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HIGHWAYS OF GOD

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BY

M. P. PANDIT

1960

SRI AUROBINDO STUDY CIRCLE

MADRAS 5

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE studies collected here were contributed by the author to various Journals during recent years. Some of the Questions, received from the readers of the Journals with which the author is associated, are also included in this series for their value in focussing attention on the practical aspects of the Teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

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Section One

A PEEP INTO THE BEYOND

A PEEP INTO THE BEYOND

I

IT was a monastery in old China. One day the peaceful routine of the inmates was rudely disturbed by a sudden hustle: pots were flying about and dust rising high. It was immediately seen to be an unwelcome activity of the spirits and an expert was sent for to exorcise them. But the gentleman had bad luck. The authors of the commotion took hold of his person, pulled off his cap, loosened his robe and interfered with his trousers—with the result that he had to withdraw. Others were called in but they fared no better; missives rained from nowhere carrying words of vile abuse.

This is one of the happenings recorded in an ancient Chinese book, *Gossip from the Jade Hall*, written more than a thousand years ago. But such phenomena occur even today in the heyday of scientific advance and progress. We would narrate only a few typical instances of which we have personal knowledge.

Rani was hardly ten. She was extremely anxious to visit and talk to a holy woman, her mother's Guru, who was seriously ill. But as ill luck would have it, before the visit could be arranged, news came that the lady had passed away. The girl was disconsolate and wept bitterly for two or three days. Thereafter, with

the passing of days, she gradually forgot all about it, as children always do. Now, some five or six months later, one evening Rani was doing her home-work (from school) standing near a big table in a Hall while the rest of the family members were away in the dining-room. All of a sudden she heard a rustle and looked up. Imagine her surprise to find the very lady whom she had once wanted to see now sitting in a chair at the table! With a shock the girl remembered, "but she is dead?". The next moment the figure in the chair smiled softly and asked: "Child, you wanted to see me?" Rani could no more doubt when she heard the voice; it was a ghost. She was frightened and started running away. But half-way she stopped as her courage returned to her and she remembered what the elders had taught her so often, viz. there are no ghosts and one must not fear. She felt ashamed of her cowardice and came back to her book on the table. She looked at the chair once again; the occupant was still there but now with a sad look. Her figure was a little larger in size than during life-time. Rani, then, hung her head down and continued her writing work and lifted her eyes only when somebody in the house entered the hall. The chair was vacant.

Another phenomenon. A landlord in Uttarpradesh, well-educated and cultured, had a dispute with neighbouring agriculturists which ended in open hostility. Soon afterwards stones started falling in the premises of the landlord. Naturally, the hostile persons were suspected and a due search made. But none could be found throwing stones in the neighbourhood. Guard parties were organised; the police were called in.

But to no avail. Nobody could be traced and the stones continued to fall as if from nowhere. The trouble stopped only after the victim approached his spiritual Guru for help.

Yet another kind. A couple had a series of quarrels and one day both the husband and wife committed suicide by hanging themselves. Since then the house became un-inhabitable. For every day, at the same time when the suicide was done, there was a commotion in that room, noises ensued and altogether a weird atmosphere was created. The house had to be given up as a 'haunted house' till to the good luck of the owner of the house, the disturbance was eliminated as a result of circumstances into which we need not enter here.

Instances could be multiplied. We will add only one more case which received a good deal of publicity and was treated to a searching enquiry before being confirmed. It concerns " an eighteen-year old airman, McConnell, and his room-mate, Larkin. On December 7, 1918, Larkin was sitting in front of a fire waiting for his friend to return from a flight. He heard the familiar rather rowdy entry typical of McConnell and turned around toward the door. McConnell was standing there in flying kit but, as usual, with a Royal Naval Air Service cap instead of a flying helmet. This, the only cap like it in the unit, was worn by him as he had seen some service in the R.N.A.S. 'Hello, boy,' he said. 'Hello! Back already,' Larkin replied. 'Yes', said McConnell. 'Got there all right; had a good trip. Well, cheerio.' And he shut the door again. A few minutes later, at 3.45 p.m. another airman came into the room saying that he hoped

McConnell would be back early enough for them to go out that evening. Larkin told him McConnell was already back and in his room.

At 3.25 that afternoon McConnell's plane had crashed many miles away and he had been instantly killed. The exact time was known because the crash had stopped his watch." [1]

Time was when phenomena such as these were dismissed as aberrations of fevered imagination which could not stand the scrutiny of scientific tests. They were ruled out of court as atavistic survivals of primitive fear and taboo in weak minds. But such an embargo could not, in the very nature of things, last for long. The progressive section of human thought came to recognise that certain classes of phenomena could not be permanently shut out simply because they were not explainable by the means developed by physical Science to test the truth of physical phenomena. It came to be recognised that these phenomena belong to a different order of Nature than the physical and they had perforce to be received and verified by means appropriate to their kind. This led to the development of what are called para-normal sciences, though the phenomena they deal with are perfectly normal in the circumstances in which they are manifest. Only to our way of looking and thinking within the grooves of the physical formula they appear abnormal.

Research Societies were started in Europe and America during the last century, to study this class

[1] Vide *The Unknown—Is it Nearer?* (p. 114) By E. J. Dingwall and J. Langdon-Davies. Pub. The New American Library, New York.

of 'psychic phenomenon,' test the accuracy of the reported cases and organise the knowledge so obtained into a regular science. This science is still in an infant stage but the move is in the right direction. We may note, however, that while this approach from the standpoint of modern empirical science is new, the bulk of the knowledge that is being sounded and gathered is already there in the mystic and occult traditions of the older civilisations like those of India, China, Egypt. What is this knowledge? How far does it explain occurrences of the kind we have described above? And to what extent does this knowledge empower one to regulate and determine the course of such phenomena?

We propose to deal with this subject in the light of the Wisdom of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

II

I have a body. Apart from the physical body I have other parts too. There is a life-energy moving in and activating the material frame. So also there is a mind encased in the living body. And there are still others besides. It is these several constituents that go to make up the total organism that is myself. So too in the case of the universe around. The physical universe which we see is not all. It is only one, the outermost stratum or, as it is called, *plane*. There are other planes or layers behind and above it. Thus, above and enclosing this gross physical plane of the earth, there is a subtle-physical plane, which opens out into a subtler plane constituted of life-force; that in turn is followed

by what one may term the mind-plane and so on. The universe thus, like the individual, consists of many tiers or planes of existence. And what is interesting, the various levels of existence in the universe, the macrocosm, are connected with their corresponding levels of being in man, the microcosm.[1] In fact each constituent part of man, the physical body, the life or vitality, the mind etc. derives from and is constituted of the stuff of the corresponding layer of universal existence viz. universal Matter, universal Life-energy, universal Mind etc. And this is so because both the Individual and the Universal are formulations from the same Eternal; it is the same Truth manifesting itself in two terms, on two levels for a common Purpose.

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[1] The connecting nexuses are located in the human body. They are the several centres or *cakras* or lotuses in the system of the Tantras and the opening of these centres opens the doors of active communication between the individual and the universal Systems on their respective planes.

"We may imagine the body to be a kind of map or chart of the earth. Each spot on the earth is represented by a particular spot—a certain group of cells, for example—in the body. If the consciousness ruling the body concentrates itself upon that point and induces a change there, a corresponding change can be brought about automatically on a larger scale in the part and conditions of the earth with which it is connected. Thus without going out and moving about, without being the 'man on the spot' to know things 'at first hand,' one can, sitting in his room, by switching on a key, as it were, in one corner of the body, set in movement a whole process of happenings in a particular region of the earth. By a conscious re-disposition of a few cells in your body, you can bring about a desired change in world circumstances. The body is thus a control room for the consciousness in respect of happenings upon earth. Naturally, anybody cannot do that, but only a body destined and trained for that purpose." (BODY, THE OCCULT AGENT in *Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VII, Based upon the Mother's Talks, by Nolini Kanta Gupta.)

Each of these planes is organised around a particular psychological principle of which it is a manifestation. Thus the plane of Life is constituted and governed by the Life-Principle, the Mental plane by that of Mind etc. Each plane has its own worlds, beings and forces—as has this material plane—all cast in the mould of its dominating Principle, with its own type, norm, rhythm, and law. However, as in the individual, so in the universe, these various planes are not independent systems. They are all inter-related, they are so many steps, *padāni*[1], of the One Existence. There is a constant movement, an interchange going on among them and each draws upon and feeds the others.

Thus our life in this material world is not a self-sufficient proposition. It is constantly acted upon and moved by influences, by the pressure of forces from the other, less gross and more subtle planes of existence overtopping it.

Once we recognise that Matter is not the sole truth of existence nor the physical senses the sole testimony of reality, and that there are several planes of Existence of which the physical state normal to us is only a part, a projected segment, and that the worlds constituting these orders form a gradation with a constant interchange subtly going on among them, all supra-physical or occult phenomenon stands self-explained.

The ancient Mystics recognised this truth of Creation. In their scheme of inner growth they pursued a double line of development, viz. self-knowledge and world-knowledge. They perceived the working of

[1] To use the expressive term of the Vedic Rishis.

several forces and beings of different orders behind the natural phenomena, subjectively and objectively, and sought communion with these occult realities with a view to gain increasing control over life-movements. They also developed faculties in the being by which they could enter, participate in—and even regulate—the activities of the occult domains. The Knowledge so gained and the practice systematised by these adepts is there embodied in the occult tradition of each of the surviving older civilisations.

III

We have seen that man is a composite being. He has a physical personality, grounded in his material body mostly concerned with fulfilling the bodily needs; a vital personality centred in the dynamic life-force that energises and courses through the body throwing itself out into waves of self-affirmation and self-enlargement on the crest of Desire; a mental personality shaping and shaped by the various movements of his mind, its feelings and thinkings. And all these personalities are presided over and directed by a central being, the *soul*. The ancients spoke of them as so many persons, selves, *puruṣas*, each ensouling the other and each having a body of its own.[1] Each self has its own

[1] Verily, man, this human being, is made of the essential substance of food (Matter) . . . this is his spirit and the self of him. . . .

Now there is a second and inner Self which is other than this that is of the substance of food; and it is made of the vital stuff called Prāṇa. And the Self of Prāṇa fills the Self of food. . . .

Now there is yet a second and inner Self which is other than this that is of Prāṇa, and it is made of Mind. And the Self of Mind fills the Self of Prāṇa. . . .

sheath, the subtler self having a subtler sheath and all together they form the instrumentation of the soul to participate in life-experience and draw from it material for its growth.

What happens to man when he dies? Naturally, we do not accept the all too simple explanation that when man dies, he dissolves and that is the end of him. Life is more purposive and man has meaning. He is a soul which has a before and an after. The soul is an evolving entity progressing from moment to moment and birth and death are only stages in its career. At the moment of death, it is only the physical body that ceases to live. The soul in its subtle body consisting of the several sheaths is intact, alive; it sheds the physical sheath on the physical plane and passes through several worlds or planes of transit on its way to its place of rest. It halts or is halted in each plane till its particular sheath corresponding to that plane is shed off and it is free to move to the next.

Thus on leaving this gross physical plane of existence it enters the subtle-physical world, then the vital-physical world, the worlds of life, vital worlds as we would call them. The soul is sheathed in its vital body and it has to tarry here till that sheath is dissolved. The sheath is so to say a formation of the vital

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Now there is yet a second and inner self which is other than this which is of Mind and it is made of Knowledge. And the Self of Knowledge fills the Self of Mind. . . .

Now there is yet a second and inner self which is other than this which is of Knowledge and it is fashioned out of Bliss. And the Self of Bliss fills the Self of Knowledge. . . .

And this Self of Bliss is the soul in the body to the former one which was of Knowledge. (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*)

desires, passions and hopes of the person during life on earth and they have to be worked out in this world before the sheath is self-dissolved or could be discarded. It is these worlds where the pent-up forces or unfulfilled desires of man, good and bad, are given full sway and spent out, that are conceived in popular imagination as heaven and hell.[1] At times the intensities are so strong that the vital parts embodying them project themselves on the physical plane and fulfil their cravings in a physical way: inordinate concupiscence may and does exhaust itself through dogs, greed for food through pigs and so on. That is how we see animals as on occasions though they were possessed and indeed so they are. It is easier for such formations from the vital worlds to enter into the bodies of animals than into human beings who are more conscious and so more resistant.

It is this region extending from the subtle-physical world to the higher worlds of the vital plane that is the source of most of the abnormal phenomenon in our physical universe. But to that we shall turn presently. The soul after it is in a position to shed its vital sheath, proceeds to the mental worlds where it dispossesses itself of the mental sheath and then goes to its place of

[1] "Hell and heaven are often imaginary states of the soul or rather of the vital which it constructs about it after its passing. What is meant by hell is a painful passage through the vital or lingering there, as for instance, in many cases of suicide where one remains surrounded by the forces of suffering and turmoil created by this unnatural and violent exit. There are, of course, also worlds of mind and vital worlds which are penetrated with joyful or dark experiences. One may pass through these as the result of things formed in the nature which creates the necessary affinities." (Sri Aurobindo).

rest, to assimilate the essence of its life-experience before it gets ready for its next embodiment.

This is the normal course taken by a soul after it leaves the physical body. It may, however, happen that the soul returns to the earth-scene for its next birth almost immediately from the vital world, in which case the memory of its past life is likely to remain awake in some way. Again it may not be necessary for the soul to shed off its vital and mental sheaths if they have been strongly developed into individualised bodies organised around the soul.

IV

These worlds in the supra-physical regions, viz. the sublte-physical immediately next to this material world of ours, the vital-physical world, the lower vital world and the subsequent higher worlds are all inhabited by forces, powers, entities and beings, participating in the life of their respective habitats. Broadly speaking, they can be said to be of two kinds: those which co-operate and promote the Purpose of the manifestation of God in Creation, and those which hinder and oppose. The former are beings of light—they are actually luminous in varying degrees—and the other beings of darkness. Each has its own hierarchy. Thus among the hosts of God there are the Pramathas, Gaṇas, Gandharvas, gods and goddesses, Godheads and the Great Gods. In the other line we have, in the ascending order, the Bhūtas, what are known as the elementals, in the subtle-physical plane, the Pisācas in the physico-vital, Rākṣasas in the lower vital, Asuras in the higher vital and the vital-mental planes.

Now, it is to these worlds that the being of the departed person arrives. The being is all at sea in these surroundings where it misses the protective security of the physical body it had so long enjoyed and is helplessly exposed to the brush of forces and beings of an altogether foreign rhythm. It depends upon the Karma forged by him while on earth, upon the kind of energies stored up in him during the life-time, what surroundings his being is drawn to and which class of beings gather round the new arrival to help or hinder his journey. It may be noted that the transit of the soul can be delayed by pulls from the earth. This pull may be due to excessive attachment to things of the earth or due to the grief of those who mourn the death; such grief acts as a drag and the soul is constantly pulled back by it. So too it can be speeded up and the obstructions loosened by the prayers and benedictions from those on earth. It is for this purpose that the *Śrāddha* ceremonies and the like are undertaken.

The duration of the halt in this region depends mainly on the nature of the vital sheath which has to be discarded or dissolved by the spending out of its constituent desires, passions, attachments, etc. It is during this period that the vital personality or more usually, a part of it may be contacted by those on earth; or—though that is rare—it may itself visit the earth-scene in its subtle vesture. Most of what is known as supra-physical phenomena, appearance of ghosts, communication with the dead through Mediums or automatic writing, poltergeist activity etc., originates from these environments.

GHOSTS

A ghost may be described as the appearance of a dead person which impinges upon the senses—eye or ear—of the living. But there are ghosts and ghosts. For, some of them are no ghosts at all but simply apparitions which are the result of anticipatory fear, formation of one's own thought. There are, on the other hand, genuine visits as when the departing soul in its subtle body chooses to cross before one leaving its image or producing a voice. In between there are other kinds.

There may be a strong desire on the part of the dying person at the moment of death to see somebody. This thought-projection can appear in form before him either at the same time or a little later. In cases of accident or sudden death a strong formation of thought or feeling of the departed is left in the atmosphere where the end takes place; it continues to be active there either till it dwindles of itself or is dissolved by other means. Such a formation goes on vibrating in that environment giving rise to the phenomenon of 'haunted' locality.

It is also possible that a being from the lower vital planes may choose the cast-away vital sheath of the dead or part of it and appear on earth in that form. Or it may be that extreme passions like hatred, anger, revenge, etc., may goad some part of the vital personality to return to the earth to rid itself of their intensities by working them out in the environment which gave them rise. And lastly, there is the phenomenon of vital beings taking possession of people under false claims of being their dead relatives.

