaning, some symbolic significance; but it is ridiculous, dangerous to rely upon these tales which the Brahmanas narrate to explain the Riks used in connection with rituals. That the sacrifice is a symbolic Vedic rite will be evident from a casual perusal of the

Brahmanas. But to follow the Brahmanas in the amplification of their ritual system is difficult for the simple reason that after all the elaborate explanations by means of stories some of which may have had a historic basis, some fictitious, some symbolic, they arrive at and impress upon us in an overwhelming voice the supermacy and sublime ideal of the Vedic *Karma*. If we are concerned with symbols, they are the symbols of the Vedic age; it is the symbolism that is inextricably woven into the texture of the hymns of the Rig Veda that is what matters to us at any rate in this context.

It is something that Sayana has not resorted to quoting the Puranas or the Mahabharata in which it is stated that the bones of the Sage Dadhichi were used for the construction of Indra's thunderbolt! The earlier legend cut off the horse's head of Dadhichi with Indra's thunderbolt before the later stories fabricated it with Dadhichi's bones! Howsoever unreasonable and inconsistent the method of explanation may be, it forms part of the plan of Sayana's commentary to discover the meanings of *Mantras* with the help of Brahmanical legends and Puranic stories. Though these may be occasionally helpful and they may have been current in some form coeval with the times of the Vedic hymns or prior to them, they are likely to mislead us in a serious search for the sense of the hymns themselves. We want the Sun and not flints to produce fire and light to see him. To explain the Riks with the help of dubious and absurd legends as Sayana does, giving them a historic colour is as unreasonable as unwarranted. For the external sense of the Veda it is indeed permissible to treat historic incidents as such, provided they are so mentioned in the original hymns themselves. But Sayana, when he mentions certain actual occurrences in the lives of sages and kings of Rig Vedic times to which the hymns themselves bear testimony forgets that he is betraying the Mimamsakas, the ritualists whose cause he champions, and according to whom every letter in the Mantras and Brahmanas is eternal and anything that appears in the Veda as history is just seemingly so but in truth refers to something eternal.* Now let us consider the nature of the Pravargya ceremony which is introductory to the Soma sacrifice. That this Vedic rite is a symbolic act would be evident from the significant names and the substances used and the hymns uttered. Here Sayana is superbly dependable and this is the substance of his explantion and description of the rite given in his commentary (Taiti. v. II. I. and Shata. Br. XIV. I. I–II). There are three terms which we must note and they are

* I refer the reader to Shabaraswami's Bhashya on Jaimini Sutras I. 2.-10. When a Vedic passage contains statement of an occurrence, Shabara says, it is not really so, but has a hidden meaning referring to the eternality of things, at any rate, it is to be so interpreted. This interesting topic I hope to take up on another occasion.

significant names—Mahavira, Gharma, Pravargya. Gharma is something prepared, an eatable cooked for offering in the ritual by pouring fresh milk in the heated clarified butter. This act of pouring of the milk is called *pravrinjana* which is the same as *pravargya*. Mahavira is the earthenware in the shape of a mortar in which the aforesaid *gharma* is prepared for offering. Sayana adds that though these three are three different things they all have come to be meant as one and the same thing figuratively *gauni vritti*. But the whole rite is named *pravargya* after the aforesaid act of pravarga. For indeed it is often called *pravargya karma* as it is the act that is the important factor here, though by courtesy, *upachara*, it is called Vidya. But the Madhu-Vidya which is called a limb, *anga* of this rite is not an act but a knowledge, a secret which is represented by the chant of certain Riks, addressed to Aswins.

We are not concerned with the further details of the pravargya rite, but what has been stated is necessary and sufficient to enable us to understand the significance of the ritual act of which the knowledge of Madhu is an important limb. Light is thrown on the symbolic character by the suggestive names of the substance that is cooked, of what is poured into it, and of the vessel in which the preparation takes place. In the system of Vedic symbolism *gharma* is brilliant heat; it is a kindred of *ghrita* and *ghrini*, all of the same family meaning 'to shine, to burn'; *payas* is milk, the luminous yield of the Cow of Light; *Mahavira* the earthen vessel is the human body of great heroic mettle. Now the sacrificer, the human soul, after his consecration for the performance of the Soma sacrificer which is the offering of all one's experiences and delight of existence to the Gods, the Universal Powers of the supreme Godhead, starts with an act by which the nourishing rays of Light, the yield of the luminous Cow, enter into the vessel of human body of heroic strength for the sustenance and completion of the substance that is cooked. It is the brilliant heat of Tapas held in the human vessel that is trained, kept under control and so purified and disciplined by the rigours of tapasya, *Mahavirasamskara*, that it can hold the healthy and brilliant heat of the substances of being to be offered to the Gods. To make the process of preparation pleasant and intelligible, more and more of the soothing luminous rays of knowledge enter into the course of the sadhana at work in the body. This is still an introductory stage, when the human soul with a disciplined life and mind prepares for the ultimate goal, needs the help of the higher powers, and has consecrated itself for offering its all to the Gods. This indeed requires a heroic strength, for the soul's giving of itself is not a mental offering done in a metaphysical manner; it is a felt abandoning of itself; its strength and knowledge and material lodgement to the care and joy of the Gods. For such a consummation aimed at, the soul whose embodiment is feeble

is not competent to aspire and receive what it gets in response; for it will break, cannot hold the gifts of the Gods in their turn. For, as is stated in a different connection by the seer Pavitra 'He tastes not that Delight who is unripe and whose body has not suffered in the heat of the fire; they alone are able to bear that and enjoy who have been prepared by the flame'. (Sri Aurobindo R. V. IX. 83.)

Therefore when the human soul, the sacrificer, is engaged in the act of putting all his enlightenment and the whole substance of his being at the disposal of the Gods, he avoids the risk of breaking and requires help. Whose help does he seek at this stage? Agni, the Divine Flame, is already kindled, the Divine Will and Strength is at work in him, and he has turned to fulfil his Dharma, entered the path of sacrifice by the help of the God who is the nearest to him, to the Earth, of all the Gods; for Agni is the messenger and voice of the Gods. Who then is the God who is to come for help now? Indra is not yet to come; he is the lord of the triple worlds and their Gods, comes at a stage when the Soma juice is ready for offering. At the present preparatory stage he requires the help of a God or Gods who could give him health, strength and joy to sustain him in his effort so that he can later continue the journey towards the Sacrifice. Now he calls upon the Twin Powers, the riders on the horse signifying Life-energy, Aswins; for they are 'the effective Powers of the Ananda which proceed out of the Truth-Consciousness and which manifesting variously in all the three worlds maintain man in his journey'. They use the vitality of the human being as the motive-force of the journey. They give health, beauty, wholeness to the body, ease and joy; they are the lords of weal and bliss. It is thus that the Aswins figure in the Madhu Vidya without which the initial stages of the sacrifice cannot be gone through. For it is the offering to the Aswins of the Sweet, *madhu*, the Delight of life that evokes their response and they come with their swift-moving powers of healing and health and strength and joy. It is by the completion of the introductory stage in the now-forgotten path of the Vedic Yoga by the help of the Aswins, the sacrificer the sadhaka enters into a higher status, to a wider existence outgrowing the bounds of the normal mind and life that persist not in the earlier stages alone of the sadhana, but a good deal later also. When a luminous knowledge of the Delight of Being in the physical existence becomes fixed in the intellectual mind, then the condition is present for the fulfilment of the limited life and mind, for their self-exceeding handed over to the charge of the higher Powers. This, then, is to be noted of the Twin Divine Powers, that they are the riders on the path, symbolic of Force, especially of life-energy and nervous force; they are seekers of honey Madhu, Gods of enjoyment, physicians, bring back youth to the old, health to the sick, wholeness to the maimed. Though they are also 'Powers of Truth, of intelligent action and right enjoyment', their special

function is 'to perfect the nervous or vital being in man in the sense of action and enjoyment'.

DADHYAN ATHARVA

Wherever the name Dadhyan occurs in the Rig Veda it is expressively or by implication or allusively associated with the Twin Honey-seekers, the Aswins, who are Divine Powers embodying the constant 'Vedic dualism of Power and Light, Knowledge and Will, Consciousness and Energy'. Who is this Dadhyan? Why are the Aswins attracted to him? What is the Madhu that Dadhyan knows and gives out to Aswins? In our attempt to get at the inner sense of such Riks as mention these things we shall confine ourselves to the internal evidence of the hymns themselves and keep aside the legends or any traditions that are employed to explain them. For if legends are often a morbid growth covering a vital truth or a crust over the kernel difficult to separate, traditional knowledge in such cases frequently proves a false light, a light that rather obscures than illuminates. Even if a legend wholly or in part bears on the face of it a symbolic significance, it is prudent and advisable to depend mainly on the earlier symbolism of the Vedic seers for arriving at the substance of the Riks. Let us, then, take up the question of Dadhyan; for we have already got an idea of the Aswins who are the seekers of honey, Madhu; and Madhu is decidedly honey in later literature, though it often means in the Rig Veda anything sweet used as a food, especially drink. But it denotes more precisely Soma Rasa, the juice of the Soma plant in the external sense, and in the sense of the Mystics Soma is the Lord of Delight and Immortality and the *rasa* is the delight of Existence.