Communications

It is to be noted that contact with the departed being is possible only when it is in the worlds nearer to the earth-atmosphere. But to establish contact with it one has to be an adept in occult practice. What passes for contact in séances of Mediums, automatic writing etc., is rarely genuine. Mostly it is the beings or spirits of the other world who masquerade as the wanted person and misguide those below, amusing themselves in the affair. They pick up something of the remnants of memories and associations from the discarded vital sheath of the departed, or draw upon the subconscious being of the person seeking the contact and talk knowledgeably. Or at times it is the suggestions from the subconscious parts of the medium or the sitters that are responsible for what is heard or talked, without any intervention from above. It may also be remembered that, except in rare cases, the soul does not tarry in the earth-atmosphere for long periods. It is said to be never more than three years.

Poltergeist Phenomenon

Next we come to what is known as poltergeist phenomenon. It consists of movement of objects without any physical cause. Jumping of inanimate things like chairs, tables, utensils, the swish and fall of stones without anyone throwing them about etc. come under this category. There are, as we have noted, several grades of Being and Consciousness with their corresponding grades of substance and energy in the Cosmos.

It is possible, by appropriate processes, to convert one state of substance and energy into another state—all being ultimately formulations of the One Being and Consciousness. Thus a gross substance can be subtilised; a material object may be treated to a process by which its materiality is finely reduced, de-materialised. So also a subtle and physically invisible substance can be materialised. The know-how of this process is part of the Occult Knowledge. It consists in the fuller exploitation of the power of Mind-energy and Life-energy over Matter.

It is thus possible for those who know the process, or at least know the formula to set the process in operation, to cause poltergeist activity by precipitating subtler substances into gross physical state or by activising and directing the mental or vital energies in such a manner as to cause levitation. It is also possible in another way. There is a certain class of spirits, elemental beings, who have it in their power to materialise and dematerialise things from their abode above. These spirits are not harmful or wicked by nature. They can be summoned to act on the physical plane by certain means known to the practicants of the Occult Science.

Occasionally these spirits may act without any provocation from here, out of sheer mischief. At times people miss things and it is impossible to trace them even after the most gruelling search; all of a sudden the things are later found in the most obvious places! Some are benevolent and helpful as in the instance of the personage who suddenly felt as if some one was scratching her foot; she looked round, there was

nobody; but the milk on the stove was about to boil over!

It goes without saying that the operations of these beings can be controlled or stopped by one who has the requisite occult knowledge to counter the move that has called them into activity.

V

Hypnotism

There is another class of phenomena variously called hypnosis, mesmerism etc. the common feature of its various species being the exercise of control over the movements of another without his consent or knowledge. These are usually the workings of a consciousness trained and raised to a considerable pitch of power.

Normally man is aware of only a part, the surface part of himself. We may call this awareness of himself as his active or waking consciousness. But there are large tracts of his being of which he is not so aware. Yet those parts have a consciousness of their own and we get glimpses of it during sleep or other periods when the normal consciousness is at rest or suspended. This belt of consciousness behind the surface awareness of the mind is called the subliminal consciousness. Though it is not directly active in the frontal being, it is its support and reservoir. All the sense-contacts, all impressions and memories are there stored in its layers and they rise up to the surface when the outer mind seeks for them. Its range is much wider. In fact the active mentality is

only a projection, a superficies of that vast extension of Consciousness in man, the Subliminal. This subliminal is not merely behind the outer consciousness; it extends deep below the levels of the conscious mind even as it rises high above it. These ranges of the subliminal being and consciousness are respectively termed the sub-conscient and the super-conscient. These ranges of consciousness are ever active, but behind the veil. It is only when the activity of the limited outer mind is quieted or suspended that the consciousness on the deeper levels moves forward and begins to act overtly.

It is this subliminal that feeds the little conscious self in the front. Man thinks that all his thought-movements originate in his mind; but in fact most of them are only waves that rise to the surface from the deeper sea of the subliminal behind. It is this truth of the Subliminal being more powerful and extensive than the surface active consciousness that is seized upon and forms the pivot of hypnosis and cognate phenomena. For what happens in them is that the active consciousness of the subject is suspended by a concentrated will-power and his subliminal is released into operation. Thereafter the required suggestions are directed and sown into this larger consciousness. Received into the subliminal they find their way later into the outer consciousness and effectuate themselves. Similarly, on the suspension of the rigid functioning of the normal mental faculties, the freer ranges of the subliminal deliver up their contents with a readier response un-inhibited by restrictions of any kind.

However, nobody can be hypnotised if he has a will not to be hypnotised. If the will be strong, it is

extremely difficult to subdue the resistance; even if it be anyhow neutralised, in the waking state, it is bound to prevail on the deeper levels of the being. Another point to be noted is that in this kind of phenomenon as also in those others considered earlier, it is fear that creates an opening to these outside movements to produce an effect in oneself. If there be no fear, no being or force, however malevolent, from any world can harm man. For he has a soul which is a spark of the Divine and that none of them has. The Mother has observed more than once that even the most ferocious and hostile of these beings slink away if one faces them without tremor and looks into their eye fearlessly. For that one must have a courage and an inner strength that flow from the soul.

VI

We have dealt with only a few kinds of the phenomena which form the object of study and research in what are known as the paranormal sciences. There are many more of which students of Occult Science and practice are aware. For there is no end to the mysteries of the manifesting Nature. The truths of material Nature, truths of mind and life natures that are being discovered by modern science are only a fragment of the still undiscovered potentialities of the Cosmic Being. We are not speaking at the moment of the powers of the Soul which are yet more profound. The more we study and develop our knowledge of this Occult Science, the larger our control over the activities of Nature and immeasurably quicker the progress in our ascension to

the heights of the Spirit. Occultism harmonised with its ancient sister, Spirituality, can yet play a liberating role in the evolutionary stress of mankind. For in the authentic words of Sri Aurobindo:

"Occultism is in its essence man's effort to arrive at a knowledge of secret truths and potentialities of Nature which will lift him out of slavery to his physical limits of being, an attempt in particular to possess and organise the mysterious, occult, outwardly still under-developed direct power of Mind upon Life and of both Mind and Life over Matter. There is at the same time an endeavour to establish communication with worlds and entities belonging to the supraphysical heights, depths and intermediate levels of cosmic Being and to utilise this communion for the mastery of a higher Truth and for a help to man in his will to make himself sovereign over Nature's powers and forces. This human aspiration takes its stand on the belief, intuition or intimation that we are not mere creatures of the mud, but souls, minds, wills that can know all the mysteries of this and every world and become not only Nature's pupils but her adepts and masters. The occultist sought to know the secret of physical things also and in this effort he furthered astronomy, created chemistry, gave an impulse to other sciences, for he utilised geometry also and the science of numbers; but still more he sought to know the secrets of supernature. In this sense occultism might be described as the science of the supernatural; but it is in fact only the discovery of the supraphysical, the surpassing of the material limit,—the heart of occultism is not the impossible chimera which hopes to go beyond or outside

all force of Nature and make pure phantasy and arbitrary miracle omnipotently effective. What seems to us supernatural is in fact either a spontaneous irruption of the phenomena of other-Nature into physical Nature or, in the work of the occultist, a possession of the knowledge and power of the higher orders or grades of cosmic Being and Energy and the direction of their forces and processes towards the production of effects in the physical world by seizing on possibilities of interconnection and means for a material effectuality. There are powers of the mind and the life-force which have not been included in Nature's present systematisation of mind and life in Matter, but are potential and can be brought to bear upon material things and happenings or even brought in and added to the present systematisation so as to enlarge the control of mind over our own life and body or to act on the minds, lives, bodies of others or on the movements of cosmic Forces. The modern admission of hypnotism is an example of such a discovery and systematised application,—though still narrow and limited, limited by its method and formula, —of occult powers which otherwise touch us only by a casual or a hidden action whose process is unknown to us or imperfectly caught by a few; for we are all the time undergoing a battery of suggestions, thought suggestions, impulse suggestions, will suggestions, emotional and sensational suggestions, thought waves, life waves that come on us or into us from others or from the universal Energy, but act and produce their effects without our knowledge. A systematised endeavour to know these movements and their law and possibilities,

to master and use the power on Nature-force behind them or to protect ourselves from them would fall within one province of occultism; but it would only be a small part even of that province; for wide and multiple are the possible fields, uses, processes of this vast range of little explored Knowledge." "Its most important aim must be discovery of the hidden truths and powers of the mind-force and the life-power and the greater forces of the concealed spirit. The highest occultism is that which discovers the secret movements and the dynamic supernormal possibilities of mind and life and spirit and uses them in their native force or by an applied process for the greater effectivity of our mental, vital and spiritual being."

DEATH—REBIRTH—SOUL—MEMORY

Q: Is it possible to have direct knowledge of birth and death as one has normally of other phenomena?

A: It is, provided one develops the consciousness for it.

One has to thoroughly awaken his consciousness, subject it to a discipline of purification and subtilisation, and learn to integrate it around his central being in such a manner that when he departs from the physical body, he is fully conscious and passes to the hereafter in a well-knit subtle body fully aware of the experiences in transit. His subtle body does not disintegrate; he keeps the core of this body intact so that when he takes birth again after the required period of rest, he does it as a conscious operation.

Naturally, only a developed being who has raised his consciousness to a high degree of effectivity and organised it around his soul, even while living, can do this. Legend has it that such a person can, if he chooses, leave his physical body temporarily, enter into another with his subtle body so developed and participate in its experience of birth, death or whatever it be, and then come back to his own body. Students of occult science see nothing improbable in it.

Q: Are Spiritualism and Spirituality the same?

A: Strictly speaking spiritualism is the doctrine of the sole reality of the Spirit as opposed to materialism

which asserts the only reality of Matter or vitalism which affirms life-force as the only truth. Spirituality is the state of being spiritual (*ādhyātmika*). But by usage, spiritualism has come to mean that province of occult science which deals with what is popularly known as psychic phenomenon—activities of discarnate spirits, beings and forces in the supra-physical planes of existence. It is confined to the study and culture of the means to contact them, communicate with them and enable them to participate in this world directly or indirectly, through mediums or otherwise. Spirituality, on the other hand, generally stands for a way of life which believes in the supremacy of the Divine Spirit and strives to discover and embody its characteristic values in a manner that leads to an ultimate identification of oneself with this underlying or governing Truth of all Existence.

Q.: Is it possible to get back the memories of previous lives and is there any method for it?

A: The soul carries with it the essence of its experience in all its previous lives. In fact it builds its developing Personality with this essential of all experience as its material. It is possible for one who has attained to the deeper layers of his consciousness, i.e. nearer the depths of the soul, to concentrate and fathom this stored memory. Or it is possible, though rare, that memory may well up by itself in the course of the release of the powers of the soul in the process of Yoga. It is to be noted, however, that this is not a memory in detail of all events and circumstances; that is very seldom. What is remembered is the nature of the previous life-personalities and the central crux of their experience preserved in the crypt of the soul.

Cases of detailed remembrance of past lives—the relatives, the environments, the circumstances, etc.—of the kind reported in the Press now and then are abnormal happenings when the departed soul makes a premature return to the earth-life without going through the normal period of rest and assimilation in the psychic world of rest.

Q: Can ancestors contact their descendants? What sort of communication is an authentic experience?

A: Usually the departed do not stay in the earth-atmosphere for more than three years at the longest. The moment the pull of the earth is exhausted, the soul proceeds to the other worlds to work out and shed its subtle sheaths before going to its place of rest. The earth memory lasts only as long as one is in the earth ambit and that is not very long. Within this period if the departed wish to contact any one left behind on earth, they can do so either by projecting themselves in their subtle form or sending an emanation from themselves either in the waking state of the individual (giving rise to the phenomenon of ghosts etc.) or in the dream state.

Of course in these matters one cannot be too careful, for other beings and spirits are always on the lookout for opening to masquerade as the departed and mislead those on earth, amusing themselves in the process.

Q: I went to some old ruins where some legends and myths are told about the ancient site. I had bad nights when all kinds of imaginary figures came into my dreams. Is one to take the experience as authentic fact connected with the old legends or is it just a result of imagination?

A: In places like this even when the power or presence presiding either directly or indirectly through human agencies, has departed leaving the field in decadence or ruins, there continue to be strong impressions and their formations in the environmental atmosphere. They are sustained by the beliefs of the people in the region and often take shape in the receptive layers of the subtle mind, *e.g.* dreams. There is of course a good deal of mixture in these things and the original formations get diluted in the course of time.

Q: What is meant by saying that the soul is immortal? Where does the soul go after death?

A: The soul is a portion, *amśa*, of the Divine. The Divine is immortal, above birth and death, and the soul naturally shares Its nature of immortality. It does not die with the death of the body. Each soul is a part, a self-projection of the Divine Spirit in manifestation. It takes on countless bodies, one after another, in order to participate in the Creation and evolve itself here into a progressively fuller image of the Parent Divine. It takes birth with a view to gather certain experiences needed for its growth; during the life-time it collects all the material and when that is done it sheds the body and goes to its place of rest—the psychic world—to assimilate the essence of the experience so gathered. After this period of assimilation and rest, the soul again takes birth for the next round of experience and so on.

The soul does not, of course, pass direct to its station of rest after leaving the physical body. It has to pass through several planes of existence, shedding its subtler bodies or sheaths on the way, the duration and

nature of the passage depending upon the karmic effects of the course of life just terminated.

Q: If it is the soul that decides what experiences to take in its next birth, why is it that some souls have experiences of pain, poverty and distress, while some others of pleasure, plenty and happiness? What is the factor that prompts the soul in its choice?

A: The soul in evolution takes birth for growth. And it grows by experience. It chooses such experiences as are most conducive to its further growth from the stage at which it has arrived. Thus the soul fixes, at the time of its departure from the body, the mould of its personality, the type of the experiences necessary for its formation, in the next incarnation. It may well be that it chooses experiences of a difficult and strenuous kind in order to ensure a rapid and secure growth, for the fuller development of its potentialities of strength and power. It is to be remembered that what is felt by the outer man as pain and suffering need not appear so to the soul within which draws the essence, the *rasa* of all experience and assimilates it in the stuff of its growing personality. What decides the choice of the soul is not whether an experience or a set of experiences is painful or pleasurable, but what type of conditions best promote its upward march in the course of its evolution.

Q: Is it true that man's mind is originally pure and it gets soiled due to his sins? If so what is the way out of that sin?

A: Yes, the true nature of mind is a pure consciousness. It is still and self-existent. Thoughts and other movements flit across it like images on a white screen.

The mind is not at all made up of ideas and thoughts. These come into the spaces of mind from outside and shape themselves there in suitable forms. Besides, there are other parts in the being of man, his body, his life-energies, etc., all of which give rise to impulsions in the nature of passions, desires and the like which come up into the mind and formulate themselves. It is these movements which constantly crowd into the mind that cover up the true transparent nature of the mental apparatus. They are movements not of what is called 'sin', *pāpa*, but of merit, *puṇya* also. For in truth there is neither sin nor merit. All are movements of Nature; they differ in degrees. Some are gross, some more refined. But all are activities of the three Guṇas and settle themselves like a film on the pure mirror of the mind.

The way out is to dissociate oneself from these activities of Prakriti, leave them alone on the surface layers and withdraw to the deeper or higher levels of the consciousness. If this practice is persisted in, then gradually one becomes conscious of the purer strata of the mind and it is possible to station oneself on these and live out from there.

Q: Men like Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini were instruments of anti-Divine Forces. Would they continue to be such eternally or is there a possibility of their turning to the Divine?

A: It depends on what type of beings they were. If they were *evolving* beings who chose these particular experiences or were somehow led and used by the occult forces for their own purpose, then it is certainly possible for them to go in for quite different kinds of experiences in other incarnations. The soul chooses

all varieties of experience to further its growth. There is nothing to prevent it from choosing exactly opposite types of experiences in successive births.

But if these men were not evolutionary but typal beings from another world who took birth in this to prevent or delay the consummation of the divine spiritual evolution in progress, it is a different matter. Here too the possibility of their conversion by the Divine Power cannot be ruled out. Normally, however, they remain constant and true to their type.

THE GREAT MYSTERY OF LIFE HEREAFTER [1]

The Sunday Times invited articles from twelve eminent individuals of different beliefs on life after death and the present book is a collection of the series. Notable personalities like Dorothy Sayers, Basil Henriques, Bertrand Russell, E. N. da C. Andrade, Sangster, C. Humphreys, the Aga Khan speak from their respective standpoints and the whole forms a most interesting conspectus of the world-thought today on the subject.

Briefly stated, the Christian looks upon human life as a term of probation, an opportunity for the individual to make his Choice: If he chooses the Lord, then he is gathered up into the bosom of the Almighty in Heaven; if he rejects, whether wilfully or by weakness, he departs into a state of continual separation from God, what is commonly called Hell. The Jewish and Islamic faiths too envisage entry of the faithful in the immediate presence of the Creator. All reject the theory of reincarnation. This life is given only once; thereafter man continues but in the way of another realm beyond the ken of human eye.