That Dadhyan is the son of Atharvan, had the knowledge of Madhu, that he gave it to Aswins on their providing him with a horse's head, that the Aswins drew into themselves the mind of Dadhyan and then the horse's head uttered his words to them, that he himself had got that secret knowledge from Twshtri, that Indra with the bones of Dadhyan slew ninety-nine *Vritras*—these are all the accounts we meet with repeatedly in the hymns—everything else belongs to the legends.* Now it is necessary to fix the sense of Dadhyan. When this is done, the rest of the names that figure in these Riks referring to Dadhyan offer no difficulty whatever as we shall see presently. We note that names in the Rig Veda are used with a special stress on their significance,

* R.V. I. 116-12 ; 117-22 ; 119-9 ; 84-13, 14. These and other Riks mention or allude to the same transaction of Dadhyan with Aswins, and only once to Indra using Dadhyan. Dadhyan opens the Cow-stalls, but that is not connected with the Aswins (IX. 108. 4).

markedly evident in the case of the names of sages, e. g. Jamadagni, Bharadwaja, Atri and of kings, such as Sudas, or of Gods, Ushas, Indratamà. Dadhyan Atharvà is a fine illustration of this truth. The name is applied to the family of Angirasas, who are mentioned as Gods as well as the Fathers. Discussing the facts about Angirasas Sri Aurobindo remarks that 'They may have been originally human beings deified by their descendants and in their apotheosis given a divine parentage and a divine function; or they may have been originally demi-gods, powers of Light and Flame who became humanised as the Fathers of the race and the discoverers of its wisdom'. This eminently applies to Atharva. Whether he is a deified sage or a humanised Higher Divine power, the Riks always mention him as the first to bring forth Agni by churning from the *Pushkara*, the Supreme Heaven, from the summit (lit. head) of the universe (Vishwasya murdhnah), while his son Dadhyan set ablaze Agni, the slayer of Vritras and the shatterer of their fortresses (c.f. Rig Veda VI. 16, 13-14). Elsewhere in the hymns we are told that it was Atharva who first by sacrifices held together the Devas (X. 92-10); or it was he who by sacrifices made or spread the path leading to the discovery of the luminous Cow taken away concealed by the *Panis* (yajnair Atharva prathamah pathas tate) (I. 83-5). These accounts go to show that he is prominent if not the foremost among the Angirasas, radiant lustres of the Divine Agni born in heaven, and thence brought him forth and fixed him here in the human existence. Atharva like other Vedic names is a significant word meaning 'not moving out', but fixing himself, disposed to consolidation. That 'fixation' or 'not moving' is the meaning of the word will be evident from another kindred word *atharvyam*, an adjective meaning according to Sayana 'unable to move' (gantum asamartham, Rig Veda I. 83-5). Atharva then is the first original Flame power of Agni in genaral, fixed in the human being, generating Dadhyan, a special form of himself, a development, a particular manifestation with a definite status and function as a radiant lustre of the Divine Flame, *atharvana angirasa agni*.

What then is distinctive about Dadhyan? The word itself suggests the sense and gives the clue to discover his status and ascertain his function. The task becomes easier if we remember the symbolic senses indicated by the double meanings of the three words *go*, *dadhi*, *yava*, (milk, curds, grain) with which the triple draughts of Soma juice are prepared. And this is the inner meaning—Soma is the Delight extracted from existence; it is mixed with the milk which is that of the luminous Cows, with the curds the fixation of their yield in the intellectual mind, and with the grain the formulation of the light in the force of the physical mind. The two parts of the word Dadhyan, *dadhi* and *anch* give us the meaning that it is a distinct lustrous power moving in the yield of Light fixed in the intellectual mind. It must be noted

while Atharvan brought forth and *fixed* the Divine Flame, Agni, in human existence which includes in a general way all that man is, mind and life and soul, Dadhyan representing a specially developed power, *moves* in the fixed light of intellectual mind, a higher rung, if not the highest, in the ladder of the progress of human mind. Because he moves towards further progress he is not bound to the fixed light of the intellect though from the height of that illumined understanding he knows the delights of all life and mind and existence and can offer them to the higher Powers, the Cosmic Gods, whose function it is to accept the offering from the human levels below so that they can come down and help the human to rise to the higher ones. But the Powers do not and cannot offer help until they are satisfied that the conditions to rise to a higher plane, to extend to a vaster existence have been fulfilled. This truth is elucidated by Sri Aurobindo in his explanations of the hymns of Agastya—The Colloquy of Indra and Agastya. But Dadhyan is the Power and Light of a Cosmic principle at work in the high enlightened levels of knowledge fixed in the mould of human intellect and so is unlike Agastya who strove to reach the Highest, to the Beyond ignoring the conditions of fulfilment in the Cosmic existence. And Dadhyan is a Flame-power; to move onward and progress towards the higher levels is inherent in him; beyond a certain limit, beyond the sphere of his function, if he is to proceed he has to change his form, become a different God (Vide Atri's hymns to Agni, V. 3), put on a different facet of the cosmic Godhead to adjust himself to the laws and conditions of the higher level differently constituted to which he moves. Or, as a Cosmic Power he stays on where his function demands, on the higher status of enlightened intellect and gives his assent to the sacrificer, to the human soul, to go still further if the conditions are answered by the achievement of the divine aspirant. And this is the achievement of the human soul in its ascent towards the hill of Being that it halts at a point when it is satisfied with the delight of being in the physical existence. But howsoever wide and exalted it may look, it is still limited and bounded by a vaster existence, outreached and over-topped by many layers, levels, planes of worlds constituted and governed by the Cosmic Godhead. To reach the next stage a higher and wider and freer vitality and superb nerve-force is necessary. It is for this that the Aswins are invoked; and they are to be satisfied first that the *Madhu*, the delight of existence in the sphere of Dadhyan is realised, possessed and ready to be let known or offered to them, so that they can accept the offerings enabling them to return their responsive gifts of health and ease and joy for the reinforcing and renewal of life-force, for a sublime and expansive movement of the Soul's progress. This is the sense of the *Madhu Vidya* that the Aswins received from Dadhyan, whether Dadhyan, like the Atharvan or the Angirasas, is a deified sage or huma-

nised god, he represents a flame Power of the Divine Agni standing for upward human progress, embracing and guarding the fixed light in the intellectual mould of mind-power. For he is an Angiras, a nine-rayed one *navagva,* active, opens the stalls of the Cows (of Light) hidden by the Panis. (IX., 108, 4). If Atharva prepares the path to discover the luminous cows, Dadhyan, his offspring, opens the gate of the prison-house where they are kept in secret. He is an Agni power, for all Angirasas are flame-powers of Agni presiding over the Earth, the physical existence. But he receives the light in the level of the luminous mind and that light is the light of the Divine Mind, Indra. He guards the knowledge of the secret Delight, Madhu, and gives it out as a password to the Aswins when the ascending or voyaging soul reaches the limit or a point when a still higher Power of a different order of existence has to intervene and take charge. But the password cannot be given in the language of the intellectual mind which is after all a term of light and knowledge howsoever illumined and saturated with the delight of existence it may be. It has to be communicated through something forceful and dynamic and therefore Dadhyan is provided with the horse's head by the Aswins; it represents the dynamic strength and motive-force of the swift-moving powers of Life which in the main is a higher and wider constituent of the Cosmos engulfing, pressing upon and penetrating into the physical existence. That the symbolic significance of the name Dadhyan is primarily suggested by the word *Dadhi* itself has been already stated. It will be interesting to note that the word is used in R.V.x. 46. I. as an adjective, meaning 'sustainer' or 'one who firmly holds intact (the sacrifice)' according to Sayana. This use of the word in the Rig Veda goes to some extent to support the symbolic meaning of Dadhi as *fixation* (of the yield of the Cow in the intellectual mind). But more important is the *dadhikra* or *dadhikrava,* the horse who occupies and possesses the *dadhi.* In Vamadeva's hymns to Dhdhikrava (IV. 38-40) and elsewhere Sayana says that he is some god, *kaschana devah;* he also calls him a horse often. That Agni takes the form of a horse is often quoted by Sayana from the Brahmanas; but the Riks themselves speak of Agni becoming a horse. That the inner sense of *dadhikrava* is a special power of extraordinary dynamic energy taking possession of the force fixed in the illumined intellect will be clear from the contexts wherever the word occurs if we grasp the symbolic figure of *dadhi* as applied to Dadhyan. Another episode connected with him can be easily explained. In the hymns we find it stated that Indra slew ninety-nine Vritras with the bones of Dadhyan and that he found the horse's head in the hills in *Sharyanavat* (I. 84. 13, 14). The bones, the skeleton represents the physical frame; it has absorbed enough of the light of the Divine Mind and emanates powerful rays to dispel and annihilate almost all the

surrounding darknesses of a many-sided ignorance typified by the ninety-nine *Vritrani*. For the complete destruction of all and not almost all the Vritras, the full number hundred is required. The last death-blow to effect the absolute destruction of the Vritra comes directly from Indra, not by the instrumentation of the secondary lustre emanating from the physical frame that lodges the radiant light fixed in the force of the illumined mind of intellect, Dadhyan.

Thus far we have taken up all the main references to Dadhyan in the Rig Veda and seen that he is an Atharvana, a specialised flame-power, an Angirasa, stationed actively in the domain of light fixed in the power of the intellectual mind, possessed of the secret of delight in the physical existence and passes it on to Aswins; and they are the Twin Divine Powers who bestow on us harmony and beauty and health and ease by taking in and giving more, something of themselves, their sweetnesses, their luminous life-force and increasing raptures of joy in the Soul of Being in the individual and Cosmic existence.