To the Buddhist, life never dies; it is only the forms of life that die. They die and take birth again

[1] Publishers: Hodder and Staughton, London.

under the inexorable drive of Karma, endlessly, till by some process the chain is loosened and the being dissolved in Nirvāṇa. Death is a kind of sleep before the being resumes its career to work out its unexpended causes.

Bertrand Russell, the scientist, refuses to countenance any possibility of life after death. To him, there is no such persistent entity as the soul or self to survive; memory is the sole test of survival, and memory is inseparable from the brain; it disappears in the dissolution of that physical organ. We do not know what Dr. Russell would say about cases of individuals who have shown a remarkable memory—verified and corroborated—of their previous lives. We need not dwell more upon this matter, for Dr. Russell belongs to a class of scientists that is fast getting out of date. The advanced thought of Science today is well represented by da Andrade who points out that the methods and standards of physical science cannot and should not be extended to spheres of different dimensions; they have their own criteria. The question of life after death, the larger domain of the truths of spiritual existence is outside the scope of the sense-bound scientist. Da Andrade holds up the counsel of Goethe: "The greatest happiness of the thinking man is to have fathomed those things which are fathomable, and to reserve those which are unfathomable for reverence in quietude."

A particularly interesting paper in the collection is from Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding. To speak in his own words: "There exists in the universe an absolute and ultimate Intelligence to which we have given the name of God, and that God has for his own mysterious

purposes decreed that pure undifferentiated Spirit shall descend through grades of ever densifying matter into the densest form of physical matter such as rock and metal. This is known as the process of involution—becoming more involved. From this nadir it starts its return journey through the vegetable, the animal and the human stages up to the angelic, gathering all experience, and thence back again to the Ultimate Source. This is the process of evolution, the ladder which we all climb whether we know it or not . . . Man has to acquire all the experience which life in a physical body can give him . . . many earth-lives are necessary before the True Self—the Immortal Spirit which has been clothed in these successive bodies—is free from the wheel of Rebirth and can pass on on its way towards the Unity."

Lord Dowding perceives that man has more states of being than the physical alone; he has an etheric envelope or 'double', an astral, then the mental states. "In a natural death the etheric double is slowly shed by the personality at the same time as the physical body and the soul is then free in the astral world; but in the case of a sudden death the etheric double is not at once disposed of, and this leads to what is known as an earth-bound condition. The astral world ranges from those bright regions which may be thought of as paradise (but not Heaven), down to the deepest and darkest depths of Hell—for Hell is a very real condition. The astral level is primarily emotional and the lessons of the astral are to subdue the emotions of fear, lust, greed and the like, and to foster the emotions of love and veneration. As the process continues, conditions become progressively more pleasurable. The soul is then ready for

translation to the mental world, which may be thought of as Heaven. Here the rebellious lower mind has to be mastered, and the lessons of that life time assimilated into the aura of the True Self in preparation for entry into incarnation once again."

This approach comes surprisingly close, in certain respects, to the ancient Indian Wisdom as developed by Sri Aurobindo and summed up here by Arabinda Basu. In this thought, the universe is conceived as a willed creation of God for a plenary manifestation of His inalienable Knowledge, Power and Bliss. Every human soul is a delegate from the Eternal Divine put forth to work out this Purpose individually and collectively. The soul—like nature—progresses from ignorance to Knowledge, from darkness to Light, from pain and suffering to Happiness and Joy, through a long and multiple course of Evolution. At death, the soul—which is encased in a mentalised living body—sheds its several vestures or sheaths, what are called the Kośas, of physical matter, *anna*, of life, *prāṇa*, of mind, *manas* etc. and goes on to its place of rest where it assimilates the essence of its experiences and prepares itself for its next birth. The popular conceptions of heaven and hell apply to the conditions the soul has to pass through immediately after the death of the body and before it reaches its destination. If one has strong desires and passions like lust, greed, hate and anger yet unfulfilled, then they have to be exhausted and the soul is held captive till they are so spent and the vestures dissolved.

The nature and the duration of the soul's sojourn after death is determined by the state of consciousness

attained by the being during its life time. Does it keep the individuality of its earthly career? It does, if the personality has been developed well enough around the central core of the Spirit.

Section Two

YOGA AND PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE GURU IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

"DEAR is Plato, but dearer still is truth"— thus is Aristotle said to have expressed himself regarding his venerable teacher Plato. That, we think, sums up in a line the innate relation in the West between the teacher and the disciple, at its highest. In the West a teacher has no traditional claims for regard and fealty as in the East. He holds the same position in society as any other professional or perhaps a technician whose services are sought for special purposes. His equipment is to be made use of as far and as best as possible. His position is analogous to that of a ladder. Considerations of loyalty, sentiment do not come into the relation. Outside the class-room, the student and the teacher meet as Mr. Brown and Mr. Thomas. Individualism is a marked trait of Western upbringing and any relation that involves the subordination or surrender of one's individuality to another is anathema to one brought up in that way. No wonder the peculiar relation that obtains between the teacher and the taught in the East strikes such a mind as something objectionable. For in the East, the teacher is not merely a pedagogue. He is one to whose care the interests of the student as a whole are entrusted. He is regarded as one who moulds the mind of the pupil and shapes his life in a more effective way than the parents themselves. The

personal relation that is encouraged and springs up between him and his charge is the lever round which rotates the entire experiment. This is particularly so in spiritual life in the East where the Guru or the Master occupies a key position. It is accepted as an axiomatic truth that no novice can enter deep into the path of the Spirit and progress unless he is initiated and helped forward by one who is, to say the least, already on the path. The novice trusts himself to the Guide in whose word and power he has implicit faith, renders into his hands the clay of his being to be shaped into the form of fulfilment. He holds back nothing and in the measure in which this whole-hearted relation is established in full freedom, the Sādhana or the course of the discipline runs towards its fruition. The objection that one loses individuality and personality in the bargain is really baseless as we shall see later.

But who is a Guru, a real Guru? This is a question that needs to be answered because the average man is bewildered by the profusion in which ingots of baser metal tend to crowd out of sight ingots of pure gold. Gresham's Law seems to hold good here also. Again, there is the perplexing phenomenon of half-baked teachers producing showy results and multiplying their trade.

In spiritual life a Guru is one who embodies a particular realisation pertaining to the path he has chosen. He has not merely realised but has the competence and the capacity to communicate that realisation to others. The Guru need not always be one who has attained to the highest status in the line; he can very well be one who has established himself

in touch with the Power or Godhead that presides over his path. If he can function as the channel for infusing into others the influence of the Power to which he is open, that is enough. Those that trust him, have faith in him, receive help and guidance from the source-Power whatever the imperfection and failings of the teacher in other respects. For it is not through the ordinary human parts of the Guru that the disciple usually receives help. The part that attracts the soul of the seeker is also the part that functions as the channel or point of contact with the higher Power and Grace and naturally, that is the very best of his being. As long as that part is not eclipsed or submerged by others, the disciple continues to benefit by his contact. So much for teachers of the common run.

The ideal Guru, however, is one who has actualised the possibility of spiritual realisation in his own person and, as we said, who can re-create his own realisation or realisations in others. How does he do it? And in whom does he effect the change? In those who throw themselves open to him in trust, in surrender of the inner being. The disciple is aflame with an aspiration to dedicate himself to the Ideal which is embodied for him in the Guru; he has the faith that this Ideal which is there before his eyes realised or in the process of being realised in the person of the Guru can also be rendered in his own being with the help of the former; he offers his will, his strength of personality to the Guru, so that he could mould it and use it for the effectuation of the purpose. In a word, he makes a genuine surrender of his own being, throwing it open exclusively to the constant

gaze and work of the Power or the Śakti of the Guru.

The Guru works, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, through Teaching, Example and Influence. He has his teaching which is a presentation, in terms understandable to the human mind, of his perception and realisation of the Truth, the means he has used and perfected for its attainment and the procedure to be adopted by those who seek to follow him. It goes without saying that instructions are laid down only in their broad lines and the Guru varies them in detail to suit the nature and need of each individual soul. His instructions are therefore living directions—a feature which one would miss in the enjoinings of the Śastras.

Apart from the living touch which he imparts to the instructions there is his *example*, the effulgent example of the divine realisation radiating from him. The compelling fact of his high elevated status is a constant reminder and awakener of the flame of aspiration in the disciples to grow into the image of the Master. This living demonstration of the practical possibility of the divine realisation in a human frame, the possibility of living out one's life in all its details from the deeper base of the Spirit, eliminates from sincere aspirants all eventuality of doubt, fear and despair regarding the practicability of the higher life, the life of Truth amidst the thousand imperfections of the earth, and confirms and promotes the Godward urge in those around him.

The most dynamic instrument of the Guru, however, is the influence he is able to exercise, the strength of his personality that is radiated. The disciple may or may not have the necessary intellectual equipment to

comprehend the teaching of the Master. He may or may not have discrimination enough to profit by the example. But he cannot escape the aura of his Master's influence. Influence here may be described as the impact of the Guru's personality on the being of the disciple. Once the latter is allowed by the Master to come into the orbit of his radiance, the influence is at work. The soul of the seeker is constantly exposed to the warming, elevating and even transforming touch of the sunshine emanating from the being of the Guru. Unripe souls get ready to ripe; ripe souls get ready for fruition. In a significant imagery the whole process has been likened to a ceaseless burning fire in whose presence logs of wood, in all conditions of dryness, are gathered. Sooner or later, each log dries up, absorbs the heat of the atmosphere and attains the necessary readiness to take up the flame in itself. Wherever there are such Masters of realisation, we find around them devotees and disciples in varying degrees of development—some highly competent to receive the help and make a real success of themselves, but some hopelessly inadequate in their equipment. Yet they are there because of the pressing need of their souls which seek to draw the needed nourishment and hasten their growth in the contributing and sustaining ambience of the Guru's benevolence. For he is really " a Presence pouring the Divine Consciousness and its constituting light and power and purity and bliss in all who are receptive around him " (Sri Aurobindo). The influence is inescapable. It is absorbed by all in some part of their being or other; it is only a question of degree. The results of the working of the influence are also inevitable in their appearance;

only it is a question of time. Those who have been vigilant, receptive and ready will naturally find in themselves the most glorious manifestations of it; the others will find their period of preparation speeded up.

II

It may be asked, why is the Guru indispensable, why his intercession is invested with such fundamental importance? Is it not possible for one to realise the Divine directly on his own? Why should anybody stand between man and his Maker? The Divine is omnipresent and every one with sincerity and effort should be able to first get into touch with it and then to progressively realise it.

We would not deny the sheer logic of this position. We would not deny either that there have been instances—however rare and singular—where spiritual realisation has been seen possible without a human Guru, as a direct revelation. Such instances have been there, but are rare. They have been so sparse and the circumstances attending them are such as rather indicate some special purpose worked out through special means. Usually the ardent aspirant gets initiated into the realm of the Spirit by one who lives in and for the Divine Reality. That is the tradition of the mystics everywhere; it is, especially in India, a settled question and the established tradition of thousands of years of spiritual history is there, not without reason and support, to meet the demands of the actual intricacies of the deeper and mystic life. Indeed, there is a gap felt by the novice, the initiate, at the outset between himself

as he is here and the Divinity far above and far in the depths. The gulf between the human soul and the Godhead is so vast as to appear almost unbridgeable. The Guru, in all mystic paths, fills up the hiatus. He has built up in his own person the perfect path which he reveals to those whom he accepts as his disciples; he has called down and holds in himself the Powers of strength, knowledge and illumination necessary for working out the Sādhana and which he ceaselessly pours into the disciple, known or even unknown to him. He is the canalised centre of the Divine especially active for a particular purpose and as such, an embodiment of the Truth of the Path over which he presides. That is why it is said that the Guru is God himself to the disciple.

Again, it is a fact of spiritual experience that initiation, oral or otherwise, is not just a formal affair signifying acceptance by the Guru. Whether it is initiation by means of a Name, of a Mantra or a silent launching of the being on its career of destiny, the Guru infuses something of himself, some emanation of his own Tapas-śakti into the disciple. And it is this living power of realisation that abides in him as the presence of the Guru, protects him, guides him and helps in the labour by its own strength. This influence of the Guru once received cannot be got rid of easily; it is there present in the being even when it is not overtly active. We recall to our mind the instance of a brilliant product of modern education who had no serious belief in these matters concerning the spiritual and occult sphere. He was, however, once prevailed upon by friends to take *dīkṣā*, initiation from a Guru

of uncommon attainments. The latter gave him a Mantra. But the young man, as he then was, did not pursue the matter; he was not serious about it. Events took him to another shrine. Nearly thirty years later, one night when he found himself in a critical situation all help seemed to fail and his heart sank. Suddenly from the depths of his being there arose the very voice in which the Mantra was first communicated to him three decades ago and went on reverberating, infusing fresh strength into him and saw him through. The Guru had left the physical body long ago. No contact had been maintained for years together. Yet the emanation from the Tapasvin was there and in the hour of need gave its succour. It is pertinent to recall here the observation made by Sri Aurobindo, in a different connection, that the influence of the Guru can continue to act even after the close of his earthly career.

Human nature is endless in its variations and even in spiritual life no set uniform course can be laid down. Adjustments, modifications become necessary in keeping with the need and temperament of the nature, and this could be done only by the Guru who has complete knowledge both of the path and the competence of the disciple. The Guru has always a fuller and better appreciation of the capacities and needs of the disciple than the latter himself has in his half-lit knowledge. The Guru gives full value to the personality of the disciple, in fact he helps it to grow into its highest potential by rounding off the corners, by opening up avenues of development hitherto lying closed or unsuspected in his being. He takes up the raw ore and

transmutes it into a finished bar of gold. It needs not to be added that certain conditions are to be fulfilled by the disciple in order that the Guru may get the needed impulsion and scope to work out the intention. But that is another subject.

JAPA AND VRATA

Q: What is the place of Vratas like periodical abstinence from food, Japa etc., in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga? Is it necessary to give them up on taking to this Sādhana?

A: These and similar *vratas* form part of the religious life which is usually preparatory to the spiritual. They have in that scheme a definite utility in the purification of nature, subtilisation and the ingathering of mental faculties and so on. Among other things they constantly serve to remind man of the incomplete nature of his normal life and the fact that there is another order of existence to which he has to open himself for a completer and more satisfying living. When one takes to spiritual life, specially the Sādhana of the Pūrṇa Yoga, these devices are no longer necessary. But he is not required to abandon them; they can be made use of for whatever limited purpose they can serve.

In this Yoga the entire reliance is placed on the Divine Śakti to whom a complete surrender is made. It is this Power that works in the Sādhaka to bring about a change in his consciousness centrally and then extend its pressure for a transforming change to the other parts of the being. The effort that is called for to fulfil the aim of this Yoga is something superhuman; no human will can achieve it unaided and hence the

stress on the Yoga-Śakti to lead the Sādhana. There is no need here to resort to physical or mental means like the *vratas* in which the human will plays a large part. All that they could achieve and much more is effected by the Śakti in proportion to the opening and the receptivity in the *ādhāra.*

MĀNASA PŪJĀ—DHYĀNA—KUNDALINI

Q: What is the place for Mānasa Pūjā in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga?

A: The same as in any other Yoga where it is practised. *Mānasa-pūjā*, mental worship, inner adoration, means the evocation before the mind's eye of the form of the object of worship—of a *Devatā* as prescribed in the Scripture, of an image or idol, or of the Guru himself and the offering of one's devotion and love to that Form in utter surrender.

This process not only gathers the threads of one's consciousness and centres it round a particular object of contemplation; it awakens the heart's emotions, directs them continually upward and thus purifies them. The activities of the mind too are regulated; their habitual tendency to go outward is arrested by this conscious direction to the centre of adoration and by and by they converge spontaneously on the object of one's worship. Thus Mānasa Pūjā helps the aspirant in the ways of concentration, purification and orientation of his *vṛttis*, flowings of mind and heart, Godward.

We may add, however, that this Pūjā as such is not an indispensable part of this Yoga. It can be practised with good results as indicated. But the same and perhaps fuller benefits could be derived by other means. Besides it is a question of temperament.

Q: How is one to do Saguṇa Dhyāna and Nirguṇa Dhyāna step by step?

A: Saguṇa Dhyāna, meditation on Form and *Nirguṇa Dhyāna*, meditation on the Formless, are not two different processes to be adopted successively, one after the other. Nor are they to be understood as one inferior and the other superior. It is the *svabhāva*, nature, temperament of the individual which determines what kind of meditation is more natural and therefore more effective for him. It may also be that for the same person one type of meditation may be spontaneous at one stage and at another the other kind. Whether it is on Form or on the Formless, what matters is that the meditation should be an effortless, natural flow of the consciousness on the object of meditation and a steady but continuous absorption by the consciousness of the nature of what is meditated upon. In these matters one has to follow the predominant trend of the state of one's being.

Q: Is the awakening of the Kundalini a necessary step for progress in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo?

A: No, it is not necessary to rouse the Kundalini Śakti in this Yoga. In the Kundalini Yoga and other lines of effort where the Kundalini plays the major role, the principle is to rouse this latent Power in the body, unite oneself in consciousness with it and by a prescribed discipline lead it upwards through various centres in the subtle body to its highest centre at the crown of the head where it culminates into an ecstatic Samādhi. The stress is on the individual Śakti within one's body.

In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, the aim is not to achieve Samādhi. It is to raise the whole of human nature into a divine super-nature; the means is an utter surrender in aspiration to the Supreme Śakti who effects the transformation of the Yoga. Samādhi can only be one of the main steps in this effort and that too can be achieved in other ways. The various centres of consciousness are opened here also but not in the successive order, upwards from the base, of the Kundalini Yoga. They rather open by themselves as a result of the pressure of the Śakti which is invoked in oneself. Here it is not the Śakti from below, but the Mahāśakti from above that carries out the operations of the Yoga. Along with other centres of consciousness, in the course of this working, the energy stored in the Mūlādhāra comes to be released and activised but that is not the same thing as the basic arousal of the Kundalini Śakti in other Yogas.

MANTRA

Q: What is a Bīja Mantra? Can it be effective even when it is not received from a competent Guru?

A: All manifestation is through Sound, *Śabda-Brahman.*

Bīja-Mantra is seed sound. It may consist of a syllable or a number of syllables. The sound or *dhvani* produced by the utterance of the syllable (or syllables) is, in the Mantra Śāstra, the equivalent in human speech, the *vaikharī* expression, of the original subtle sound-vibration which is produced by the movement of the forces (of Consciousness) while manifesting a thing. That subtle sound, *mātṛkā*, is the true Name of the thing manifested and to repeat it is to call the thing into awareness, into active being. This is the main principle of the Mantra.

Thus the manifestation of a Devatā which is an emanation, a self-formulation of the Supreme Godhead, is accompanied by a characteristic sound. This *mātṛkā* is the sound-form of that Deity. This sound-value rendered in terms of human speech is the Mantra, the sound-body of the Devatā on the human level. When this sound is uttered the vibrations that go forth are the very vibrations that were active when the Devatā first manifested and consequently they urge the same manifestation again. Hence it is that to utter a mantra is to invoke the Deity signified by it.

It goes without saying that the evocation, to be effective, must carry the power, the consciousness with which the original sound-vibrations were instinct. Without it the Mantra is a dead word. The *Mantra-caitanya* must be awakened and made active. And that only a Guru, one who has already realised and holds in himself something of the dynamics of the Mantra, can do.[1] When such a one communicates the Mantra to another, he not only speaks the Word, but also transmits in his very utterance the *caitanya*, the life-power of the Mantra, so that when the recipient repeats it, it is a Word which is loaded with its innate power-charge that is released into action.

[1] Theoretically it is of course possible for one to energise and enliven a Mantra by his own tapasya. It is also possible to receive the living Mantra directly from a Higher Source, as has happened at times. What is important and indispensable is that the Mantra must vibrate with the power that underlies its manifestation.

SIDDHIS AND REALISATION

Q.: Some yogins bury themselves under earth for days together. How is this siddhi related to the realisation of Brahman? What is the state of mind and breath under such conditions?

A: Normally such feats are done by adepts in Haṭha Yoga. By strenuous discipline of Āsanas in which the physical body is trained and accustomed to long periods of immobility and by sustained regulation of the inflow and outflow of breath, a control is acquired over the body and the life-force to such an extent that their normal operations can be suspended for considerable lengths of time. In feats of this kind, there is a prolonged *kumbhaka*; the performer holds the breath within, withdraws his active consciousness from the physical body which is kept in a state of utter immobility and lives in his subtle body maintaining only the indispensable thread of connection with the outer frame. The normal mind stands tranced as it were.

Naturally, all this has nothing to do directly with spiritual life, much less with spiritual realisation. It is a gymnastic, an extraordinary development of certain faculties of the being, which can be done by practice and the necessary will, without regard to any faith in the existence of the Soul or God,—even as feats of the intellect like the *śatāvadhāna* could be so done.

Realisation of Brahman is a totally different matter. It is a fact of the consciousness. It is one's consciousness

that has to change, to grow and settle into the state of Brahman. The ordinary human consciousness has to leave its moorings in Ignorance and grow increasingly into the nature of the Consciousness that is Divine. Haṭhayogic practices and *siddhis* of the kind spoken above cannot effect this change of consciousness. At best they can only help to purify and subtilise the physical body and life-energy in which the consciousness is housed, so that they can be more supple and responsive to the touches of the Spirit growing within by other means. But that could be effected in other ways much less laborious and strenuous.

Q: It is said that saints are not conscious of bodily pains or ravages of diseases of the body? Is that true?

A: It is both true and not true. For it is only when the normal active consciousness is withdrawn from the body and held in a trance, samādhi, that there is no awareness of bodily pain. But the moment one leaves the trance-state, the consciousness naturally comes back to its station in the physical frame and shares all the pain the body is undergoing.

Q: Who is a Rishi in the Indian conception?

A: The Rishi is a Seer (*darśanāt ṛṣiḥ*). He *sees* beyond the range of the senses and knows the truth, the right law of things. He is one who has sounded life in its fullness and transcended it in his experience. He has arrived at a liberating Knowledge above the boundaries of human mentality. Yet his heart beats in unison with the rest of the fellow creatures in the universe and he pours out the gains of his Knowledge for the advancement of the collective Good.

GOD AND THE WORLD

Q: If God is there in stone, in the animal, in the heart of man, why is it that He is not seen by the devotees?

A: Because of the veil of Ignorance that covers the true vision of man. Normally one sees by the physical eye which seizes only physical objects. But beyond the range of the physical senses there are realities which cannot be reached by the human eye. They can be perceived only by another, subtler eye, the Eye of the eye, *cakṣusaḥ cākṣuḥ*, which is there in the being of man concealed under the folds of Ignorance. It is only when this veil is removed and the inner eye opened that man is able to sight the Truth behind appearances, see the One who lurks behind every form.

This can be done by an inner discipline, Yoga, which proceeds by enlarging one's consciousness, extending the sphere of his awareness of himself and of others, and awakening and activising the dormant faculties of the being by a ceaseless dissolution of the densities that normally cover them. Or, the opening may come about by the sheer Grace of God. Whatever the means, one has to have the *adhikāra* to participate in the vision of the Godhead.

To take an analogy, even in the material world there are objects which cannot be seen by the normal human eye; one has to equip himself with appropriate

means to increase the range of the physical sight, before he is able to bear witness to their existence. Similarly to perceive the supra-physical truths of the Universe, the appropriate mode of seeing is to be brought into operation. One needs to attain to the requisite state of consciousness in which alone the eye of the soul is always open to the revelation of the Divine in All.

Q: What is the meaning of Vivekananda's saying that a yogin who has realised gains control over the entire world?

A: In this context, realisation means the attainment of union with one's own inmost self, *ātman*, which is one with the Self of All in the world. Or it can be the realisation, by a progressive enlargement of one's consciousness, of oneness with the cosmic Consciousness, union with the universal Brahman. In either case he is one with the Divine at the base of things in the universe: his will is in unison with the Divine Will at the head of the cosmos and consequently the power of his will partakes of the character of the Divine Will which is absolute. His will is a willing from the Divine.

WORK

Q: Can work and the worker get merged into one? And is work possible in such a condition?

A: Certainly it is. When the consciousness of the doer is fully gathered up, concentrated and energised in the activity he is engaged in, no practical distinction is felt between the work and the worker. One is only that work and nothing else. It is not an uncommon experience in work whose nature calls for a high degree of concentration of the mental faculties, e.g., that of the scientist or mathematician, that at times the worker loses all sense of external surroundings and is so rapt that both the work and the worker are one movement of consciousness.

Work is not only possible, but perhaps, the best work is done under such a condition. For then the external mind is completely withdrawn from its customary meanderings; the mental consciousness is not only tuned to the precise requirements of the work but settles in a state in which what is needed at the moment streams into it from the larger or subliminal consciousness behind of which it is only a frontal projection.

Of course it is understood that we are not here speaking of Yogic action which is a different subject altogether.

CHILD GROWTH

Q: A child takes in, involuntarily, the tendencies in the outer world, good or bad. What should be done to safeguard the child from these influences and to direct its growth Godward?

A: Without doubt, to keep the child in surroundings favourable to a healthy growth of the soul, mind and body. The immediate environment should be kept pure, free from the play of gross desires and passions. That means the adults in whose atmosphere the child lives have to lead a clean life turned towards the higher values of Truth, Beauty, Harmony and Love. In such an environment the darker elements of Nature do not thrive, outside influences are automatically sifted and the ingrained tendencies of the soul find the necessary impetus to blossom and flower. The child, be it noted, is best led by example. Practice, not precept, should be the rule for the guardians; for that is what the young imbibe effortlessly all the time.

If it is desired to encourage the spiritual possibilities of the soul to manifest themselves, a suitable atmosphere has to be created. Prayer, worship, reading of scriptures are some of the recognised means in tradition. But here too, there is nothing so effective as the influence generated by the actual living of the spiritual life by somebody in the environs, in moulding the life of the developing soul.

All these, we must remember, can only exercise a contributory role. The main and the decisive factor is indeed the purpose for which the soul has taken birth, the lines of experience it has chosen for itself while entering the body. Also, the soul chooses the environment most suited for working out its purpose.

STUDENT-LIFE AND SĀDHANA

Q: What is the Sādhana for a student aspiring for God-life? Can studies and devotions to God go together?

A: Sādhana means an exertion, a discipline, to achieve an object. In the present context the sādhana aims at self-perfection through realisation of God. For this purpose one has to prepare, control, purify and elevate all of himself so as to be fit to tread the Noble Path. The period of student-life is ideally suited to equip oneself to this end. It is at this stage that habits are formed, directions taken and the foundations of the future life laid. If one is lucky enough to awake to the Call of the Higher Life at this early age it is indeed a great blessing. His is a wonderful opportunity to prepare himself in all the parts of his being with an exclusive preoccupation since he has no other responsibilities to claim his attention yet.

Studies are no impediment. Far from it; they can be his means for self-development. For an all-round spiritual life, the body is to be built up into a strong and resilient *ādhāra*; it must be developed into a clean temple for God to live in. The best use should be made of the available facilities of physical culture for this purpose. The mind must be trained to grow into a means and receptacle of Knowledge; studies prepare the mind progressively in the climate of the intellect. They

help to cultivate the faculties of concentration, application and discrimination and others which go to develop the mind into a power for the realisation of the Ideal. Used towards this end, studies themselves become devotion. Similarly the energies and emotions within are to be given an orientation towards the Truth, the Good and the Beautiful. There are plenty of opportunities in the life of the student to develop himself in all these directions that lead to God.

Once the choice is made for the Godward Path, every detail in life acquires a new meaning; every thing has its significant bit to contribute. Studies, games, other activities incidental to student-life—all these can be and are meant to be used for the growth of the being towards its own perfection. The student must look upon everything in this light, welcome the wide opportunities for self-development and self-perfection he gets during this period and utilise them in a spirit of dedication and gratitude to God.

THE MOTHER AND THE ĀŚRAM

Q: Does it make any difference, whether one does sādhana outside the Āśram or within it? Is the same progress possible there as in the Āśram?

The Divine Mother has cut down personal contact with the sādhakas to the minimum these days and emphasises on inner contact. What difference would it make then to practise yoga living in the Āśram or outside?

A: It depends upon the individual.

In this sādhana much depends upon the extent to which one is awakened in his central, the psychic part. For it is through this psychic centre within that the sādhana is guided and led. If the psychic being is fully awakened and brought forward to govern all of one's movements then it need not make a difference—at any rate in the early stages—whether the sādhana is done in the Āśram or outside. But if this condition is not or only partially fulfilled then it becomes necessary to live under the direct Influence, in the proximity, of the Guru. For only so can the psychic influence and control be kept constantly operative and growing. Conditions in the outside world are not usually favourable for the maintenance and growth of this psychic contact; they tend to cloud it. The flame gets covered by smoke. The constant impact of forces and influences from a milieu involved in the common

round of life in ignorance is always a corroding factor.

Things are naturally different in the environs of the Guru, the Mother. There is such a thing as Her aura which overspreads the surroundings—for some miles—with a dynamic charge of the spiritual Power and Joy radiating from Her Person, vibrations which are incessantly active to dissipate every weakening formation and to give impetus to every upward aspiration. In such an atmosphere there is an effortless outflowing of the powers of the soul and a natural unfoldment of the Spirit.

A word about the "cutting down of personal contact" by the Mother. There has been certainly a reduction in outer forms of individual physical contacts. But *personal* contact or rather opportunity for it remains the same as ever. The Divine as embodied in the Mother is always accessible to all sincere seeking; contact with her can be established only on the basis of an inner relation arising out of deep devotion, love and surrender to her. Only such a relation could be truly personal and living, not any number of outer meetings without this inner rapport.

Q : Is it possible to establish outside a collective life of the type that flourishes in the Āśram?

A : It should be possible if similar conditions were created.

If a sufficient number of seekers of the Truth of this Ideal were to pool themselves together in a spirit of total dedication and drawing their inspiration from the supramental Mahaśakti active in the person of the Mother, pursue this Yoga both individually and

collectively, such a colony could well reproduce the life in the Āśram elsewhere too. And in fact this is exactly what the present Sri Aurobindo Centres and Circles are expected to grow into in the fullness of time.

ON
SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

Q : The conception of Double Soul in this Philosophy is wrong as it is contrary to the tests of Advaita which does not recognise any difference between Paramātman and Jīvātman, let alone countenance a division in the ātman of man. If, as Sri Aurobindo asserts along with the Upaniṣads, all is Brahman including Matter, " sarvam khalu idam Brahma," *how comes this duality in the human soul?*

A : Sri Aurobindo's distinction between the desire-soul and the true soul corresponds to a very practical truth in the constitution of the being of man in evolution. The soul, the true soul, is a spark from the Divine and it is there in the inmost depths of the being. Of that, man is not normally aware. What he is aware of as the centre and what functions as the main fulcrum of his personality is the formation around the centralising agent of his ego, formed and kept going and growing by the driving force of Desire. It is this head of desire that ordinarily governs the movement of the body, life and mind. It is only when one turns from the normally extrovert direction of life and looks inward that one begins to get conscious of the real soul which is seated in the deeps of the heart-cavern, *hṛd guhā*, supporting from behind one's entire life-movement.

It is obvious that this living centre of the Spirit in the individual cannot be the same as the 'soul' on

the surface being, what is in fact a contrivance—an important one though—in the mechanism of Nature in its process of centralisation and motivation of the diverse forces and energies with which the evolving being is endowed. True, this entity of desire-ego derives from the soul in the sense that it owes its existence to and depends ultimately on the support or sanction extended by the soul even as do the other parts of the being, viz., the physical, the vital and the mental. But it is a temporary formation of Nature whereas the soul within is an eternal portion of the Divine.

It is to be noted that the soul is not what is termed Ātman in the Upaniṣads and other scriptures. The ātman, the self of the individual, jīvātman, does not enter into evolution but stands above and presides over it. What enters and participates in the evolutionary movement is a delegate from the jīvātman, a representative portion, what we call the soul which is a developing entity supporting, from within, the evolutionary career of the individual in the triple formulation of mind, life and body, and itself growing into a personality assimilating the essence of the experiences gathered during each life-period. Till this soul acquires a definite individuation and power and moves from behind the veil to a position of direction and control, as it is intended to do, it is the outer formation, the pseudo-soul, that acts as the monitor and guiding agent. It functions and continues as long as it has this purpose to serve. It dwindles and drops away as the real soul develops and takes its rightful place as the leader of the evolution.

It will be thus seen that there is no question of any division in the Ātman. The Ātman is always sole

and entire, aloof from these dynamics of manifestation. But the manifestation is not the less real or less divine for that reason. The movement is as much divine as the status, since both are poises of the One; the Many that constitute the manifestation are as much the Reality as the One that releases them into movement out of itself. *Sarvam khalu idam Brahma*; indeed, all is Brahman, Brahman in essence, and all shall be realised as Brahman in pervasion once the perceiving intelligence recognises the purely temporary and local character of the many formations of Nature and their consequences, in her evolutionary labour towards the plenary revelation of the Godhead in this oceanic Existence.[1]

Q : In believing that when a sufficiently large number of persons attain to a high spiritual state, there will commence the reign of God on earth, the very Vaikuṇṭha here, Sri Aurobindo accepts the Christian dogma of the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth. But such an eventuality is impossible. For, if it were to come about, all would melt into Brahman and the world would go into a praḷaya. Besides, it would be against the cosmic purpose and process of variation.