THE TWIN DIVINE POWERS

Now we proceed to consider the aspect of dualism represented by the Twin Powers, Aswins. Why are they always mentioned as an inseparable dual Godhead? There are some Gods who join with other Gods individually for effective action directed towards a definite purpose, and these are figured in the Vedic rites and are mentioned in the hymns also. Mitra and Varuna, Agni and Soma, Indra and Agni, Soma and Pushan are a few examples of dual Godheads but they are different and combine to form into a dual Divinity on occasions and then separate. But the Aswins are not separated from each other. They always appear together, never singly and in this sense they are inseparable. Not that they are identical or interchangeable, but are co-existent, interdependent for their effective functioning which they discharge in common. Therefore separate, they appear and act together. They are born 'separately, spotless *nana jatau arepasa*', so sings the seer Paura Atreya (V. 73. 4). They always act together for the same purpose 'like two press-stones' (II. 39). Gritsamada's hymn to Aswins likens them to a splendid married pair, to the two lips that speak sweet words, to the two nostrils, two hands and to many other pairs all of which have common objects in their respective functions. What then, is the nature of the dualism that the Aswins represent in principle? Earlier we mentioned the double principle of Light and Power that is constantly figured in the hymns of the Rishis. Certainly, no effective action anywhere in creation is possible without a biune principle governing it. Creation itself sprouts, grows, branches out, bears fruit from a

root above, beyond the all we can comprehend and that is a biune principle inherent in the Absolute, the One-without-a-second in the parlance of the ancient Vedânta. It is the Force that inheres in the Consciousness of the Absolute Being which is the momentum for Creation. Consciousness without the Force is unthinkable and beyond expression; Force is nothing without its capital reserve and basis in the Consciousness of which it is a revelation and expression. One in being and purpose, yet they are two in principle; distinct in formation they vary in kind and degree, Knowledge and Will or Light and Power; always the underlying double principle of all movements in Nature maintains itself and governs every field of creation. Even where appears a predominance of Will or Power there is the element of Knowledge or Light and vice versa. Therefore in the Vedic symbolism Aswins are two distinct formations of the same Godhead for the same purpose but representing severally Light and Power or Knowledge and Will, with an intimacy of understanding and a mutual dependence. Because of their immediate relation of mutuality they embody the forces of harmony and beauty and health and joy. Their own archetypal interdependence and harmony in the cosmic functioning brings to bear on us the necessity of realising the interdependence of things and beings, the balance and harmony that is preserved among them by a unifying principle, by the great secret. Their mutual relation is that of a balance and harmony but neither of them can be explained by itself without the term of the other and therefore their mutual dependence and balance and harmony can be explained by that one secret, the Madhu, the Delight of being in all existence which effects, supports and holds them in close affinity. It is this Delight that makes possible the harmony and explains and unfolds the necessity of diverse forms in the manifested existence and gives them their value.

To realise the interdependence of things and beings human and others is a necessary step towards a knowledge of the secret Delight that maintains the diversity for Self-expression and therefore for variations in form of the essential Self-delight. If it were a question of arriving at the Supreme Delight, the Ananda Brahman or Atman, the Self-delight, the doctrine of Madhu would not be necessary and the quoting of the Riks devoted to Aswins would signify less than nothing. But the Madhu doctrine teaches that the diversity in creation is the manifestation of a secret Delight that all things, howsoever heterogenous and warring they may appear, are held together by a secret harmony effected in them by the hidden creative Self-delight of the Supreme, who is the effulgent Self, the Immortal. The Upanishad perceives the Vedic truth of Madhu and the Aswins and teaches here the seeking of Madhu in the manifestation of all things and beings and not the delight that is unrelated to the Cosmic Existence. It concludes with four

verses two of which are Riks addressed to Aswins, one is a verse—not a Rik—describing the soul as a bird, and the last again is a Rik to Indra as the original typal Form of all forms and this last is indeed an appropriate conclusion to the topic as it is the Delight in created forms that is the subject instructed in this section of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

THE MADHU DOCTRINE OF THE UPANISHAD*

Here, then, is the Madhu doctrine as given in the text of this Vedantic Scripture. It gives fourteen illustrations to impress on us the truth that in this Creation everything and any part of it is Honey to the whole and the whole is Honey to every part of it; and that is because it is the Honey, the Secret Delight that abides in the whole creation and in every part and detail of it that manifests and makes possible the world-existence intact, and enjoyable *bhogya*. "This earth" begins the Upanishad "is honey for all beings and all beings are honey for this earth and he who is in this earth—the effulgent, immortal Purusha and he who is within one's being, in the body, the effulgent, immortal Purusha are indeed the same—He who is this Self, this Immortal, this Brahman, this All". In the same manner the text proceeds to exemplify the root principle of Madhu as the basis of this manifold existence by referring to the Waters, the Fire, the Wind, the Sound, the Quarters, the Moon, the Lightning, the Thunder, the Space, the Law (Dharma), the Truth, the Mankind and at last this Self which crowns the series. It further adds that this Self does not merely represent the basic principle of Madhu, the Bliss that abides in the heart of things, but he is the Master and King of all things and beings and holds together—as the hub and felly hold the spokes—all beings, all gods, all worlds, all lives, all selves. "This is that Madhu which Dadhyan Atharvana declared to the Aswins; seeing this (truth) the Rishi said" —this is how the Upanishad justifies the quotation of the Riks in this context. We shall give here an English rendering of the Rik with as close a literalness as the English language would permit.

The seer Kakshivan, the son of Dirghatamas, addresses the Aswins. "O heroes, I proclaim, as the thunder (proclaims) the reign, that mighty deed of yours for the acquiring (of Madhu) when with the horse's head provided by you Dadhyan, offspring of Atharvan, made known to you the secret knowledge of Madhu". (R. V. I. 116,12). Again another Rik of the same seer (I. 117,22) is cited in the text. "Aswins, fulfillers of action, you sprang a horse's head in the place of Atharvana Dadhyan's;

* Brihadaranyaka Up. II.5

and he acting in the Truth revealed to you the Madhu, the secret of Twashtri (the Divine architect)". The third verse is not from the Riks; but though the language appears to belong to comparatively later times, the idea is as old as the hymns of the Rig Veda. For the bird in the Riks is quite often a symbol of the liberated soul that soars to the heights of Being. We know the Hamsa bird is the symbol of the supreme Soul. The famous Rik of Vamadeva "Hamsah shuchishad" has still more familiarised us with this truth. The Upanishad now declares that the Madhu so far described is also the Madhu whose secret Dadhyan revealed to Aswins and is the same as the creative Spirit, the Purusha who "made the two-footed cities (bodies), who made the four-footed cities (bodies) and who having become the Bird entered into them". And it further removes possible misconceptions as regards the embodied souls as independent self-separate finite entities which they certainly appear to be to our experience, by an affirmation that "This Purusha is the same as He who abides in all the cities (bodies) and there is nothing by which he is not enveloped, nothing by which he is not concealed". The last part of the sentence is again significant, a reminder that this Purusha is immanent in everything as the secret Madhu, the potent Delight that is wakeful holding in its basic unity all forms and things and beings, the Madhu that is to be discovered in the smallest, in the biggest, in any part or whole of this manifested existence which to instruct the section opens. And it gives a fitting close too. For in unequivocal terms it reiterates the Vedantic Truth that not only the Substance of all existences, the essential Delight in the all and in detail is the Ananda, Atman, Brahman, Purusha, but all Form also is himself, his creation, a mould of the Substance, a shape of his being, — he is the supreme Lord, the Divine Being, is active, many-formed he moves about, he is the divine counterpart of every form, his countless life-powers are set in motion for ever. Thus closes the section with a Rik of Bharadwaja (VI. 47, 8). "To every form he has remained the counter-form; that is his Form for us to face and see. Indra by his Maya powers (creative conscious powers) moves on endowed with many forms; for yoked are his thousand steeds".

This is the Madhu doctrine of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. It is significant that it comes close upon the Maitreyi Brahmana which concludes with famous passages often quoted in support of the lofty Idealism represented in Shankara's exposition of the Adwaita doctrine of later times. It serves as a corrective to the Metaphysical excesses to which the closing lines of the preceding section are often interpreted to lend support. It reconciles the Absolute Idealism to which the Maitreyi Brahmana tends with the relative Realism of World-existence in which an all-embracing dualism is the dominant note. It teaches that the secret Honey, *kakshyam madhu,* is the same as the Delight of the Purusha,

the creative Spirit, the One and uncompromising Absolute of all dualisms, the unifying principle that balances, harmonises and maintains its own variations for Self-expression. This, then, is the Madhu of the Rig Veda also the Madhu that the Aswins received from Dadhyan, as has been convincingly cited by the Upanishad itself. That this Madhu Vidya is part of the Mystic Wisdom of Rig Vedic seers, discovered and recorded by the sages and thinkers of the early Vedanta is evident from the note of relevancy that runs through the citations of the appropriate Riks of Kakshivan and Bharadwaja with which the conclusion of the section closes the chapter. These facts we have been enabled to find because of the substantial help that Sri Aurobindo has kept at our disposal. And if we have not consigned the Madhu Vidya to the limbo of a time-worn rite, treating it as a formal chant subsidiary to the chief ceremony of the *pravargya* ritual, *karmanga vidya*, but have closly traced it—inspite of the Puranic legends that cover the truth like the accursed Vritra—from the Upanishad and the Brahmanas to the Riks, it is because we apply the key that turns in many locks of the Vedic secrets, because we use the luminous clues that make the passages clear, because we have something that makes the hymns—what would be otherwise abracadabra in many places—intelligible, something that makes the hidden treasures of Vedic wisdom—what are otherwise invisible—visible, the magic collyrium, *siddhanjana* that Sri Aurobindo has presented to us in his studies of the Rig Veda.

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

Early Contacts of India with Islam

The coming of the Muslims into India is generally associated with the first Arab invasion of Sindh early in the eighth century, but the part that the pre-Muslim Arabs played in the commerce between the East and the West had brought them into India long before Islam was born. It is said that these Arabs had settled in Chaul, Kalyan and Supara, and that for a long time they exercised great influence on the Malabar coast. The rise of Islam freshened up this intercourse which had previously been more commercial than cultural in character though a view is held that the *Sabaean* cult of the pre-Muslim Arabs had, to some extent, influenced the coastal people of Malabar. The new faith of Islam opened up new possibilities and India began to enter largely into the thoughts of the Caliphs. Questioned by Omar as to what he had seen in India, an Arab sailor said, "India's rivers are pearls, her mountains rubies, her trees perfumes." But Omar was against making any attack on India, since he believed that the followers of Islam, as of other religions, were free to practise their faith in that country. As a matter of fact he rejected every proposal that was made to undertake an expedition against India by sea.