A : There is a world of difference between the Christian conception of the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth and Sri Aurobindo's vision of the Divine Life on Earth. The former anticipates a change in the nature of the world as a result of an intense moral purification, religious emotion and the elevation of man to the purer heights of the *sāttvic* mind from the turbidities and densities of the lower levels of consciousness.

[1] Sri Aurobindo has given a very lucid exposition of the subject in the pages of *The Life Divine*. There is also a section in the *On Yoga*, II, pointedly dealing with this topic.

But the latter holds that no radical change in the life of humanity is possible unless the centre of consciousness is lifted clean above the Mind and its dualities, and a still higher Consciousness, a supreme Power of Knowledge-Will, is set operating on Earth. It follows that the solution to the cosmic problem does not lie in any number of individual liberations into the Spirit—there have been quite a number of them so far—but it lies in the descent of this New Dynamics above the Mind, the Supermind.

The Perfection that is envisaged as a result of the established reign of the supramental Power on earth is in the full revelation of the Glory of God, the free outflowering of the Divine powers of Knowledge, Will, Harmony and Joy here in the universe, under the conditions of the terrestrial manifestation. It is not a transcription or repetition of the perfect world of Mahas as it is on its own plane; Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that there would be no purpose at all in simply repeating the same type of creation elsewhere. Vaikuṇṭha on earth means much more than Vaikuṇṭha in its original station above. All the ordered Truths and potencies in the supramental Gnosis shall stand worked out and manifested on this scene of unfolding evolution, it is Vaikuṇṭha arriving at its own fulfilment in what initially seemed its opposite.

There is thus no room for fear that this variegated Creation shall have to dissolve into the featureless unity of Brahman. On the contrary, the multiplicity in manifestation will acquire its just value and express the manifold Splendour of the One in all its fullness.

Q : Sri Aurobindo has stated that Sri Rāma's consciousness was a highly developed human kind whereas Sri Kriṣṇa's was divine. It follows he does not consider Sri Rāma an Avatār.

A : No, it does not. For, in the first place, what is an Avatār? An Avatār is a special Descent of the Divine in the world with a special purpose: to help the progress of Creation in its evolutionary endeavour. Whenever the central Consciousness in evolving Nature has to take a decisive turn at crucial junctures in its upward ascent, it needs a special help, a lift and an energising higher than is normal to it at that stage. The Descent, *avataraṇa*, is precisely of such a Higher Power embodied in a form and consciousness answering to the demand of the hour. Thus in the Indian tradition, there is a divine manifestation at each stage of transition from one form of life to another—from the sea animal to the amphibious animal, to the land animal, to the half-man and so on. Even after the appearance of man, crossings have been effected from grade to grade of humanity, from level to level of consciousness in man. At each junction the Godhead at work manifests the consciousness and force required to precipitate the jump, *saltus*. There is a purposive self-limitation and only so much of the Super-nature is brought into play as is called for. Thus Sri Rāma appeared on the scene of earth history at a time when man had to be helped to rise out of the dominion of the vital ego and its impulses (*Rākṣasa*), the restless sway of the animal mind (*Vānara*), and take his place on the station of the sāttvic mind, the consciousness that is pliant and open to the light and reign of reason, civilised order and warmth of emotion and

idealism. Sri Rāma embodied this consciousness, new to earth till then, strove and succeeded in breaking the hold of the exaggerated vital ego and the animal or physical sense-mentality and establishing the sāttvic order of life. That was the purpose of his Avatārhood and he fulfilled it victoriously just as earlier Avatārs with still lesser formulations of Consciousness succeeded before and subsequent Manifestations with higher embodiments have done their work thereafter.

Section Three

HIGHWAYS OF GOD

MESSAGE OF THE VEDA

It is gratifying to note the steadily growing influence exerted by Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation of the Hymns of the Veda on the enlightened scholarship of the day. There have been a number of publications on the Veda during these years, in various languages, and—whether acknowledged or unacknowledged—the approach of most of them reveals the moulding spirit of his researches into the *Secret* of the Veda. A recent work [1] of Sri Anantarangacharya in Kannada, containing a choice collection of a hundred Riks with explanatory comments, is the latest in the line and makes a most delightful presentation of ancient thought in terms of the new.

In a remarkably brief but adequate Introduction, the author points out that the Ṛiṣis of the Vedic Age were Mystics like the Priests of Egypt and Chaldea, the Magi of Persia and the Occultists of Greece. They were individuals who strove to know and probed into the mystery of life through measures of intensive self-discipline. The Knowledge so obtained by them was the Light which led the rest. These mystics delved into the secrets of external Nature but they also

[1] *Rigvedada Amoghasuktaratnagaḷu.* Publishers: Jivankaryalaya, Bangalore.

plumbed into the secrecies of their own soul and related their world-knowledge to the self-knowledge. But they took care to conceal this mass of knowledge from the laity for reasons of public safety apart from danger to the immature mind. They recorded their perceptions in inspired utterances—the Mantras—which were so skilfully worded that they meant different things to different persons. The author quotes Yaska to say that the Veda Mantras have a threefold significance—the *adhidaivata*, *adhiyajña* and the *adhyātma*—and that the last is the highest. Behind the apparent ritualistic meaning there is a secret sense without which the Mantra is lifeless; *yas tanna veda kim ṛcā kariṣyati*, he who knows not that, what shall he do with the Rik? so asks Dirghatamas. (I. 164. 39).

To the Riṣis of these Hymns, the Universe is not just something that has somehow come to be. It is an eternal object of wonder. It is a creation, an emanation from a mysterious Being, a Primal Person. It has been a deliberate creation shaped part by part from out of the limb and limb of the Manifesting Puruṣa, Who is all that yet hath been and all that is to be (Rv. X. 90). The Universe is not merely generated but it is held together by the Might of the Lord:

> By Him the heavens are strong and earth steadfast, by Him light's realm and sky-vault are supported;
> By Him the regions in mid-air were measured.
>
> (Rv. X. 121. 5)

The entire life of the worlds is conducted and governed by Gods with various Names, Indra, Varuṇa, Surya etc. who are in truth so many functional aspects of the One Supreme. There is a Law from Above that

governs all Creation. It is the Law of self-ordering Truth called the Ṛta by the Seers of the Veda and hymned:

> Varied are the sustaining powers of Ṛta;
> Thought of Ṛta kills all sin;
> The fame-chant of Ṛta awaking to knowledge, illuminating, opens the deaf ears of the living.
>
> (Rv. IV. 23. 8)

Naturally, life with such a profound background has a great significance. It is an opportunity to live here fully with the body, mind and life—*sthiraiḥ angaiḥ. . . . tanubhiḥ* (I. 89. 8)—for a full life-span of hundred autumns and at the same time to equip oneself to a blissful hereafter. Life here is a prelude to a super-life hereafter; the one is as real as the other. Both the Here and the Otherwhere are likened to two horses that are yoked to a chariot and must march in harmony for a successful journey. "May not our household gear lack the double harness" prays the seer. (Rv. VI. 15. 19). We may also cite here the utterance of another Riṣi (though not quoted by the author):

> *Indra, bhrātar ubhayatra te arthaḥ,* both there and here thy goal is, Indra, Brother.
>
> (Rv. III. 53. 5)

Man is called upon to mould his life into the shape of the Truth, Satya, that is at the base of All, the Truth that is active in the movement of the Cosmos, —the Right, the Ṛtam. He is asked to cultivate and promote the growth of the powers and expressions of this Right—happy wingings of thought, dexterity in work and determinations of the will (Rv. X. 25. 1).

While exhorting man to ride upon the flood of life on its crests of Plenty, *vāja*, Hero-Strength, *vīra*,

Felicity, *bhadram*, Delight, *madhu*, *soma*, the hymns warn him too against all that detracts from the high Ideals of Truth, Beauty and Harmony and dilutes the purer breath of the Spirit:

> O Ādityas, dispel all ill-will, all meanness, all hostility from us . . . (Rv. VIII. 56. 21)
> Drive ye disease and strife away, drive ye away malignity; Ādityas, keep us ever far from sore distress. (Rv. VIII. 18. 10)

He shall not tarry in lassitude, indolence and misuse of time:

> Never may sleep or idle talk control us, *mā no nidrā iṣatam uta jalpiḥ*. (Rv. VIII. 48. 14)

On the other hand, he must be vigilant and prepare himself incessantly for a greater future. He should wake up in time:

> Old age, like gathering cloud, impairs our being; before that evil be, O Agni, give us understanding. (Rv. I. 71. 10)

Otherwise, standing in the midst of Waters (of life) he will be left thirsty:

> *apām madhye tasthivānsam tṛṣṇā avidat*. (Rv. VII. 89. 4)

The Great Way of Immortality is of course in the keeping of the Gods. They alone can give the direction and lead on the Path:

> The will and thoughts within my breast exert their power: they yearn with love, and fly to all the regions round.
> None other Comforter is found save only these: my longings and my hopes are fixed upon the Gods. (Rv. X. 64. 2)

Great reliance is placed on the Grace of God to reach whom there is no way but that of love. Neither

works nor sacrifices (rituals) can secure Him, *tam karmaṇā yajnaiḥ nakiḥ naśat* (Rv. VIII. 70. 3). The author quotes a number of remarkable utterances of these seekers showing the depth of their devotion, the intimacy of their communion with the Gods and draws attention to the fact that here are the seeds of the Movements of *Bhakti* and *Madhura-Bhāva* which swept across the land centuries later.

To the God-lover in the Veda, the Lord is dearer than his own life; he would not part with Him for anything:

> O Indra, I would not sell thee for a mighty price,
> Not for a thousand, Thunderer! nor ten thousand, nor a hundred, Lord of countless wealth! (Rv. VIII. 1. 5.)

As we have seen, the Ṛiṣis of the ancient times place a great emphasis on the progress and development of the individual—on both the material and the spiritual fronts of existence. But they do not forget that he does not live all alone; he is a member of the society. They remind him, time and again, that together all are born, together they live and together they advance. And this is their final Word to him, as indeed to men of all times:

> One and common be your aspiration, united your hearts, common to you be your mind,—so that close companionship may be yours. (Rv. X. 191. 4)

Such is the splendid legacy of the Seers of the Veda which the author of the present selections portrays in cameos for the benefit of a generation which is too much in a hurry to appraise for itself the intrinsic worth of this hymnal lore. He points out that the Ṛg Veda is not merely a collection of prayers. It is the

original ore from which is drawn the Gold of the Upaniṣads; in it are adumbrated the high Ideals of life and thought that later developed into the fundamentals of the Universal Religion of Hinduism. And, adds the author, at a time like the present when the path of salvation is all but lost to sight, when life in the world is in dire need of purification, when harmony between the individual and the community is broken, when noble ideals are forgotten and their practice long ceased to be, it is the Ṛg Veda which superbly meets the want and shows the Way for the total upliftment of man.

ṚTAM JYOTIḤ

Q: What is meant by ṛtam jyotiḥ in the ancient Vedas? And what is its relevance to us in the present age?

A: The seers of the Veda speak of three great *vyāhṛtis*, Words or Terms which denote the three worlds of man's existence, viz., *bhūḥ*, the earth, *bhuvaḥ*, mid-region, *suvaḥ*, the heaven. To the Ṛṣis every form is a symbol of some truth; each world a manifestation of the truth of a psychological principle. Thus the earth, *pṛthivī*, is the formation of the awakened physical consciousness; the mid-region, *antarikṣa*, of the vital or nervous consciousness; and the heaven, *svar*, an organisation of the mental consciousness in Creation. The three worlds have these respective formulations of the manifesting Consciousness as their basis.

They also speak of yet another world, a Greater Heaven, above the world of Svar, *Bṛhat dyauḥ*. It is referred to variously as *Bṛhat*, the Large or the Immense, as *Maho arṇas*, the Great Water—waters in the Veda symbolising the streams of consciousness. This fourth world of the Veda corresponds to the fourth *vyāhṛtī* which, the Upaniṣad[1] records, was discovered by Seer Mahachamasya, the *Mahas*, the Great World or the World of Light. The Principle governing this

[1] *Taittirīya* I. 5.

world is called in the Veda Ṛtam, Divine Truth; in the Upaniṣads it is known as Vijñāna, complete Knowledge. Ṛtam signifies truth of a divine order above the lower hemisphere of the three worlds of mortal existence where the principles that rule are inferior in nature and human in their operation.

It is important to note the distinction between Ṛtam and Satyam both of which are generally taken to have the same meaning, Truth. Satyam is the essential truth of being; it is that which bases every existence at its core. Ṛtam is that truth in action, on the move, determining the movement in just accord with the truth that is to be fulfilled. It is the Right. It is an active Knowledge of the Truth to be manifested along with the Power to effectuate it. And the plane or the world where this Consciousness reigns in its full splendour is the World of *Mahas*, described by the Vedic seers as *satyam-ṛtam-bṛhat*[1]: *satyam*, because the Truth of being is there unveiled; *ṛtam*, because there the Truth of action is living and self-fulfilling; *bṛhat*, because the range of its Truth is vast and infinite.

The Ṛṣis perceived the effulgent Truth-Consciousness active in this realm as a Supreme Spiritual Sun radiating the rays of this Consciousness in the form of Light, *jyotiḥ*. For it is a fact of mystic experience that the spiritual Truth reveals itself to the inner eye in the form of light: Light is the form of Truth.

Ṛtam and Satyam, declares a Seer,[2] were the first to be born out of the heat of creative incubation of the

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[1] *Atharva Veda*, XII. 1. 1.

[2] *Rig Veda*, X. 190.

Eternal and it was on their basis that all the subsequent movement of manifestation proceeded. It is on the firm foundations of Ṛtam above [1] that the creation is based; in fact it is for this Supreme Truth that the vast and profound Heaven and Earth exist, *ṛtāya pṛthivī bahule gabhire*.[2] Here are the opulent Waters that sustain and strengthen.[3] The very Gods who direct and preside over the cosmic functionings are born of this Truth, *ṛtajāḥ*, increase by the Truth, *ṛtāvṛdhaḥ*, and stand in the Heavens by the right of this Truth.[4] And it is to this Realm of Truth, Ṛtam, and its undying Light, Jyotiḥ, that the Ṛṣis of the Vedic Age strove to rise in their consciousness and there live for ever:

" Settle me in that Immortal World that never decays nor dies, wherein the Light of Heaven, the Sun-World is set and the Lustre shines for ever.

" Make me immortal in that realm where the brilliant Vivasvān's Son reigns, where is the secret shrine of Heaven, where flow the waters, the mighty streams (of Conscious Energy).

" Make me immortal in that realm where the luminous worlds are full of lustres. . . .

" Make me immortal in that realm where are all joys and raptures, where are all delights and contentments. . . . " [5]

The Teaching of Sri Aurobindo, based as it is on these eternal truths perceived by the ancient seers,

[1] *Rv.* IV. 23. 9.
[2] *Ibid.*, IV. 23. 10.
[3] *Ibid.*, IV. 23. 8.
[4] *Ibid.*, X. 85. 1.
[5] *Ibid.*, IX. 113.

attaches a crucial importance to this Truth-Power of Ṛtam in its resolution of the cosmic riddle. In fact it goes on to appreciate and realise its potentialities in an even fuller measure. For Sri Aurobindo sees in this Truth-Principle and Plane of Knowledge-Will—high above the highest ranges of the mind, Super-Mind as he terms it—much more than a perfect Heaven of Liberation. He finds here the supreme Light and Power which alone can displace and eradicate the ills of Ignorance, Falsehood and Imperfection with which the life of humanity is beset. Not only does his Yoga lead to an ascent of the consciousness of man to the heights of this Supramental Truth but it also aims and works to channel the Force of this Dynamics downward so that all the elements of the creations below can stand uplifted in its transforming grasp.

Not on the summits alone but too on the plains shall shine the Light of Perfection, *Ṛtam Jyotiḥ*.

DIVINE BODY

Aspects of Indian Religious Thought[1] is an interesting collection of addresses and papers on a number of subjects in illustration of the particularly spiritual bent of the Indian mind in its outlook on life. The writing is learned and informative and touches upon a number of key-concepts and institutions that have played a notable part in the evolution of Indian thought and culture viz. Yajña (sacrifice), Mantra, Mother-worship, Puruṣottama Ideal, Divine Body, Yoga, Unity with Nature and the Way of Love.