Nevertheless, the Muslim Arabs began to pay more frequent visits to the western coasts of India, and their influence in Malabar rapidly grew. A story is current in Malabar that early in the ninth century the last of the Cheraman Perumal kings became a convert to Islam. A few years after his conversion he went to Arabia and died there. The Arabs whom he sent with instructions regarding the administration of his dominions were cordially received at Malabar and allowed to build mosques. This conversion of the king is still remembered in the practice followed at the installation of the Zamorin when he has himself shaved and dressed like a Muslim and crowned by a Mapilla. The Maharajahs of Travancore on receiving the sword at their coronations have still to declare, "I will keep this sword until the uncle who has gone to Mecca returns." The Zamorins became patrons of the Arab traders who, in return, gave him every support in his campaigns. It is said that the Zamorin was so well-disposed towards Islam that he openly encouraged conversion among his subjects because sea voyage being forbidden to the Hindus, local people were not to any extent available for man-

ning the ships of the Arab merchants. He also gave orders that in every family of fishermen in his dominion one or more of the male members should be brought up as Muslims. Appreciation of Islam by Hindu kings is testified to by Masudi who visited India early in the tenth century. He says, "The king of Cambay was interested in religious discourses and exchanged ideas with Muslims and other people who might have visited his kingdom." Regarding the Hindu king of Gujrat Masudi says, "In his kingdom Islam is respected and protected; in all parts rise the domes of beautiful mosques where Muslims worship." When the Hindus of Cambay attacked the Muslim masses Siddh Raj punished the guilty Hindus and compensated the Muslims with money for building a new mosque.

After the invasion of Sindh by Muhammad bin Qasim, the administration was left entirely in the hands of the natives. The Hindus of Sindh appealed to Muhammad for freedom of worship. Muhammad referred it to Hajjaj, the governor of Irak, who issued the order: "Permission is given to Hindus to worship their own gods. Nobody must be forbidden or prevented from following his own religion. They may live in their houses in whatever manner they like." Von Kremer observes, "The customary honour and deference due to the Brahmins and the the three percent share in the land revenue was maintained. 'Build temples, traffic with the Muhammadans, live without any fear and strive to better yourselves in every way possible,' was the law in Abul Qasim's days and later." There cannot indeed be a better example of toleration than that which the Arabs granted to the Hindus of Sindh. The first history of Sindh called the *Chach-Namah* is the work of an Arab historian. The Arab geographer Astakhri visited India about the middle of the tenth century. He is the author of many geographical works which contain a map of Sindh, the first of its kind. In his description of the important commercial towns of India which were inhabited by Hindus and Muslims, he said that in their social intercourse both the communities were tending towards a harmony of their manners and customs. The Hindus and the native converts dressed like the Muslims and spoke their language. In Multan, says Ibn Hauqual, the dress of the Hindus and the Muslims was the same. Politically, the Arab invasion of Sindh was not so important as its effect on the mind of the Arabs who felt attracted by the greatness of Indian civilisation and began to visit the country in order to be acquainted with the wisdom of the Hindus.

Buzurg bin Shahryar, who was in India in the ninth century says, "The Indian Rajahs are particularly well-disposed towards the Muslims. The Buddhists of Ceylon love the Muslims and are extremely kind to them. During the Caliphate of Omar they deputed two Bhikshus to Arabia to collect particulars about Islam. One of them died on the

way back, and the other, on his return, expressed his admiration for the Caliph who led a simple and unostentatious life." Sulaiman, an Arab merchant who was in India about the same time said that none liked the Arabs more than the Vallabhi king of Gujrat. Buzurg bin Shahryar says that the King Mahrug of Alor in Kashmir had the Koran translated into Hindi and used to hear the translation read to him every day. The same authority tells us about a visit to Sairaf, a port on the west of Irak, of the Hindus,—mostly Sindhis, Multanis and Gujratis,—who were invited there by Arab merchants to a dinner where special arrangements were made for their food. These Hindus struck the locals by the fluency with which they spoke colloqual Arabic. This of course is not the only instance of the intercourse that then existed between India and Persia. About the tenth century when Persia was conquered by Islam the Muslims came in contact with the Buddhist population of that country and evidently gathered from them some idea of the teachings of the Buddha. These Buddhists were gradually absorbed into the pale of Islam along with many others in Khurasan and Turkistan.

The Abbasid court of Bagdad was famous for its patronage of learning, and was keenly interested in Indian culture. It invited Hindu scholars and highly appreciated their incomparable gifts in medicine and astronomy. Many of them were appointed chief physicians in the hospitals of Bagdad and were asked to translate, from Sanskrit into Arabic, various works on medicine, philosophy, astronomy etc. Yahya ibn Khalid, the Barmaki minister of Harun al Rashid, had a treatise on the various schools of religious thought in India, as also one on the plants found in India alone, prepared by a scholar whom he sent to India specially for the purpose. The Barmakis had been Buddhists having had their original home in Balkh, which came under Islam about the middle of the seventh century. Yahya was a Barmaki, and was, due to his Buddhistic inclinations, an enthusiastic admirer of Indian culture. He is one of the earliest to have furthered the cause of Indo-Muslim cultural friendship. And it was through his efforts as well as through the patronage of the Bagdad court that interest of Arab scholars and historians in Indian lore was aroused and they began to visit this country in search of knowledge. These, as well as those learned men who went from India to Bagdad, carried to that country much of Indian scientific knowledge which was subsequently assimilated to the culture of Islam, in which Indian influence is considered to be more pronounced than the Greek. But everything that the Arabs received from India was given by them a new character and a new garb in which it was later transmitted to Europe.

The appreciation of the religion and culture of the Hindus by the Arabic and Persian scholars shows the breadth of their outlook and

the sympathy and care with which they tried to understand things Indian.

Writes Al-Jahiz (9th century) :—

"The Hindus excel in astrology, mathematics, medicine and in various other sciences. They have developed to a perfection arts like sculpture, painting and architecture. They have collections of poetry, philosophy, literature and science of morals. From India we received that book called Kalilah wa Dimnah. These people have judgment and are brave. They possess the virtues of cleanliness and purity. Contemplation has originated with them."

Writes Yaqubi (9th century) :—

"The Hindus are superior to all other nations in intelligence and thoughtfulness. They are more exact in astronomy and astrology than any other people. The Siddhanta is a good proof of their intellectual powers; by this book the Greeks and the Persians have also profited. In medicine their opinion ranks first."

Writes Al-Idrisi (10th century) :—

"The Hindus are by nature inclined to justice and never depart from it in their actions. Their good faith, honesty and faithfulness to their promises are well known and they are so famous for these qualities that people flock to their country from every side."

Writes Al-Beruni, who was in India for thirteen years from 1017 A.D. and who was of opinion that in the core of their teachings Hinduism and Islam are almost one :—

"The Hindus believe with regard to God that He is One, eternal, without beginning and end, acting by freewill, almighty, all-wise, living, giving life, ruling, preserving; one who in his sovereignty is unique, beyond all likeness and unlikeness, and that he does not resemble anything nor does anything resemble him"

These revealing utterances of the Muslim scholars show how deep was their insight into Hindu life and thought and how correct their understanding of the Hindu character. They alone can build up unity who can appreciate the culture of others as well as they do their own, for it is on mutual understanding alone that unity can thrive. To these high-souled Muslims India should remain grateful for the invaluable service they rendered to the cause of cultural fellowship in those medieval times, the history of which has yet to be written. Not much is known about many of these seekers of knowledge. One name however looms

large before our eyes. It is that of Al-Beruni whose visit to India is a notable event in the history of Indo-Muslim friendship in the world of learning. He came to this country in quest of knowledge about Hindu sciences and philosophy and visited prominent centres of culture in Northern India including those in Kashmir, Mathura, Prayag and Ujjain. He wrote a history of India in which he described the social and religious life of the country. It is noteworthy that nowhere in the book has he said anything that might offend the Hindus. Neither had he anything to say about the political turmoil that was then raging in the country beyond a casual reference to the havoc it did to the people. About his activities in India, Sachau, who collected and edited Al-Beruni's works, says, "It was like a magic island of quiet and impartial research in the midst of a world of clashing swords, burning towns and plundered temples." There is no doubt that in their exchange of views and in the daily talks that they had with Al-Beruni and with others who followed him and had preceded him in search of knowledge in India, the Hindu scholars had their first-hand information about Islam and the culture that was developed under its inspiration. Like an impartial scholar, Al-Beruni did not hesitate to criticise the defects that he noticed in the Hindus. He complained of their conceit and self-sufficiency hoping at the same time that "if they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their minds, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is."

The Muslim saints who visited India about this time were most of them Sufis, though many divines and *dwervishes* had already been in India disseminating the tenets of Islam. Many of the Sufis settled in the country leading an austere life and devoting themselves to spiritual pursuits. For the catholicity of their outlook and for the loftiness of their doctrines they became popular among both Hindus and Muslims and earned their respect. It cannot be said that they were all of them pledged to a proseletysing mission. Their saintliness and liberality attracted large numbers of Hindus, especially those whom the Hindu society neglected and could not give a human, not to speak of a respectable, status. The social organisation of the Hindus was suffering from many defects. It is to them that the cause might be traced of the growing discontent among a large section of people, which drove them to seek spiritual help from the Sufis. Many embraced Islam, and many became admirers of its liberal teachings.

Al-Hujwiri was one such illustrious saint who hailed from Ghazna and settled in Lahore which became a centre of his activity. Even today Hindus and Muslims come to pay their homage to his memory at his tomb in Lahore where he died in 1072. Hujwiri is believed to be the first teacher of Sufism in India. He emphasised complete annihi-

lation of ego by which the seeker is to realise the all-embracing Unity and be the recipient of divine grace which will fill him with 'Godly idealism'. Muinuddin's is another great name which is held in the highest esteem by the Sufis in India. His tomb, erected along with a shrine, is also a place of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Muslims. Akbar the Great is said to have travelled on foot to this place as a pilgrim. It is interesting that in this Sufi shrine, as in Hindu temples, music is played daily and professional female singers sing at the request of the pilgrims. The fame of Muinuddin and his spiritual activities spread over India, and even high-caste Brahmins fell under his influence. At Pushkar in Ajmer, a place of Hindu pilgrimage, where Muinuddin lived and passed his last days, there is even today a class of people who call themselves Husaini Brahmins, who are neither orthodox Hindus nor orthodox Muslims, having belief in Hindu customs and rituals along with Muhammadan ideas and practices.