The sacred character of the institution of Sacrifice as a preordained feature of the Creation, its double movement of Descent and Ascent, the Becoming or the outsurge of the Consciousness-Force of the Divine Being and the return of the Movement on the crest of the evolutionary Aspiration in Nature; the profound significance of Mantra as a dynamism deriving from the original Nāda Brahman, the Logos, its effective role in the unveiling of the Soul, as developed in the Tantra Śāstra; the truth of the Transcendent Puruṣottama in which are reconciled the apparent contradictions of *kṣara* and *akṣara*, the mutable and the immutable;—all

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[1] By S. B. Das Gupta. Published by A. Mukherji & Co., College Square, Calcutta.

these are expounded with admirable clarity of thought and expression.

The most interesting chapter in the book is on the Indian conception of the Divine Body. As the author recalls, there is in this country a long standing tradition that it is possible for man to develop and acquire a body that would not be subject to the limitations, decay and death to which the ordinary physical body is heir. By transubstantiation, by a total change of the elements which go to make the substance of the body, it is possible to gain freedom from these trammels, achieve immortality. Different means have been tried to this end. There is the school of Rasāyana, alchemists who believed in making " the body immutable by changing the very quality of the ingredients of the body by the application of Rasa, a chemical combination of mercury and sulphur or mica ". There are the Nātha Gurus or Siddhas who sought to effect this change by means of certain yogic practices—mainly physical and physiological: first, to dry up and deaden the normal elements of the body and then to revive it through a regulated outflow of the currents of Bliss, nectar, *sudhā*, from the Moon in the Sahasrāra at the crown of the head. To them, the *siddha deha*, perfected body, so developed is but a prelude to the attainment of *Divya Deha*, Divine Body, which " can have free movement in all the three worlds and, perfectly dematerialised as it is, it does not have to adhere to the spatio-temporal laws of the universe ". There is also mention in sufficient detail of the Buddhist (specially Mahāyānist) theory of *trikāya*, the three bodies possible for man: the *nirmāṇa kāya*, the normal physical body, *sambhoga kāya*, the subtle refulgent body

of bliss, in which the liberated man lives while still on earth working for the welfare of his fellow-beings, and finally the *dharma kāya*, body of Law, of Truth, with which he enters the Nirvāṇa.

The author then refers to the importance acquired by this subject in the Teaching of Sri Aurobindo who enunciates the Gospel of Life Divine for mankind, and writes: "He (Sri Aurobindo) has realised the truth of a continual flow of *amṛta* (nectar, the flow that makes one immortal) not only behind the life-process of the individual man, but behind the evolution of the whole cosmic process; and that flow is the flow of the infinite divine bliss which is to be attained and utilised, not for the extinction of the being of the man, but to immortalise the being by divinising the whole of it, for, 'From the divine bliss, the original Delight of existence, the Lord of Immortality comes pouring the wine of that Bliss, the mystic Soma, into these jars of mentalised living matter: eternal and beautiful, he enters into these sheaths of substance for the integral transformation of the being and nature.'" The process by which the transformation of the body is envisaged to be worked out has been dealt with in the writings of the Seer during his later years and forms the subject-matter of the book *The Supramental Manifestation.* Those interested in the subject might refer to the issues of the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, in which the Mother has been throwing fresh light on the immediate possibility of this development taking place.

The studies are enlightening. Perhaps the one on Mother Worship could have been less discursive.

It is difficult to accept the author's conclusion that the One Śakti, the Supreme Mother, represents the fusion of a number of goddesses worshipped all over the country at different times and in different places, as a result of the synthesising process of historical evolution. It is, on the other hand, a fundamental scriptural truth corroborated by spiritual experience that the One bases the many, the One Divine manifests, or emanates severally, each Form or Personality with a distinct purpose and power for its effectuation.

AITAREYA UPANIṢAD

The Aitareya Upaniṣad belongs to the *Rig Veda* and comprises the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the Second *Aitareya Āraṇyakā* ascribed to the sage Mahidāsa Aitareya. Simple in narration, it is yet profound in import.

In the first section is described the creation of the worlds, the Cosmic Person, the Gods and the senses. The primeval Spirit, the Ātman, says the Upaniṣad, manifested the several worlds out of its own Being. The Virāt Puruṣa was then shaped out of its oceanic extension; further tapas by the Creator brought into form the several parts of the body, their respective sense-organs, *indriyas*, and their governing deities. The Gods thus emanated, continues the narrative, were afflicted by Hunger and Thirst and they pleaded for a secure habitation. The Creator shaped a Cow; but the Gods would not accept it as adequate. A Horse was then presented; that too was not acceptable. It was only when He fashioned Man that the Gods rejoiced and found in him a fit dwelling. And they entered into him. Food for the embodied was then created and the way determined for its absorption. Once this was done, the text declares, the Spirit itself entered into the Form of its making and took up its triple poise therein and discovered Itself as none else than the all-pervading Brahman.

The second section speaks of the succession of births undergone by the embodied soul: the first at the time of the conception, the second at physical birth and the third when the body dies and the soul is born in another incarnation. To break through this chain of births, hints the Upaniṣad, it is essential to gain Knowledge—Knowledge of the Spirit and its manifestation, and it cites in commendation the victory cry of Vāmadeva from within the womb of Ignorance which he burst by the force of his Knowledge.

In the third and final section the question is raised, who is this Spirit, the Self which is to be known? It is the One Consciousness that has projected itself as all that breathes, whatso moves and whatso moves not. All are but names of the Eternal Consciousness that is Brahman, *prajñānam Brahma*. This is the Self that is to be realised if one would be immortal.

KARMA AND JÑĀNA

THE *Sambandha-Vārtika*[1] of Sureśvara, the justly renowned disciple of Āchārya Śankara, is the introductory part of his gloss on the Āchārya's commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Though only an introduction, it runs into 1,148 verses. Helpful editions of this work have not been too easily available and we are thankful to Dr. Mahadevan for his labours as the editor-translator in bringing out this sumptuous volume. Apart from his usual fluent and yet faithful translation, he has added invaluable notes based upon the Śāstra-prakāśika of Ānandagiri and three other commentaries still in manuscript-form, e.g. *Nyāya-tattva-vivaraṇa* of Narasimha Prajñāyati, *Nyāya-kalpalatika* of Ānanda-pūrṇa and the *Āraṇya-vṛtti-sambandhokti*. Helpful extracts from these commentaries have been also given.

The subject-matter of the work is to determine the relation, *sambandha*, between the two sections of the Veda, the Karma Kāṇda and the Jñāna Kāṇda. For this purpose the author examines the views of the Mīmāmsakas and the various Vedāntins and seeks to establish Śankara's view as the right one.

The Mīmāmsaka position is that Ritual, Karma, is the sole purport of the Veda. Karma is of three kinds:

[1] Edited by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan. Published by University of Madras.

optional, *kāmya*, to gain objects of desire; prohibited, *pratisiddha*, the performance of which brings on demerit; obligatory, *nitya*, which avoids demerit. One who seeks release should avoid the first two categories of Karma thereby saving himself from gathering merit and demerit; he should perform the *nitya* karma to keep out demerit, with the result that after the fall of the body, with the completion of the accumulated Karma, he gets release.

But that is only release from Karma, says the Advaitin. Karma is the result of nescience, Avidyā, and unless the cause is removed there is no real liberation. And to eliminate the Avidyā there is no other means except Knowledge, Jñāna, which is the real meaning of the Veda.

The author then examines certain other propositions sponsored by the Vedāntins, viz. *Samuchaya Vāda* which combines both Karma and Jñāna in its means of release: Karma, sacrifice, etc. is performed for the 'resolution' of the world, i.e. dissolution of the bonds that tie one to the world (according to the *Prapañcha-vilaya Vāda*) or for resolving desires through enjoyment (according to the *Kāma-vilaya Vāda*). In either case it is auxiliary and leads to Jñāna which ultimately gives the release. The Advaitin rightly questions the validity of the assumptions underlying these propositions and refuses to admit that the conjunction of two means, each with a contradictory fruit, can effect Mokṣa.

Next is the position of the *Niyoga-vādin* whose claim is that the Veda aims to lay down what is to be done and it is only this injunctive part that is of value.

The Advaitin has little difficulty in proving that the Veda is a Pramāṇa to make known what is not known and that it is not the propeller of all activity.

Then there is the *Prasankhyāna Vāda* of the Vedānta which insists that systematic meditation (Prasankhyāna), not mere *sravaṇa* of texts, is the only means to realise the Self. It is the Upaniṣads that expound the nature of the Self *and* enjoin meditation as the means to Self-realisation. Sureśvara rejects this view. He points out that *dhyāna*, *manana* etc. are only secondary means to clear the obstacles standing in the way of direct experience of the Self which, however, is evoked intuitively by Vedāntic texts like *Tat Tvam Asi*, etc. in those who are in the requisite receptive consciousness. It is these texts of the Upaniṣads that are the Pramāṇa for the Reality of Brahman-Ātman.

What, then, is the relation between the Karma and Jñāna Kāṇdas according to Sureśvara? As summed up by Dr. Mahadevan, in his admirably lucid Introduction, " If what is enjoined in the Karma-kāṇda is pursued without reference to what is taught in the Jñāna-Kāṇda, one attains prosperity here in this world, and in heaven after death. But if the Karmas are performed without a desire for prosperity, they purify the aspirant and open the way for knowledge. In the Jñāna-kāṇda it is the knowledge of the non-dual self that is taught. And, it is through self-knowledge that one attains release from Samsāra."

THE SIDDHARS

SOUTH INDIA has been always famous for its orthodoxy. Its conservatism in matters of religion as in other walks of life, e.g. social customs, arts and sciences, has been traditional and has served a purpose in the historical evolution of the country. For it is this element that has helped to preserve many of the basic traditions and institutions in the life of its people against frequent incursions of forces and influences alien to the genius of the soil. Be that as it may, it is not known equally well that the South has been also a centre for reaction and revolt against custom and tradition—at any rate in some of its extreme forms—even centuries ago. The standard of revolt was then raised not by politicians or self-declared atheists but by shining exemplars of cultural and spiritual achievement—Siddhars as they have been called in the annals of the peninsula. This neat little book[1] gives a brief but interesting account of the times, the life and the message of the more prominent of these Siddhars.

It was about the fourth and fifth century of the present era that the socio-religious movement of the people of these regions—the kingdoms of the Tamils—

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[1] *The Poetry and the Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhars*, by A. V. Subramania Aiyar. Publisher: S. Mahadevan, Tirunelveli.

had run into the hardening moulds of ceremonial religion, rituals of temple worship and social conventions; the springs of spirituality that have always kept the life currents in this country fresh and dynamic were slowly drying up. "The domination of the Āgamic religion and rituals over some sections of the people became strong at the period when Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism took deep root after overthrowing Buddhism and Jainism in a grim encounter that lasted three centuries. The Bhakti movement, which formed the main feature of this religion in its early stages and which called forth the best creative impulses of the community and gave birth to great Art and Literature gradually began to lose its original fire, purity, and chastening influence . . . the will of the community to live a fruitful Dhārmic life weakened. The responsibility of the individual to develop himself by discipline and ethical conduct, which had been stressed in earlier centuries by Tiruvalluvar and the Jain moralists was lost sight of. Divisions sprang up on sectarian lines. In due course, the true spirit of religion, which was so powerful and creative earlier, was slowly fading away. It was in such a situation that the Tamil Siddhars rose in revolt and began to preach their doctrines."

Who are the Siddhars? The Siddhars are not merely those who have achieved *siddhi*, perfection in their line, be it religion, yoga, medicine or any other avocation. They are a *genre* in themselves. The Siddhars of Tamil Nād are men who strove for self-transcendence in spirit individually in total disregard of the standards and laws of a ritual-ridden society;

they achieved a fulfilment in the realm of the soul by union with God and attainment of Knowledge of the truths and powers of God; they sounded the trumpet call to their less fortunate brethren to awake to the true significance of life, to the universality of the Truth of God and to place the one paramount need of the soul to realise its innate divinity above all other obligations to man and society. This is not to mean that they were anarchists who preached disorder. On the other hand, they commended the efficacy of ethics, ideals of morality and self-culture as factors promoting the growth of godly life and leavening the existence of men and women in the work-a-day world. Man, they declared, is divine in essence; he has Powers in himself of which he is not normally aware. To become conscious of them, to leave behind the little life of the senses, tread the path of strenuous discipline to be liberated in the plenitude of the Light and Power of the soul in a realised oneness with the Highest Divine is the main import of their message. To allow no circumstance or consideration to interfere with or impede the progress of the soul till this yogic union is achieved and to care for nothing except for the radiation of the Light and Power so attained is its corollary. The author compares them to the Sūfis of Islam and the early Gnostics of Europe,—not, be it noted, to the Antinomians of medieval times.

Attention is drawn to the distinction in the teaching of the Siddhars and other saints, the Aḻwārs of the Vaiṣṇavas and Nāyanmārs of the Śaivas: " . . . the differences are not in the fundamentals of their theology or in intensity of devotion to God, but only in their

emphasis, methods of approach to God and the forms in which devotion to God should manifest itself. . . The Siddhars stress in rough-hewn but powerful Tamil verses the need for each individual to develop his own psychic powers by Yoga and concentration of the mind and see and experience God within himself. If God could be found and experienced within Man himself, there is no need to go in search of Him to temples or other man-made trysts. . . The later religious teachers have declared that the observance of certain rituals and practices . . . [is] of paramount importance while the Siddhars do not consider these as essential to inner religious life."

The foremost of these Siddhars is Tirumūlar, the "Arch-Siddhar or the supreme mystic and pontiff of Yoga in all Tamil literature". Leaving aside the usual legendry accounts, nothing definite is known of his life except that he must have come from the north and lived in the fifth or sixth century A.D. His work, *Tirumantiram* of over 3,000 verses[1], is considered to be

[1] All the verses have been written in the same metre, "a kind of simple and short *Viruttam* metre. In the command over this peculiar metre and in making it a fit instrument for his poetry and thought, Tirumūlar has shown a genius of exceptional vitality. It is one of the wonders of Tamil literature that this entire work of over three thousand stanzas is in the same metre which is handled with such skill that want of variety does not result in a sense of oppressive monotony. Though the subject of the poem is dryly intellectual and mystic, packed with heavy thought in a maze of symbolism, the poetic style of the *Tirumantiram* has on the whole, a rugged simplicity, a vigour and a new tone and use of words, which have added to the richness of Tamil poetry. Tirumūlar is a master of the apt, short and winged word. No other Tamil poet, who has written on such a scale, has a larger proportion of the best."

unique in many respects and occupies one-tenth of the entire *Tirumurais*, the Canon of the Śaiva religion in the South. Apart from containing current ideas on Dharma, Polity, Religion and the like, largely from the *Tirukkural*, the work is notable for its sections on the practice of Yoga, Siddhis or Powers, Mantras and other branches of Āgamic knowledge, in which he has drawn upon existing Śāstras and on his own personal experience and knowledge of the truths of inner life. All the portions of this valuable treatise, however, could not be made intelligible as these concepts and truths have been clothed in a symbolism which is obscure to the later generations.

The use of symbols, especially numerals, to express spiritual verities has been adopted by the Tamil mystic poets, even as the Seers of the Veda resorted to another imagery in their hymns, to guard the occult lore from the eye of the profane and abuse by the ignorant.[1] The author points out: " When the word *five* is used, it may mean the five senses, or the five elements or the five *prāṇams* or the five sacred letters or the five *Mūrtis* and so on which has to be inferred from the context. Similarly for every numeral there are several meanings. . . . Another factor that causes difficulty in understanding, if not obscurity, is the wide variety in the symbolism used. For, God, the human body, and the human soul have been represented in a multiple symbolism." Due to this difficulty the most important part of the work yet remains to be unravelled. But

[1] And yet, it was Tirumūlar who pioneered the movement of using the speech of the common man—an innovation which was continued by the later Siddhars.

from the portions that have been interpreted, it is clear that the Poem is a masterpiece in which the Four Ways of Liberation, Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti and Yoga have been integrated in a manner that fully justifies the title of Tirumūlar as the greatest Siddhar in Tamil literature.

His teaching is notable for another feature; we are happy to read: " Tirumūlar does not favour that type of Yoga which leads to mortification of the body. Unlike later Siddhars he does not consider the human body to be evil in itself. On the other hand he values the human body as a fit and suitable instrument for the soul in its career of self-discipline and search for God. In one place he calls this body itself the temple of God." (*Tirumantiram* 724. 1823). And indeed it is so. In truth, the body is as much a creation of God as is the soul. The difference between them is only one of degree of the self-formation of the One Spirit. The Divine has shaped the soul as its centre of manifestation and built the body as its vibrant vehicle for the reception and projection of its powers and glories. Hence the body too has its claim in the perfection and liberation that is aimed at. Like the mind and the soul, the human body also is to be cultivated, processed and energised in order that it may effectively participate in the spiritual progression and become a plastic instrument for the expression of the realised Divinity.