This intermingling of rites and customs indicates the beginning of a new social outlook which was initiated through the influence of the Sufis, And by drawing adherents from among both Hindus and Muslims they were able to unify into a synthetic whole the two streams, Hinduism and Islam. Thus Sufism became one of those syncretic forces which prepared the way for the greater synthesis that came into being in the spiritual world of India under the inspiring influence of the lives and teachings of the saints and mystics in medieval times. The wide popularity of Sufi idealism among the Hindus is explained among other things by the striking similarity between some of its fundamental principles and Indian thought, specially of Buddhism and Vedanta; and this was largely due to the influence of the latter on the former. It is well known that the Sufis came in touch with Buddhism in many important centres of the Muslim world. As early as the second century of the Hegira, the Arabs translated many Buddhist works. The Sufi idea of *Fana*, i. e., of total self-annihilation is distincly a derivation from the *Nirvana* of Buddhism. The inspired utterance 'I am the Truth' of Mansur, the well-known Sufi who visited India is only an echo of the Vedantic 'Soham', "I am That". The yogic breathing exercises of the Hindus are followed in every detail by a section of the Sufis and their practice of remembering God and repeating His name is the same as the *Japa* of the Hindus for which the Sufi term is *Zikr*.

Such, in brief, was the character of the early contact between India and the Islamic world. It was principally cultural. One might speculate on the turn that the course of Indian History would have taken if a closer political association had been established during these early centuries between this country and the enlightened court of Bagdad. But such speculation would serve no really useful purpose. If subsequently Providence thought it fit to introduce the stream of Islamic thought into

India through the agency of a swashbuckler like Mahmud of Ghazni or a dashing cavalier of the type of Babar the Mughal, it must have been done with a deeper design than appears on the surface.

The two most remarkable qualities in Indian thought have been its powers of receptivity and assimilation with regard to new ideas. These qualities have not always been externally perceptible in the history of India's cultural evolution. But they have always been there and working out a state of things which would make India the pivot of human progress when mankind passes from the stage of narrow mentality to that of a broad and divinely illumined supramentality.

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

Conception of God in Patanjala

A growing interest in Yoga is observable now-a-days not only in India, but even in Western countries, and it is remarkable that Yoga is being sought for not, as in previous times, as a means of escape from life but of raising it to a higher level of harmony and perfection. But as yet there is much confusion of thought about the nature of Yoga and its relation to life. By Yoga people generally understand the particular system of Raja Yoga expounded by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. Thus it is very common to regard the Yoga of the Gita as being the same as that of Patanjala; even there are people who do not see much difference between Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and the system of Patanjala. These misconceptions and misunderstandings should be removed. It should be clearly recognised that Yoga is a general term for various kinds of spiritual discipline and this variety has had its use in the spiritual development of mankind. If some sort of a synthesis is now called for, it can be successfully done only if we understand the different aims that were pursued by the different systems, the different techniques that were developed by them as specially suitable to the realisation of their respective aims and also the common principles on which all were founded. It is such a synthesis that we find in the system of Sri Aurobindo and it would be a mistake to identify it with Raja Yoga or any other ancient system.

Patanjala Yoga, following the Sankhya, regards the worldly life as intrinsically full of suffering, and aims at making an end of it; there is no idea in it of improving or perfecting life. In the pursuit of Yoga a man may develop extraordinary mental and physical powers—that is a matter of fact admitted by Patanjala—but the sadhakas are warned not to be diverted by them but to use them whenever possible only for the attainment of liberation, which means the cessation of wordly life altogether. This was the general outlook of all the ancient Indian systems of Yoga, and the Gita also emphasises the imperfect nature of wordly life, *anityam asukham lokam*; the Gita however does not advocate renunciation of life but an acceptance of it from a higher spiritual basis and that is also the essential teaching of Sri Aurobindo, though there are very important differences even between these two great systems of spiritualising human life and all its activities. Patanjala Yoga not only aims at the cessation of worldly life, but the very

practice of this Yoga requires that one should retire altogeher from worldly life. This Yoga has to be practised constantly for a long time with great application (Yoga Sutra 1-14), and so it is indispensable that the Raja-Yogin must give up the world and become a sannyasin. Even the preliminary discipline of Yama and Niyama consisting of universal non-injury, truthfulness, celibacy, purity, etc., is not practicable for a householder. It is a confusion with the Gita's Yoga that has given rise to the idea that Raja Yoga can be practised for the edification of the ordinary worldly life. The Gita has used the term Ishwara, Patanjala also has used the same word; from this similarity and coincidence people rush to the conclusion that both of these systems accept the same conception of God and that the Yogic practice also must be the same. To remove this misconception we propose in this article to explain the Patanjala idea of Ishwara or God. It is not, however, an easy task as the Sutras are cryptic and have led to all sorts of interpretations. Yet we shall not be far from the truth if we follow the general intention and outlook of the theory and practice of the special system of Raja Yoga that has been propounded by Patanjali in his Sutras.

The Patanjala system of Yoga has accepted for its theoretical basis the metaphysics of the Sankhya; indeed they are regarded as two schools of the same system. Thus the Mahabharata speaks of the followers of this system as "Sankhyayogascha" who have expounded the relation of Purusa and Prakriti according to the Srutis (Santiparva 318-71). Prakriti is the material cause of the world, but it is unconscious and cannot act or create by itself; only when it is associated with Purusha it is moved to action, it evolves the subjective and objective world out of herself for the *bhoga* or enjoyment and ultimate *apavarga* or liberation of the Purusha. As association of Purusha and Prakriti is the cause of the world, their dissociation is the cause of its cessation. As the only way of radical escape from the sufferings of life is the cessation of the world play, a means has to be found for the dissociation of Purusha and Prakriti; this is accomplished by a knowledge of the true nature of the Purusha as a pure immutable silent consciousness quite different and separate from Prakriti. "The Sankhya proceeded like the Vedantic Yoga of knowledge by the Buddhi, by the discriminating intelligence; it arrived by reflective thought, *vicara*, at right discrimination *viveka*, of the true nature of the soul, of the imposition on it of the works of Prakriti through attachment and identification, just as the Vedantic method arrives by the same means at the right discrimination of the true nature of the Self and of the imposition on it of cosmic appearances by mental illusion which leads to egoistic identification and attachment. In the Vedantic method Maya ceases for the soul by its return to its true and eternal status as the one Self, the Brahman, and the cosmic action disappears; in the Sankhya method the working

of the *gunas* falls to rest by the return of the soul to its true and eternal status as the inactive Purusha and the cosmic action ends." *(Essays on the Gita)*. Patanjala accepts all this and adds a powerful psychological discipline by which one can arrive at the true knowledge of Purusha and Prakriti. We find that in the later development of Sankhya this Raja-Yogic discipline has been included as an integral part of the Sankhya method (*Sankhyapravacanasurta* III. 30,36). In this Sankhya-Yoga scheme we do not find any place for Ishwara or God. As an alternative method of arriving at samadhi, Patanjala has introduced *Isvara pranidhana*. This is commonly supposed to be an important difference between Sankhya and Patanjala, that while Sankhya denies the existence of God, Patanjala accepts it. But this is a mistake. There is no such fundamental difference between Sankhya and Patanjala metaphysics. Sankhya explains all existence by twenty-five *tattvas* or principles, twenty-four of them constituting Prakriti and the twentyfifth is the Purusha. It is said that Patanjala adds Ishwara as the twenty-sixth *tattva*. This however is not correct as according to Patanjala, Ishwara is a particular Purusha, *purusa-visesa* Like any other Purusha or individual soul, Ishwara is eternal, immutable, nirguna, silent, inactive; the speciality of Ishwara lies in this that he is never in bondage to Prakriti as other souls but is for ever free. All individual selves are more or less subject to the afflictions (*Klesa*) or ignorance, egoism, desire, aversion and dread of death. They have to do various kinds of works (*Karma*) —good, bad, and indifferent—and reap consequences thereof (*vipaka*). They are also infected and influenced by the latent impressions of their past experiences (*asaya*). Even if the liberated self is released from all these troubles, it cannot be said that he was always free from them. It is God and God alone who is *eternally* free from all defects. God is the perfect immortal spirit who ever remains untouched by afflictions and their effects and impressions (klesa-karma-vipaka-sayai-raparamrsta). He possesses a perfect nature, the like of which is not to be met with anywhere else. He has also the fullest possible knowledge." This is the Patanjala conception of God, and the Sankhya does not deny it; the Sankhya objection is to the conception of a God as a supreme being who is the creator and ruler of the world, and its chief argument is that a perfet being like God has no purpose of his own to create a world and that if he has created a world he would not have made it so full of sin and suffering. Such discussions about God however does not occur in the ancient Sankhya treatises which do not raise the topic at all as not necessary for their purpose which was to find a sadhana by which the individual soul could escape from its bondage to worldly life.

As the dissociation of Purusha from Prakriti arising from a knowledge of their true nature actually dissolves the cosmic existence of the Purusha

and with it abolishes all suffering, there can be no dispute about the conclusion that the association is the cause. Sankhya did not think it necessary to enter into further theoretical discussions about ultimate realities, in this respect taking the same attitude as is attributed to the Buddha. The world is created by Prakriti for giving a chance to individual souls to exhaust their *anadi* (beginningless) karma and attain liberation; there is no necessity of assuming the existence of a perfect supreme Being, God, as the creator. The question remains why Patanjala brings in the conception of God as a special Purusha while the ancient Sankhya does not make any mention of it? In this respect we can only make conjectures. There is the conception of God in the Sruti and for any system admittedly based on the Sruti to ignore it altogether is obviously a defect which Patanjala sought to remedy; and it also found a use of it in the practical Sankhya-Yogic spiritual discipline of *isvarapranidhana* as an alternative method of arriving at true knowledge through samadhi. In the Sruti, God is described as the creator and ruler of the world; the later Sankhya thinkers explained this by saying that God is creator only in an indirect way; it is Prakriti that is the true creator, but as she cannot move and act without association with Purusha, the latter can be called the doer and the creator, just as a king is said to have fought and won a battle which is really the deed of his army.

That is how far the Sankhya and Yoga conception of Isvara goes. But in the Gita, God is the creator and the ruler of the world in a true sense; even if he works and creates through Prakriti, the latter is nothing but his own power, *svam prakritim*, and here is a fundamental difference between the Gita and the Sankhya-Yoga conception; for according to the latter, Prakriti is altogether a different entity and does not belong intrinsically to the Purusha. A very important practical consequence follows from this difference; for if the world be a creation of God's own Prakriti or power, it cannot be fundamentally a thing of sin and suffering. The Gita accepts the Sankhya account of creation by inconscient Prakriti, but says that it is only the phenomenal manifestation. The Prakriti of Sankhya is regarded by the Gita as the *apara* Prakriti; but there is another Prakriti higher than this, *para*, or rather a higher form of Prakriti which is the own nature of the Divine. As long as man lives identified with the *apara* prakriti constituting his mind and body, he is subject to imperfection and suffering; when he rises above it and establishes himself in the spiritual consciousness or the *para prakriti*, he rises beyond all conflict and suffering, *dukhsantam ca nigacchati*. That is the Gita's way of getting rid of worldly suffering, not like the Sankhya-Yoga way of dissociating from Prakriti and therefore dissolving the cosmic existence, but the rising into the higher spiritual Prakriti and thus effecting "the divorce of the mind's marriage with grief" (6-23).

The whole Yoga of the Gita is intended as a means of making this spiritual ascent. As a first step, one has to realise the imperfection of the ordinary life of man involved in the lower nature, and here the Gita accepts the Sankhya-Yoga method of dissociating Purusha from Prakriti, the Self within which is eternal and immutable, silent and inactive, which is our true being and the outer life of mind, life and body which are the play of Prakriti of which our true Self is only a witness but which can in no way affect the serenity and peace of that Self. The immutable Self within us is what the Gita calls the Akshara Purusha, it corresponds with the liberated Purusha of the Sankhya; by identifying ourselves with it we become free; and the soul involved in the play of Prakriti, the bound Purusha of the Sankhya corresponds with the Kshara Purusha of the Gita. The Kshara Purusha is never really bound, he is the multiple and active aspect of the Divine, and the Akshara is his silent and inactive aspect, and the one is the complement of the other; they are the two poles of existence in and through which the Divine manifests himself in the world (5-16). It is the silent and immutable Self which is the stable basis of the mutable world play. And the supreme being who holds these two aspects, who is the foundation even of the Akshara Brahman, is called the Purushottama by the Gita. It is not merely the *purusavisesa* of Patanjala, one among many Purushas, though the most perfect of them all, but the one supreme Being of whom everything else is a derivation, a form or figure. The Gita does not accept the existence of a multiplicity of souls like the Sankhya; it is the one Purushottama who becomes many souls through his para prakriti for upholding the world play, for manifesting the glories of the one Divine in and through a multiplicity of finite beings.(7-5). The lower prakriti is a mechanism of this manifestation, a means for building up the finite personalities through which the Divine can manifest himself in a world of relations of the one and the many. This in short is the Gita's account of the creation, and though it has in it some elements of the Sankhya and Patanjala, it goes beyond them to their source, the Upanishads (13-4), and gives a unique and wonderful synthesis of their teaching, which is made the basis of divine life and divine action in the world. The ordinary human soul identifies himself with the Kshara, the mutable being, but does not see the Akshara behind it and the Purushottama above both of them; that constitutes his ignorance which is the source of all his imperfection and suffering. When he realises the truth, he is established in the peace and the silence of the immutable Self within, and in his outer active nature feels himself to be a channel, a *nimitta* of the working of the divine will in the world. Giving up all attachment to the lower nature, contemplation of the silent Self within and offering of all life and action with love and devotion to the supreme Being constitute the core of the Gita's Yoga by which one enters into the

spiritual consciousness and attains to the likeness of Purushottama himself *mama sadharmyamagatah*, being one with him and with all other beings in the inmost self and a luminous channel and instrument of his will and action in the outer nature.

This synthesis of the Gita had a profound influence on later Indian thought and spirituality and it evidently gave a new shape and outlook to the development of the Patanjala school. When Vyasa wrote his commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (about 200 to 300 A. D. according to modern scholars), the influence of the Gita was well established; thus he explains *isvarapranidhana* as offering one's works to the Divine or giving up all desire for the fruits of action. This is evidently a new thing as Patanjali nowhere mentions desireless action offered to the Divine as an integral part of his Yoga; on the other hand, the Sankhya, as expounded in the current authority on it, the Sankhyapravachanasutra, definitely says that action, whether done with or without desire, can never combine with knowledge and become a means of liberation. (3-27, 28); "As sleep and waking state cannot act together to produce any result, so *mayika karma* and *amayika jnana* can never combine to effect the liberation of the Purusha". (3-26). According to Sankhya, and therefore to Patanjala, Purusha is ever inactive and all action belongs to the inconscient Prakriti, *mayika*. What the Gita means by the offering of all actions to the Divine is the realisation that all action in the world is done by the Divine himself, the jivas are only instruments or *nimitta*.

"The Lord is stationed in the heart of all existences, O Arjuna, and turns them all round and round mounted on a machine by his Maya" (Gita 18-61).

This is very far from the Patanjala and Sankhya conception of the Purusha who is ever inactive. The only activity that is attributed to Isvara by Patanjala is teaching *jnana* and *dharma* to souls bound in the world play so that they may work out their own liberation. Thus it is said that Isvara is the first Guru, the Guru of all other Gurus and he can be the Guru of all because he is *Sarvajna*, omniscient. Indeed this is used as a sort of argument in support of the existence of Isvara. According to the law of continuity, whatever has degrees must have a lower and an upper limit. There are different degrees of knowledge in the world, thus a man has greater knowledge than an insect or an animal. So there must be a person who possesses perfect knowledge. Such a supreme person is God. But such knowledge is of *citta* or pure *sattva*. Isvara is said to be free from Prakriti or chitta, how can then he have knowledge by which to help others? The answar is that this knowledge does not belong to the pure consciousness of the Isvara, but to the *citta* which he takes up for the special purpose of helping others; this is called technically, *nirmanacitta*; even a liberated purusha can help

others by assuming such pure citta. The Isvara of Patanjala is associated with Prakriti, but is not bound to her like ordinary souls. Thus he corresponds to the Saguna Brahman of the Upanishads, and it is said that even Sankhya accepts such Saguna Isvara, calling him Hiranyagarbha. But there is no hint in Patanjala or Sankhya that Isvara moved by the devotion of sadhakas brings release to them by an act of grace. It is the commentator Vyasa who has introduced this element of Grace (1/23) into the Patanjala system, evidently under the influence of the Gita. Thus explaining *isvarapranidhanat,* he says that God moved by the devotion of the sadhaka immediately brings samadhi to him by his grace. But Patanjali himself explains *pranidhana* in a quite different way in the immediately following sutras, 1/24-28, describing the nature of Isvara for whom the pranava is the symbol; one has to recite the pranava and meditate on the purity and immutability of God; this is a psychological process which speedily brings purity and liberation, and this is what Patanjala really means by *isvarapranidhana* as an alternative method of attaining samadhi. Even if we accept the interpretation of Vyasa, Patanjala does not come in line with the Gita. For according to Vyasa God exercises his grace only at the time of pralaya, while according to the Gita the Grace of God is always working. The Gita has accepted the Rajayogic practice as a powerful means of silencing the restless activity of the outer mind and realising the immutable self within us. But if Gita had stopped there, the result of Gita's Yoga would have been the same as that of Sankhya and Pantanjala, viz, an escape from life into the silence and inactivity of the Purusha or Nirguna Brahman. But the Gita regarded it only as a step in the ascent to an integral union with the Purushottama through dedicated work, knowledge and devotion, and making that the basis of divine life and divine action in the world.

But even the Gita does not say anything about the integral transformation of the mind, life and body; it shows the way how one can rise to a higher spiritual consciousness in union with the Divine and from that consciousness use the mind, life and body in a divine way. But that divine activity will be limited by the imperfection of the mental and physical instruments. And even this limited *siddhi* is not at all easy to attain. "Among thousands of men one here and there strives after perfection, and of those who strive and attain to perfection one here and there knows me in all the principles of my existence." (7-3). Sri Aurobindo has seen in his unique Yogic vision that this is so only because the evolution of man is not yet completed; in the course of natural evolution man will rise to a higher spiritual state just as plant rose to animal and animal rose to man in the previous stages of the terrestrial evolution. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga aims at co-operating with this evolutionary process of Nature so that a higher divine life may be

accessible to all mankind and not to a few strenuous strivers here and there.

Again, those who invoke Raja-Yoga in modern times generally lay stress on the very first *anga* or step of its eight *angas*; that first step consists of moral self-control and self-discipline, Yama. Thus Mahatma Gandhi has taken up four items of Yama as the core of spirituality, namely, non-violence, truthfulness, poverty and celibacy. But this is the western ideal which confuses morality or following certain mental rules or principles with spirituality. In Indian Yoga this is regarded only as a preliminary discipline. As long as our mind, life and body remain untransformed, and we do not find the self within us, all moral rules will break down and it is no use insisting on them too much. "All existences follow their own nature and what shall coercing it avail?" (Gita 3-33). The nature has to be transformed and for that we must find our true self within. It is no doubt necessary to discipline our outer nature.. "But we have, even so, to remark that God respects the freedom of the natural members of our being and that he gives them room to grow in their own nature so that by natural growth and not by self-extinction they may find the Divine in themselves, and the subjection which they finally accept, complete and absolute, is a willing subjection of love to their own highest being. Therefore even in the unregenerated state we find that the healthiest, the truest, the most living growth and action is that which arises in the largest freedom and that all excess of compulsion is either the law of a gradual atrophy or a tyranny varied or cured by outbreaks of rabid disorder. And as soon as man comes to know his spiritual self or to seek it, he does by that, as ancient thought and religion saw, escape from the outer law and enter into the law of freedom." (*The Psychology of Social Development* by Sri Aurobindo).