The author notes that Tirumūlar refers to Śiva or Nandi, the Highest Power realised by him, as a dazzling Effulgence and observes: " The conception is metaphorically an apt one as Light always dispels darkness and ignorance, which are said to stand in the way of Man's attempt at self-realisation or union with God.

Probably in the trances and visions of the mystics, God is seen as a Mighty and moving blaze of light." It is not a metaphor; it is a fact of spiritual experience that the Divine Truth reveals itself, to the inner vision of the seeker, in the form of Light. For the characteristic form of the Higher Truth or Power is spiritual Light of which the physical light is a material expression. It may be mentioned here that the Ṛṣis of the Veda speak of the Highest Manifestation of the Divine as the Supreme Sun—*uttamam jyotiḥ*—of whom the solar orb of our universe is a physical symbol.

Citing a number of verses in the original to illustrate the excellence of the work, its profundity, poetic beauty and melody, variety of symbolism, Mr. Aiyer ranks Poet Tirumūlar with Māṇikkavāchakar and Nammāḷwār and adds: "He lacks the former's melody and finish in form, but has his easy command over language. He also lacks the latter's depth of ideas and sweep of imagination, but has his terseness and power of expression. In the wide range of his symbolism Tirumūlar may be said to excel both."

The book then gives a short account of three Siddhars, Śivavākkiyar [1] who posits the supreme Divine Power above both Śiva and Viṣṇu,[2] Pattinatthār, the

[1] The author takes up the controversy whether Siddhar Śivavākkiyar and the famous Tirumālisai Āḷwār are one and the same person. He argues with considerable force in support of the old tradition that Śivavākkiyar is the very same Śaivite Siddhar who later became famous as Tirumālisai Pirān, the Vaiṣṇava Āḷwār.

[2] *கருமை செம்மை வெண்மைக் கடந்து நின்ற காரணம்*
அரியுமல்ல, அரனுமல்ல, அப்புறத்தில் அப்புறம்
பெரிதல்ல, சிறியதல்ல, பற்றுமின்கள் பற்றுமின்
துரியமும் கடந்து நின்ற தூர தூர தூரமே.—10

most widely read of the Siddhars and Bhadragiri—all of whom lived in what is known as the Hymnal Period, 6 to 10 A.D.

This is followed by a chapter on the later Siddhars in the 16th and 17th centuries when there was another burst of revolt against the newly consolidated orthodoxy and scholasticism. Much less is known about the personal lives of these later celebrities, even their names deriving from some significant expressions used in their works.[1] Brief accounts are given of the works of Pāmbātti Siddhar, Idaikattu Siddhar, Ahappey Siddhar, Kudambai Siddhar, Kaduveli Siddhar and Aḷuhunni Siddhar. The author, however, is inclined to rate their contribution to Tamil literature much lower than that of the earlier giants.

Amidst masses of obscurity and archaism the keen eye of Mr. Aiyer detects gems of beauty and he is eager to share his discoveries with the reader. This short account succeeds in its objective, viz. to create interest in the literature and work of the Siddhars, a subject which has not received adequate attention so far in modern studies. Perhaps the present essay could be more intensive in some parts than it has been. His final estimate of the Siddhars is both happy and just:

" The Siddhars have made a permanent and varied contribution to Tamil literature and have enriched it. They introduced into Tamil poetry not only the common speech but also an easy and flexible style woven

[1] For instance the Siddhar known as Pāmbātti Siddhar (Snake-charmer) after the symbolism of the snake he uses to denote the human soul and the expression '*āḍu pāmbe*', (do thou dance, Snake).

out of it. The Siddhars were votaries of true religion and noble philosophy. Being men given to Yoga and meditation they underwent long spells of contemplative silence and moods of concentration. Their poetry was subsidiary to their religious life. There is not the impress of the consciously developed art in it. They appear to have sung when they chose to . . . Their teachings about the existence of the one Supreme God and the need for a feeling of identity with and faith in Him, the absolute equality of all irrespective of caste or creed and the need for each individual to develop his inner life by spiritual effort, to know and realise God, have a great value at the present time . . ."

One word before we conclude. The author notes at the end:

" One cannot predict with equal certainty about the practical value of their Yogic teachings and mystical knowledge about the development of the latent powers of Man by Yoga and discipline. The scientific spirit of the times rules out worth-while future for them, though, perhaps, stray individuals here and there may treasure them and practise them like lone wanderers in a strangely fascinating realm. As for the spiritual yearning after God, that is an eternal quest. There will always be persons engaged in it. . . ."

We are afraid the author makes an unnecessarily rigid distinction between the development of the latent faculties in man and the spiritual evolution of his being. For truly speaking, there is no inconsistency between the evocation and full maturing of all the powers with which one is endowed and the outflowering of the soul into Union with the Divine; one can be a part and

expression of the other. The powers are there in the being as potential means for an all-sided manifestation of the Soul which presides over them. Their fullness is part of the total realisation or perfection of man. It is not accurate, either, to say that the culture and development of these faculties—powers which are not overtly active but nevertheless inherent in the being—has no future in this age of Science. On the other hand, the birth and advance of the new Sciences of para-psychology, telepathy, etc., initiates and promises a new career for this line of human effort, although the approach of these empirical sciences is different from that of the old. The frontiers of Knowledge are expanding at an incredible speed and it is not going to be long before what is occult today becomes part of the patent tomorrow.

DATTĀTREYA

LITTLE is known of the Dattātreya cult outside Maharāshtra where it is still an active movement and claims considerable following. Literature on the subject in English is practically nil, the few books written about it having gone out of print long ago. The present work [1] is hence specially welcome for the light it sheds on the significance and also the consequence of the symbolism of Dattātreya in Indian Religion. The exposition is not merely adequate; it is a faithful and convincing presentation of the Doctrine of Dattātreya—both in its philosophical and the practical aspects, in the traditional setting of the Vedānta. The author is himself a whole-hearted adherent of this path and his writing mirrors the faith and sincerity of his approach.

According to legend, Dattātreya is the gift, *datta*, of Lord Maheśvara to Ṛṣi *Atri*, borne by his wife Anasuya. He is considered to be the fourth (some say the sixth) Avatār of Viṣṇu. He is traditionally represented with three faces: the first one of Brahmā, the second or the middle one of Viṣṇu and the third of Śiva, symbolising thereby the triune Movement of the One Divine in manifestation, viz. creation, preservation

[1] *Dattātreya* by Sri Jaya Chamarajendra Wadiyar Bahadur. Published by Allen and Unwin, London.

and destruction. At his feet are four dogs "which represent the four Vedas which follow at the feet of the Lord as hounds of heaven and watch-dogs of truth, owned by Dattātreya, the great Hunter for the souls of men."

In another significant figure, Dattātreya is described as standing with a jar of wine in one hand and a woman in the other, thus emphasising the utter freedom of the manifesting Spirit from all determinations of universal Nature. He is the One who is ever-present, everywhere; the enjoyer, the witness, the Transcendent, He is the Absolute.

The many facets of the Dattātreya Incarnation are dwelt upon in the Bhāgavata and other Purāṇas; some of the Yoga Upaniṣads too have passages on the subject. The author has made an extensive study of these writings for the purpose of his own Sādhana and gives in these pages the cream of his reading. He has selected two texts of importance, the *Jīvanmukta Gītā* and the *Avadhūta Gītā*, ascribed to Dattātreya, for presenting this teaching. Both of them expound the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta. They stress on the impermanence and the ultimate unreality of the lower life of the senses in the shadow of Ignorance and call upon man to grow in Knowledge and realise his identity with the one Reality that is Eternal—the Brahman, call it by what name you will.

The *Jīvanmukta Gītā*, in twenty-four verses, deals with the subject of liberation while still in the physical body. One who realises the truth that Jīva is Śiva itself and lives in that consciousness is a Jīvanmukta (verse 3); so too he who actually *sees* the supreme

Lord pervading the entire creation and shares effectively in this divine Oneness, is a Mukta (verse 11). To realise this identity is the object of Sādhana, spiritual discipline. One has to have, points out the author, a 'disposition', a spontaneous turn to this seeking; and that can come only by the Grace of God.

The *Avadhūta Gītā*, the Song of the Anchorite, is a longer treatise of 289 verses in eight chapters. The writing is uneven and obviously the inspiration is not the same throughout. The thought is the same as that of the other *Gītā*—Advaita—but the treatment is more detailed. "There is neither scripture, nor worlds, nor Gods. . . . Ultimate Reality which is Brahman is alone manifest. It is the Highest Reality." And "That Reality you are." The tortuous way of the mind is not the means to reach this Truth. "O Mind; why do you weep? Be Self itself by means of Self." A progressive peeling off of the veils of ignorance discloses at last the self-effulgent impartite Ātman, the Eternal Self which is at once the Self of the individual and the Self of the universe. This is the Path of Knowledge best pursued led by a Teacher who embodies that Knowledge, the Way to the supreme Bliss of Brahman which liberates man into the infinities of the Spirit transcending the warring dualities of phenomenal Nature in Ignorance.

PILGRIM TO THE SELF

". . . AND the people entered the shrine of his heart. An altar was there and on it two lights were burning.

"He understood that these were the lights of his own life. They were himself. The flame of the nearer one was many-hued, pulsating with a richness of colour and emanating a slight smoke. He recognised it to be his thoughts and emotions by the very familiar rhythm of their vibrations.

"The second and farther light was colourless, but its rays were pervading everything and penetrating through the changing hues of the first one. Immovable in its pristine purity it was quietly burning, breathing a peace as great as eternity itself.

"Then a Rabi dressed in white appeared, took both the lights in his hands and changed their places. 'From this movement you will look through the light of eternity on that of the fleeting life, instead of looking, as you have done till now, through the ephemeral light, which made the perception of the eternal difficult.' "

This passage from a work based on the Hebrew Kabbalah had once fascinated the author of this book [1]

[1] *In Days of Great Peace.* By Mouni Sādhu. Publishers: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.

though its full meaning was not clear to him then. It has been his rare good fortune to see its truth unveiled in his own person at a culminating juncture in his long arduous journey in search of the Truth of God. His life, as we gather from the pages of this remarkable book, has been a sustained endeavour over a period of thirty years to arrive at the basic Reality of the All.

He was twenty-five when he felt drawn to Theosophy. He got into touch with Mrs. Besant and Mr. Leadbeater, the then leaders of the movement, and began practices for developing the supra-physical faculties. But the results, even after some years, did not encourage further effort in the direction. He found no practical guidance forthcoming from those living and "their Masters were not accessible, and seemed to be rather like a myth. It appeared that only Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott had the privilege of meeting them in physical form. On my enquiry late in 1926, Mrs. Besant wrote to me: 'It is true that after the death of Col. Olcott in 1907, the Masters withdrew their direct guidance of the T.S., but recently in 1925, they resumed that guidance'."

He then took to Heremeticism based on Egyptian tradition and the symbolism of the Tarot, and to Kabbalah under the guidance of Eliphas Levi and Dr. Papus. He pursued his efforts with enthusiasm till one day he realised their futility. He followed up by a study and practice of the methods of Dr. Practt, the German occultist, for acquiring control over thoughts and through them on one's personality. Here too the results were inadequate.

Then he came into contact with the semi-secret society, *Amitiés Spirituelles*, in Paris, founded by the mystic and occultist, Paul Sedir. Sedir has written much about his master, 'Master of Masters' whose name, however, he would not reveal but whose identity came to our author in a flash much later when he found his own Path. But we anticipate. The author is not disposed to speak more of this sect and their doctrines in view of their vow of secrecy. But it is obvious his need was not met and he continued his search till an elderly acquaintance placed in his hands a copy of Paul Brunton's *Search into Secret India* and insisted on his reading it. And it was well he read it. For its famous chapters on Sri Ramaṇa Maharshi made a profound impact on him and " were decisive. At last I had found my true Master. This certainty came of itself and permitted no doubts. And then I realised why all my previous searching had been in vain. The occult ways mentioned before were only blind alleys. They could give me some help, but there was no vision of the true goal . . . Now it was clear to me why the *vicāra* (self-enquiry) could replace the time-devouring training of occult practices. All that I had previously been striving after—concentration, meditation, breath and body control, a clear vision of reality, peace and bliss—all of them now came of their own accord, as ripe fruit falls from a tree."

The author began to apply himself with his customary earnestness to the discipline of this Path of Self-enquiry and Self-realisation forthwith. For this purpose he retired for a few months to the quiet environments of a monastery in the heart of Paris and

devoted himself with exclusive attention to his object, with satisfying gains. Three years later he could come to India, where, he observes, with fine sensitivity: "The psychic atmosphere of India is very different from that of most other countries. One might say that contemplative moods are in the very air. This is easy to understand if we admit that no energy is lost in nature. Millions of human beings, often endowed with extraordinary spiritual powers, with a weighty radiating influence, have from time immemorial been throwing into the atmosphere of India streams of energy generated by their meditations."

At last he arrived at the feet of his Master, the Maharshi, and soon found himself in the throes of a spiritual revolution which precipitated into a fulfilling movement the several lines of inner life that he had been building up all along so laboriously. Resistances broke down; impassable barriers disappeared; his consciousness found itself liberated in a manner that turned all the 'normal' values upside down. And that is exactly what happens in spiritual life. No amount of human labour opens the doors of the Spirit. It is the Divine Grace that alone can give the delivering touch; it may operate directly in rare cases or, more usually, through the person of the Guru. It is the Power and the Presence of the Guru that works wonders and creates what is well-nigh impossible for unaided human effort to achieve.

Mouni Sadhu—that is the name adopted by the author—lived in the physical proximity of the Sage for only a few years. But the progress made and the catalytic changes undergone by him in that short period

were incredibly swift and prodigious. It is fortunate that he kept a note of these developments and was impelled to weave them into a connected sequence for the corroborative guidance of fellow-seekers. This account is one of the most transparent, living and powerful writings of the present-day spiritual literature. It is simple, direct, yet vibrant with the Power of Silence that has claimed and moved the author into expression.

Whether he speaks of the indispensable personal effort, the liberating role of the Grace, the advent of Peace, or of the three steps of meditation in the way of self-introspection special to this line of spiritual effort, or of the 'Land of Silence' above the flux of Name and Form or of the *inner space*, infinite, 'strangely silent and empty, yet throbbing with intense life,' one stands here face to face with a mighty Silence unrolling itself through words that speak the language of the Eternal.

Thus far regarding the genuine character of the inspiration that runs through the main part of the work and the fidelity with which the author transmits it to the reader. There are, however, a few statements made by the author as axiomatic truths while they are in fact only points of view valid to particular standpoints. Truth is global in manifestation and it is always wise not to be too trenchant in the formulation of one's thought-vision. Also, the author could have been more careful in verifying his collection of information about men and things he has come across.

Speaking of the evening meditation at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the author writes: "Everything proceeded smoothly and harmoniously and was full

of deep symbolical meaning. Scores of white robed disciples and visitors filled the vast room. Then the Master appeared with the Mother for a short time. Full of dignity and powerful concentration, his face showed solemnity and inspiration."

This is rather interesting if not intriguing. For Sri Aurobindo was never physically present at these meetings. It is only the Mother who presided over them. Could it be that the sceptical author was vouchsafed, in his subtle vision, a glimpse into an important truth governing the Āśram, the fact that Sri Aurobindo is inseparable from the Mother and he is always present wherever the Mother is?

UNTO THE INFINITE

Towards the Infinite[1] is a remarkable document of spiritual significance. The Infinite reveals itself infinitely and the present book is an interesting and yet authentic record of the spiritual realisation and knowledge gained by the author in pursuit of Rāja Yoga, under the guidance of his Master, Samarthaguru Sri Rāmachandrāji of Fatehgarh.

Real Knowledge, Jñāna, says the author, is not something to be learnt from books or heard from others. It is a thing to be experienced and made part of oneself. And such a Knowledge of the Self, God and the world can only be got by an intensive yogic effort under a Guru who embodies that Knowledge. The writer goes direct to his subject and expounds his perceptions and realisations in three chapters: *Jñāna Prakaraṇa*, Knowledge; *Granthi Prakaraṇa*, The Knots; *Antima Daśā Prakaraṇa*, The Final State (of Beatitude). In brief:

This world is a product of a dynamic Movement that arose in the Static Idea or Poise of the Supreme. It has been a graded creation with successive levels of descent down which the individual emanations of God have descended and up which they are to ascend back

[1] *Anant ki or* by Ramachandra. Publishers: Sri Ramachandra Mission, Shahajhanpur (U.P.).

to the state Ultimate which is a state of Absolute Peace and Bliss. Man is situate in the intermediate zone between the Highest and the lowest. His heart reflects this mid-status inasmuch as here is the nodus of the conscious and unconscious states of Existence and it is there that the one is to be separated from the other. That is why, the author adds, one is enjoined to concentrate and meditate in the Heart.