Sri Aurobindo's conception of God is essentially that of the Purushottama of the Gita, but his philosophical presentation is different. The Gita took the Sankhya philosophy as its basis and starting-point as at that time Sankhya was the philosophy *par excellence, jnanayogena sankhyanam*, and had developed to the fullest the metaphysical idea of Purusha-Prakriti. But, as we have already stated, the Gita introduced several important modifications into the Sankhya system; thus it regarded the Sankhya dualism of Purusha and Prakriti as only subordinate and not fundamental, Prakriti being ultimately the self-power of the Purusha, *svam prakritim*. "We have always to keep in mind the two great doctrines which stand behind all the Gita's teachings with regard to the soul and Nature, — the Sankhya truth of the Purusha and Prakriti corrected and completed by the Vedantic truth of the threefold Purusha and the double Prakriti of which the lower form is the Maya of the three gunas and the higher is the divine nature and the true soul-nature." *(Essays on the Gita)*. In later times, evidently due to the

influence of the Gita, Vedanta took the place of Sankhya as representing the path of *jnanayoga*. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is addressed not only to the Indian mind as shaped by Sankhya and Vedanta but to the mind of all humanity. Even in India there have been important new developments in philosophy as well as yogic practice. Modern scientific enquiry also has opened vast new vistas of knowledge giving men great power over life and Nature. Sri Aurobindo's task was to find a philosophy which would be a broad synthesis of all knowledge and serve as the intellectual background of the integral fulfilment and perfection of human life on the earth. He has started from the highest conception which the human mind can form of the ultimate Reality as confirmed by his own spiritual experience and deduced from it his integral philosophy in which Sankhya, Vedanta and Gita as well as the many-sided discoveries of modern thought find their proper place and justification.

"Our fundamental cognition of the Absolute", says Sri Aurobindo, "our substantial spiritual experience of it is the intuition or the direct experience of an infinite and eternal Existence, an infinite and eternal Consciousness, an infinite and eternal Delight of Existence." These three, Sat (Existence), Chit (Consciousness), Ananda (Bliss) "are always an inseparable Trinity, even though one can stand in front of the others and manifest its own spiritual determinates, for each has its primal aspects or its inherent self-formations, but all of these together are original to the triune Absolute." The fundamental spiritual determinates of the absolute Existence are its triune powers, necessary first postulates for all its self-creation or manifestation,—Self, the Conscious Being, the Divine; Atman, Purusha, Ishwara. "Branman, the Reality is the self-existent Absolute and Maya is the Consciousness and Force of this self-existence but with regard to the universe Brahman appears as the Self of all existence, Atman, the cosmic Self, but also as the Supreme Self transcendent of its own cosmicity and at the same time individual universal in each being; Maya can then be seen as the self-power, Atma-Shakti, of the Atman. It is true that when we first become aware of this Aspect, it is usually in a silence of the whole being or at least in a silence within which draws back or stands away from the surface action; this self is then felt as a status in silence, an immobile immutable being, self-existent, pervading the whole universe, omnipresent in all, but not dynamic or active, aloof from the ever mobile energy of Maya." The Sankhya conception of Purusha as separate from Prakriti is based on this experience of the silent and inactive Aspect of the Self; the Vedanta as interpreted by Sankara goes still farther in this exclusive concentration on the silence and regards the active aspect as altogether an illusion, while the Sankhya assigns to it a separate but real entity, the Prakriti. Sankara lays stress on the im-

personality of the Self, while the Sankhya conceives it as something personal, as a conscious being and not a mere consciousness. "Freedom and impersonality are always the character of the Self. There is no appearance of subjection to the workings of its own Power in the universe, such as the apparent subjection of the Purusha to Prakriti. To realise the Self is to realise the eternal freedom of the Spirit. The Conscious Being, Purusha, is the Self as originator, witness, support and lord and enjoyer of the forms and works of Nature. As the aspect of Self is in its essential character transcendental even when involved and identified with its universal and individual becomings, so the Purusha aspect is characteristically universal-individual and intimately connected with Nature, even when separated from her."

The first realisation of Self as something intensely silent and purely static, on which Sankhya and Sankara Vedanta are based, is not the whole truth of it, "there can also be a realisation of Self in its power, Self as the condition of world-activity and world-existence." "For we can see that the Conscious-Power, the Shakti that acts and creates, is not other than the Maya or all-knowledge of Brahman; it is the Power of the Self; Prakriti is the working of the Purusha, Conscious Being active by its own Nature: the duality then of Soul and World-Energy, is not really something dual and separate, it is biune. As we cannot separate Fire and the power of Fire, it has been said, so we cannot separate the Divine Reality and its Conscionsness-Force, Chit-Shakti." Here we come to the third aspect of the Reality, the Divine Being who is the master and creator of the universe. It is evident that whatever the posture taken, the Being is always lord and ruler of its nature; "for even when it allows Nature to have its own way with it, its consent is necessary to support her workings." But this comes out in its fullest revelation in the third aspect of the Reality, the Ishwara. "In a certain sense, so seen and understood, this becomes the most comprehensive of the aspects of the Reality, since here all are united in a single formulation; for the Ishwara is supracosmic as well as intracosmic; He is that which exceeds and inhabits and supports all individuality; He is the supreme and universal Brahman, the Absolute, the supreme Self, the supreme Purusha. But very clearly, this is not the personal God of popular religions, a being limited by his qualities, individual and separate from all others; for all such personal gods are only limited representations or names and divine personalities of the one Ishwara. Neither is this the Saguna Brahman active and possessed of qualities, for that is only one side of the being of the Ishwara; the Nirguna immobile and without qualities is another aspect of His existence. Ishwara is Brahman, the Reality, Self, Spirit, revealed as possessor, enjoyer of his own self-existence, creator of the universe and one with it, Pantheos, and yet superior

to it, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Ineffable, the Divine Transcendence." (The Life Divine, Vol. II p. 87).

This is essentially the Gita's conception of the Purushottama, though Sri Aurobindo has arrived at it in a different way making it more comprehensive and bringing out its deeper significances. We may note here an important difference. According to Sri Aurobindo, the duality of Ishwara and Shakti is only in the manifestation: in the ultimate Reality they are fused into one entity: this truth is not so clearly brought out in the Gita which regards Prakriti only as a power of the Purusha, though in one place the Lord identifies himself with His Para Prakriti where He declares, "I am the birth of the world and its dissolution" (7-6); it is evident that Para Prakriti does both these things. Again, though the Gita brings in the Para Prakriti in explaining the philosophical basis of its Yoga, in the actual practice of it the Gita assigns no place to her; in this respect the Gita's Yoga comes within the Vedic Yogas as distinguished from the Tantric systems which were developed later, probably taking a clue from the conception of the Para Prakriti of the Gita, which the Gita itself did not develop. "In all the Vedic methods of Yoga, the lord of the Yoga is the Purusha, the Conscious Soul that knows, observes, attracts, governs. But in Tantra it is rather Prakriti, the Nature-soul, the Energy, the Will-in-Power, executive in the universe. It was by learning and applying the intimate secrets of this Will-in-Power, its method, its Tantra, that the Tantric yogin pursued the aims of his discipline,—mastery, perfection, liberation, beatitude." *(The Synthesis of Yoga)*. In Gita's Yoga, Sri Krishna is Yogesvara, in Tantra Prakriti is Yogesvari: Sri Aurobindo's comprehensive philosophy has made it possible a fusion of these two great methods. "It is evident", says Sri Aurobindo, "that we are looking at an infinite of which the Self-Power is capable of many movements, all of them valid. If we look again more largely and take account of both the impersonal and the personal truth of things as one truth, if in that light, the light of personality in impersonality, we see the biune aspect of Self and Self-Power, then in the Person Aspect a dual Person emerges, Ishwara-Shakti, the Divine Self and Creator and the Divine Mother and Creatrix of the universe; there becomes apparent to us the mystery of the masculine and feminine cosmic Principle whose play and interaction are necessary for all creation. In the superconscient of the Self-Existence these two are fused and implied in each other, one and indistinguishable, but in the spiritual-pragmatic truth of the dynamism of the universe, they emerge and become active; the Divine Mother-Energy as the universal creatrix, Maya, Para-Prakriti, Chit-Shakti, manifests the cosmic Self and Ishwara and her own self-power as a dual principle; it is through her that the Being, the Self, the Ishwara, acts and he does nothing except by her; though his will

is implicit in her, it is she who works out all as the supreme Consciousness-Force who holds all souls and beings within her and as executive Nature; all exists and acts according to Nature, all is the Consciousness-Force manifesting and playing with the Being in millions of forms and movements into which she casts his existence. If we draw back from her workings, then all can fall into quiescence and we can enter into the silence, because she consents to cease from her dynamic activity; but it is in her quiescence and silence that we are quiescent and cease. If we would affirm our independence of Nature, she reveals to us the supreme and omnipresent power of the Ishwara and ourselves as beings of his being, but the power is herself and we are that in her supernature. If we would realise a higher formation or status of being, then it is still through her; through the Divine Shakti, the Consciousness-Force of the Spirit that it has to be done; our surrender must be to the Divine Being through the Divine Mother; for it is towards or into the supreme Nature that our ascension has to take place and it can only be done by the supramental Shakti taking up our mentality and transforming it into her supermentality. Thus we see that there is no contradiction or incompatibility between these three aspects of Existence, or between them in their eternal status and the three modes of its Dynamis working in the universe. One Being, One Reality as Self bases, supports, informs, as Purusha or Conscious Being experiences, as Ishwara wills, governs and possesses its world of manifestation created and kept in motion and action by its own Consciousness-Force or Self-Power, — Maya, Prakriti, Shakti." (*The Life Divine* Vol. 11 p. 93).

ANILBARAN ROY

The Crisis of Modern Civilisation

All thoughtful persons despite their varying standpoints and outlooks now agree that the forces that led nations to war were not immediate or accidental but were deep-rooted and smouldering for a long time under the deceptive surface appearance of peace; the actual breaking out of war was only an overt outburst of these forces. If we had sufficient insight we could have foreseen what actually happened during the war and taken adequate steps to prevent the incalculable destruction wrought by it not only of our material resources but of human life and social values. We did not foresee and prevent this wanton destruction, but now that the completion of war has rendered necessary for us the reconstruction of the war-shattered society, we should keep in mind that no scheme of reconstruction would succeed in its purpose unless it is based upon a correct understanding of the fundamental causes that drove nations to war. Unless these causes are fully and correctly diagnosed and definite steps taken to eliminate them there can be no reasonable hope that our schemes of reconstruction would succeed or prove stable.

A full and correct diagnosis of the causes of war cannot be had if we rest satisfied with partial and superficial explanations; it can only be had if we penetrate sufficiently deep down till we contact the basic factors that were really responsible for throwing almost the whole of humanity into the conflagration of war. The general tendency in this matter is to consider some economic, political or other external factors as basic causes; but this is due to a radical misconception of the social process and an incomplete insight into the real forces that determine the behaviour of nations. If we are not to err in our search for the root causes, we must firmly fix in our mind the cardinal truth clearly stated by Gerald Heard that "History is the shadow cast by the evolving spirit of man". Unless we keep in mind the fact that the changes that happen to man and societies are due not to changes in external circumstances but to changes in themselves we can never correctly understand any social phenomena or diagnose the cause of any human crisis. In searching for the real causes of war and in planning to remove them by schemes of reconstruction we must therefore not rest satisfied with the superficial economic, political or other external factors but must go deeper to find out the root causes which can only be found in man's

nature and consciousness. If this is not done all our planning would prove sooner or later futile.

If we consider the innumerable plans for post-war reconstruction from this standpoint we find that hardly any of them takes sufficient cognizance of this fundamental truth. Most of them as mentioned before ascribe to some economic or political cause the responsibility for war and seek to reconstruct the war-shattered society on the basis of a better economic and political structure from which factors leading to war have been eliminated. The reinstatement of democratic and liberal tendencies in the political field, removal of economic exploitation of the masses and the subject nations combined with a fair and just distribution of the world's resources and a rapid large-scale extension of the various technical and scientific discoveries for the benefit of the whole humanity would, it is believed, set right the disturbed condition of the world and bring about a peaceful and progressive social order. None of these plans visualize the need of any profound alteration of man's psychological condition; for this condition, according to them, only reflects the changes in the external economic and political conditions of life. It is presumed that if these conditions are set right the inner psychological situation would also be set right as a natural consequence. But this is taking an entirely wrong view of the relation between man's consciousness and his external individual social life. The events and happenings on the outer surface of life do not determine the inner psychological condition of man and society but are themselves the symptoms and resultants of changes of their consciousness.

If we admit this view that consciousness is the fundamental factor and the external political and economic occurrences are merely the results of the changes in man's consciousness we must seek for the causes of war in the mind of man himself rather than in his social conditions which merely reflect the condition of his mind.

What was the change in the consciousness of humanity that brought about war? Surely it must be some deep process working itself out in man's consciousness, some crucial conflict and disruption in his basic psychological condition which has been reflecting itself in the rapid political developments we have been witnessing in recent years and which precipitated itself in the unprecedented outburst of destruction and massacre in the war just ended. What is that crucial process? What are the forces involved in that grim conflict? Is this conflict merely a clash of blind forces without any point or meaning? Is there not some issue of crucial importance determining the fate of the whole humanity?

For an answer to these questions we must examine the chief features of the development of man's consciousness during the modern epoch. The one fact that stands out clearly if we take a comprehensive view is the one-sided course that this development has taken. Within a very

short period man has made immense, almost incredible progress in the external field of life compared to which the development in his inner life or consciousness is almost negligible. There has occurred a swift many-sided, complex extension of his knowledge of and power over the external life and nature without any corresponding extension of knowledge of his inner life and consciousness. In the inner field not only the growth has been arrested but, as a result of the all-engrossing preoccupation with the external life and nature an atrophy, a regression, even a loss of faith in the possibility of any such growth has taken place. The material life driven by inconscient mechanical forces seems alone real to the modern man; his mind and consciousness seem only secondary phenomena somehow arising from but wholly governed by material force which only is ultimate and real. As a result of this attitude man's physical and intellectual capacity has immensely increased but in his moral and spiritual capacity which solely can assure a balanced growth there has been an arrest, even a retrogression. This disequilibrium between man's progress in physical life and his inner life is itself an indication of the turn that the psychological evolution of the race has taken in the present epoch. The predominant stress of the evolutionary urge in the consciousness of the race during this period has been to isolate the frontal self-conscious part of man's being from the totality of his deeper inner being so as to focus it wholly on the development of his external material life. This all-engrossing preoccupation with the external life was necessary for the specific purpose which the evolutionary nature had to achieve but it can only result in an acute disequilibrium in man's consciousness unless corresponding development in his inner life also takes place.* For the excessive development of the frontal self-consciousness sundered from the deeper total consciousness can lead only to the intensification of his ego and its dividing and limiting tendencies. If the contact with the deeper consciousness which has in it a sense of unity and mutuality with all other beings, is not kept up, the development of the separated frontal consciousness can result in what Gerald Heard correctly describes as "individual neurosis and international anarchy" which we witness today.

* The sundering of the fore-consciousness from the deeper layers of being, the growth of extreme self-consciousness and unparalleled development in the outer field of life without a corresponding enlargement of the inner life to balance it .... these then are the basic factors which were responsible for the war and are also the root cause of the endless disruptive tendencies that are still evident everywhere. For though the war has ended it has not brought any clear realisation of the causes at the bottom of it and no earnest effort to remove them is made. The hostilities have terminated, a simulacrum of peace has been temporarily imposed but the fundamental forces responsible for

war are still alive and potently active. So long as these are not clearly understood and decisively removed any amount of planning and reconstruction in the economic and political field will prove of no avail.

The cause of the present malady, in which humanity finds itself, being psychological, the cure of it must also be psychological. The cure to be truly effective would necessitate a profound psychological praxis by which the fissure in man's psychic constitution is healed, his superficial self-consciousness is joined to his total inner being and by that joining the equilibrium between his inner and outer life which was disturbed by the one-sided development of the surface mind is regained at a higher level. Then alone will man find himself whole and integrated and his social life which is only a reflection of his inner consciousness find its true basis for a harmonious and progressive collective existence. Then alone will the advances in the various fields of physical life find their proper and fruitful place in the total economy of man's life and not serve as instrument for his own destruction as they threaten to do at the present moment.

The deeper inner layers of consciousness with which the outward-projected hypertrophic superficial consciousness must unite, if the human psyche is to regain its balance and poise and not destroy itself, comprise not of the subconscious and unconscious parts of our concealed being which the modern psychologists have explored but of the pure psychical and spiritual ranges of our inner and higher being which were more or less familiar to the spiritual and mystical traditions of all past civilisations but the knowledge of which has been eclipsed during the present era in which the mind of man has turned its gaze wholly outward. It is only by entering into and bringing forth the pure truth and the luminous force of this inner spiritual consciousness and transforming by it the basic nature and dynamic values of our blind and blundering ego that the splintered and self-destructive consciousness of modern man precipitating its anarchic influences in individual and social upheavals, can heal itself and find its internal wholeness and completion and an external harmonious world-order.

The war that has just ended was thus not merely an armed conflict arising from political and economic rivalries of powerful nations; truly considered it was an overt violent manifestation indicative of the grim writhing conflict of crucially significant forces in the consciousness of humanity. The most important point that has to be borne in mind in this regard is that this acute present situation is not such that even if we neglect to set it right we will somehow continue to survive in however distressed and precarious a condition. The situation in which we find ourselves does not allow even such a gloomy prospect. The situation is crucial in the sense that unless we rise to the occasion, see clearly the incalculable significance of the wrestling forces in the con-

sciousness of the race and resolve them in the only way in which they can be resolved—by a profound spiritual conversion and transformation of consciousness and life—the human race may destroy itself. Externally the peace of the world seems to be threatened by the political rivalries and conflicting economic claims of powerful nations, but the deeper real situation is that we are passing through a critical stage in human evolution where it is not possible to continue in the existing uncertain conditions; either by a supreme effort of our whole will we raise ourselves to a higher level of existence, where we are freed from the shackles of the overgrown ego, which precipitates in our individual and social life ever more destructive conflicts and find a new and true basis of life or we as a race destroy ourselves. There is no third alternative left now for us to choose.

Obviously this task of spiritual conversion is too difficult and immense for most of the people to undertake and accomplish. Only a few, a very few can realise the crucial need of the situation and devote themselves whole-heartedly to this endeavour. Can these few, presuming they succeed, save the foundering civilisation? Can they save the human race, which despite its tremendous development in the material life and control over external nature, is on the verge of self-destruction because of its utter bankruptcy in spiritual resources which alone can balance and make truly fruitful the achievements in material life and carry the human race on the way of true progress without deviation or regression?

All depends on the answer that we can find to these questions. For, as said before, it is certain that humanity in general including its leaders in various fields of life have neither the understanding of the crucial significance of the situation in which we find ourselves and which threatens our very existence as a race nor the necessary capacity and courage to undertake the task of radically transforming the whole consciousness and life by a drastic spiritual practice. If the few and the rare, who have the superb courage and unremitting devotion to take up this task and make themselves the instruments of the urgent call of the Time-Spirit, cannot sustain and upbear the staggering human race, that race, despite its glorious achievement in external civilisation, may perish because of its utter disregard of spiritual values and its presumptuous shallowness to flout God as an imbecile superstition or an outworn creed. The fate of the whole humanity and its only hope now rest in the hands of these rare individuals, these men of immense daring and vision who are prepared to sacrifice their all to find first in themselves and then for humanity the unerring Light of the Spirit, the invincible Power of Truth and the Supreme Grace that delivers and fulfils.....

K.H.G.