This Yoga is a sustained discipline to rise into each successive state or level of Consciousness, identify oneself with it, integrate it with one's own developing consciousness before emerging into the next higher state, till one attains to the plenary State above states. These are the levels or Knots, *Granthis* (as the author terms them) which are not to be cut asunder but resolved. He describes thirteen of them in all. Beginning with (1) the state of awareness of a divine lordship over all existence and a certain inrush of vital energy, the Yogin proceeds step by step through further stages of, (2) divine light exuding a sense of lightness and goodness all round, (3) a glimpse of Soul and experience of natural clarity, (4) a higher light warm with True Love, connected with the element of Fire giving mastery over Agni Tattva, (5) Peace, givir g mastery over Vāyu Tattva; this Vāyu, however, is different from the ordinary Vāyu and is immensely more refreshing, (6) change in the nature of the luminosity and a pronounced lessening of the hold of Matter, (7) Purity and Power in a concentrated form capable of neutralising the impact of gun-shot and more powerful than the celebrated Sri Krishna Chakra; complete experience of *Aham Brahmāsmi*, (8) Peace and Solidity in which

the world looks a dream and there is the rise of real Vairāgya, (9) commencement of contact with the Infinite, Bhūmā, new birth and a spontaneous adoration of the Lord, (10) growth into the nature of the Lord, (11) removal of all *āvaraṇa*, screen, and glimpse into the Reality, (12) subtler than the subtlest of our states; before this stage of vividity and brilliance our most rarefied altitudes of the mind look gross, (13) the total disappearance of Māyā and the revelation of Life, Life, nothing but a state of Life. This is the prelude to the final emergence into the summits of Transcendence which words can never describe.

One who attains this state of super-consciousness has his will totally identified with the Divine Will. His will is infallible; it is self-effective. But such persons, says the author, are rare; there can be only one such at a time and it is they who mould the destiny of the universe.

The author gives interesting evaluations of the spiritual stature of figures renowned in the Indian spiritual history while describing the Siddhis vouchsafed to the yogin in *tapasyā* and prophesies that better times are ahead for the bleeding humanity of today.

Much in the book is corroborated by the spiritual Wisdom recorded in scriptures like the Upaniṣads, Yoga-treatises, etc.; as to what appears to be new, the author invites the readers to verify for themselves by taking to the practice of this Yoga.

ZEN

It is said that once at the end of a sermon, Gautama Buddha held up a flower. Only one disciple understood and smiled. Later the Enlightened One called him aside and transmitted to him the wordless Message of the One Mind by the Mind. The recepient was Mahākāśyapa, the first Patriarch who in turn transmitted It to Ānanda, the second of the 28 Indian Patriarchs. The last of these, Bodhidharma, carried this Message to China in the sixth century A.D. and became the first of the six Chinese Patriarchs. No further patriarchs were created because of divisions in the Sect. The last Chinese Patriarch was Hui Neng. Third in direct line of descent from him was Huang Po who gave a special shape and vitality to this Doctrine of the One Mind and preached it through his sermons, dialogues and anecdotes which have been recorded in part by his disciple P'ei Hsiu, a scholar-official of the State. A conscientious and elegant English translation of this significant work is now available.[1]

The theme of the book is the Teaching of the Dhyāna School of the Buddhists, known as Ch'an in China and the Zen in Japan. It is by the last name (Japanese) that the Sect is now known all over the

[1] *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po.* Publishers: Rider and Co., London.

world. According to this Teaching, the Reality is not something to be attained. It is there always as the Substance and one can only realise it, become aware of it. It is necessary for this purpose to eliminate all conceptual activity of the mind, stand aloof in consciousness from all dualities; when this is successfully done the Revelation comes in a flash. All else is a preparatory stage.

This Doctrine, points out the translator, Mr. Blofeld, in his admirably clear and concise Introduction, found a ready soil in China where " centuries of Confucianism had predisposed scholars against the fine-spun metaphysical speculation in which Indian Buddhists have indulged with so much enthusiasm; . . . the teaching of Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, the Taoist sages, had to a great extent anticipated Zen quietism and prepared the Chinese mind for the reception of a doctrine in many ways strikingly similar to their own."

The Zen Sect split for a time into two branches: the Northern branch holding that the process of Enlightenment is gradual and the Southern believing in sudden Enlightenment. There is agreement, however, that the central fact of Enlightenment is an intimate realisation of one's immediate Unity with the Absolute, besides which there is no other, and which for want of a better word they called MIND. Several of the utterances of this Master of Zen, attempting to give as adequate an idea as possible of this inexpressible Reality, recall identical passages from the Upaniṣads (and even echo some of the Ṛks from the Veda), thus emphasising the unity of the particular spiritual and mystic experience of all time and clime.

Though this work does not tell enough of the practice, *sādhana*, of the Zen Discipline, it throws abundant light on a variety of topics, viz. the stages of non-enlightenment preceding the Enlightenment, the three bodies (*kāyās*) of the Buddhas, the necessity of transcending the sensory perceptions and dualising conceptions, the four steps of the process of awaking to the Substance of the One Mind, the way in which 'the illusion will cease of itself'—all of which have a practical significance even today to those who seek to rise above the lowlands of the sense-submerged mentality to the 'Terrace of the Spirit'. It is a delight to watch the Master as he draws parallels from the commonest occurrences of daily life in speaking to the lay intelligence, throwing in here and there a phrase or a paradox to give "a sudden jolt to the pupil's mind which may propel him towards or over the brink of Enlightenment", or slaps the Divine Emperor himself to drive home a point and when language palls before the Ineffable, announces, "as there is no more to be said, the assembly is dismissed."

SUBUD

HUSEIN ROFE, the writer of this remarkable book,[1] has had an interesting career. Born in England of mixed parentage, he had an unusual flair for learning languages and at quite an early age he picked up a number of oriental languages. Even before he left school he was reading literature on Theosophy, Ouspensky, Buddhism, Upaniṣads, etc. and was drawn to the spiritual side of life. By eighteen a sense of a spiritual mission was growing upon him and he turned to the Orient in search of a Teacher with direct experience of God to help him. It required, however, ten further years of varied life in war and travel before he could actually visit the East. In the meanwhile, at 24, he became a Muslim attracted by the fraternity of brotherhood in Islam where all Muslims were considered equal, regardless of their social and other status. After an adventurous life in North Africa where he came into contact with the mystics and Magi of the deserts, he found himself drawn into a chain of happenings which finally landed him in Djakarta in 1950.

It was here in Java (at Djogjakarta) that the author met Muhammad Subuh whom he instinctively recognised as the Master who was to shape his destiny

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[1] *The Path of Subud.* Publishers: Rider & Co., London.

and to whom he was to play the role of Brunton to Ramaṇa Maharshi. He gives a delightful account of the life and peoples of Indonesia, their social modes and their occult practices with a most sympathetic approach.

From this account of the life of Muhammad Subuh we learn that he was born in 1901 heralded by volcanic disturbances. He was a sickly child till one day his name was changed from Sukarno to Muhammad Subuh, at the instance of a passing beggar. He had clairvoyant visions even from the age of two and as he grew up he was fascinated by the esoteric lore of his country. Then, one night in 1925, while walking alone on a road a bright ball of light like a sun floated towards him and touched his head; he began to shiver. He returned home and rested; but a strange force was moving inside and raised him up to a standing position and made him undergo a number of physical movements quite involuntarily. This was the beginning of a series of spiritual phenomena which continued for nearly 1,000 nights. "His soul visited various planets, and he records that when he reached the sun he saw that its light was in reality reflected from beyond our solar system. This ascent took place on the thousandth night, the final culmination, during which his body remained in a cataleptic trance. In the centre of the sun yawned a great hole through which he was preparing to pass when a voice warned him that if he went further it would be impossible for his soul to return to his body. He was required to perform a task decreed by God for the benefit of humanity." (We are strongly reminded here of a verse in the Upaniṣad which says

that those who cross the gates of the sun cannot retain their body.)

The knowledge so granted to him and embodied by him in a special discipline is known as the SUBUD, which is "an abbreviation of three Javanese words of Sanskrit origin: Susila, Buddhi and Dharma." Subud is not a religion, it has no special ritual. It is a discipline to awaken the soul-consciousness—to activate the Inner Power of the Divine which is embedded in every body—to disengage oneself from the coverings of ignorance and the trappings of sense-life and place oneself in the hands of God. There is, first, an initiation in which there is the "communication of the spark". The Power which was revealed and vouchsafed to the Founder has been transmitted to his disciples, members of his fraternity and they in turn are authorised to pass it on to other aspirants who seek for it in all sincerity. Once communicated, this Power starts working of itself. The seeker on his part has to undergo certain "exercises" on the nature of which the author is understandably silent. That is to be learnt directly from the Guru. There must be an attitude of utter surrender, mental receptivity on the part of the practicant. It is only then that the Force can work unobstructed. Here the stress is on the Divine Force, not so much on personal will. It is the Divine Grace that has to intervene and uplift man. The working of the Force goes on differently in different individuals: each one reacts in the manner suited to his soul-development. There is a "periodic isolation" of consciousness from the movements of the lower self. Gradually a different state of consciousness, the reign of the Higher Self,

replaces the normally extrovert condition of the being and a spiritual growth towards God makes itself felt in a hundred ways. Not only the practitioner but those who come into his atmosphere feel the impact. Diseases are cured; the mind gets illumined and intuitive faculties come into play. "New organs" i.e., hitherto concealed capacities, come into operation. The soul gathers speed in its movement towards perfection in the nature of God which is indeed endless.

Rofe describes the process vividly, citing a number of cases in which the Force brought about amazing results. He is persuasive in his exposition. He writes that no advance Faith in the System is demanded. Any one wishing to try is welcome and may profit by this "new Force . . . made available in the world". Experience, not Theory, is first given to the seeker. In fact the founder of the Subud envisages it as a panacea for all the ills of humanity in time to come. It does not call for austerities, renunciation and the like. One can continue to be in the world, participate in it and yet live in the sunshine of God, act and move under His sole direction. A successful initiate will be "passive to God but active towards mankind".

The author recalls a prophecy of Pak Subuh that if by the end of 1953 there were no war, then there would be no more War though "for a time, conditions in most parts of the world will be as critical as if there were an actual war. Beyond that, we are on the verge of a Golden Age." He writes: "There is no doubt that for more than twenty years sensitives have known that a spiritual force of an unusually high order was operative in the world, but they had not located its central focus

on the material plane." He adds: "Furze Morrish had mentioned the existence of an unknown occult centre in the Southern Hemisphere, by which he *may have* meant central Java." (Italics ours). He refers to Rudolf Steiner "who suggested in 1909 that the present century was likely to offer, through some selected vehicle, a possibility for Man to get more easily in touch with his Divine nature." He is convinced that the time is now and the appointed Radiator of the Liberating Divine Power is Pak Subuh. Towards this end, Rofe has yoked his energies forming Centres all over the world for the concentration and propagation of the New Dynamism; branches have been opened in Japan, Middle East, England and Europe where the Movement is steadily making headway.

He has many interesting and instructive things to say on matters occult, the changeability of Fate, reincarnation, soul-memory, vegetarianism and so on. The book makes absorbing reading and it is a healthy publication drawing attention to what is still a little-known Movement for the upliftment of man and betterment of humanity.

UPĀSANI BABA

BORN in 1870 in Satna (Nasik Dt.) Baba had a meditative turn of mind from infancy and ran away from his home a number of times in search of solitude and God till finally he left for good at twenty. He underwent severe penance in hill-caves and forests, remained in a state of samādhi for months together without food or drink. In 1911 he met and accepted as his Guru the famous Sai Baba of Shirdi who led him to realise not only God in himself but equally God in All. He settled down in Sakori (1917) and became a centre of attraction for all devotees who flocked to him in spite of all the oddities that characterised his external life. It was here that he talked to people (in Marathi) as and when they came on whatever topics that arose directly or indirectly and the present Talks[1] are compiled from these discourses, rendered into English.

It may be that there is no connected philosophical thought or any central Teaching in them governing the whole. Baba himself explains: "This head of mine is empty, whatever enters into it spontaneously I speak out . . . not even a trace of any thought remains . . . anything can enter into it." He adds that when he is alone he is not even conscious of his body and thoughts

[1] *The Talks of Sadguru Upāsani Baba Maharaj.* Publishers: Dr. Sahasrabuddhe, Ramdas Peth, Nagpur.

and words come into him only when people come into his atmosphere. That is how hundreds of topics are touched upon in a manner suited to the temperament and readiness of the auditors. The most valuable of these talks, however, are those on subjects of spiritual import, of which he has a special knowledge and experience, e.g. Japa, its true meaning, the way to release the śakti dormant in it and to gain identity with the creator of the Mantra, the several conditions of Unmada, Pisācha, etc., of some realised beings, the self-organisation of the Bliss of God into a celestial body, etc.

There are many interesting topics besides. For instance, what he says about Kubadi, the short wooden contrivance like an arm-crutch carried by the followers of Swāmi Rāmdas of Maharāshtra, and its use for promoting the Suṣumnā in the Prāṇāyāma discipline: "The arched cross piece fits in the arm-pit and the remaining vertical stick-like part rests on the ground. When one sits leaning on that side, the cross piece presses the arm-pit a good bit, and soon the breath is seen to change from one side to the other. . . . By constantly changing the sides and pressing the arm-pit you try not to breathe through one nostril only."

SAI BABA

IT is certainly strange, as Mr. Osborne observes,[1] that there should have been so far no biography published in the West, in any European language, of a saint as eminent as Sai Baba of Shirdi. Sai Baba has been the most unconventional of the holy men of modern India. All who came into contact with him were shocked out of the accepted standards and notions of spirituality, religion, Yoga. He lived in a mosque but had an overwhelmingly preponderant Hindu following. He not only did not refuse to touch money but actually demanded it from those who sought his help. He performed miracles with a "flamboyance" that truly scandalised the susceptibilities of sophisticated minds. He effected cures in the most bizarre fashion. He belaboured visitors and followers with an ostentatious disdain of all elements of hospitality. And yet his flock grew and has continued to grow even years after his death. To the Indian mind such a life does not at all strike as something "incredible", though it may to a Western eye trained under different conditions. It is not unusual in India to find cases of yogis behaving in an unconventional rude sort of way. Tradition here recognises certain states among men of God in which they move and act, so to say, in intoxication, *unmattvat.*

[1] *The Incredible Sai Baba,* by Arthur Osborne. Orient Longmans Ltd.

Normal standards no longer apply to one who has gone beyond them in his consciousness, particularly if he has not related his inner state to the outer. Be that as it may, the present book forms an engaging account of the Saint of Shirdi by a most sympathetic observer from the West. It is objective, brief and readable.

Nobody knows the antecedents of Sai Baba. In fact even his original name is not known. "Sai" (Persian) "Baba" (Hindi) simply means saintly father. All that is definite is that he came of a middle-class Brāhmin family in Hyderabad. At a young age he left home to follow a Muslim Fakir after whose death, a few years later, he got attached to a Hindu Guru whom he called 'Venkusa'. He said of the Guru: "I loved to gaze on him. I had no eyes except for him. I did not want to go back. I forgot everything but the Guru. My whole life was concentrated in my sight and my sight on him. He was the object of my meditation. In silence I bowed down."

He stayed with him for twelve years at Selu and when he left he took care to take with him a brick which the Guru had given him. He kept it with him throughout his life as a precious link.[1] He came to Shirdi and settled there in a dilapidated mosque where he lived for nearly fifty years. Nobody could say why he chose this out-of-the-way place till one day, "he told a devotee to dig at the foot of the neem-tree where he used to sit on his first arrival there; a tomb was unearthed and he declared that it was that of his Guru, not in this life but in a previous incarnation."

[1] It is interesting to learn that this brick dropped and broke in 1918, shortly before his death.

By and by devotees were drawn to him and the place became a centre of pilgrimage. He gave no formal initiation nor had he any set teaching. His devotees felt that their natural way to God was through the Guru and acted accordingly. The author describes with enthusiasm the variety of miracles worked in the environs of the saint and quotes one of his famous sayings, in explanation: *I give my devotees what they want so that they will begin to want what I want to give them.* His narrations of Baba's teaching through symbols, the occult character of his movements and actions, are indeed interesting, though we wish the author had paused a little to explain the rationale of his application of occult science by the saint, especially his " travels with an invisible body ".

He passed away in 1918. Before the end came, he " sent word to another Muslim saint: ' The light that Allah lit he is taking away ', and the saint received the message with tears." The body was buried. Why not cremated? asks the author and answers: " Actually it is a tradition that the body of a Realised Man should be buried. He has passed through the fire already; there is no need to do so symbolically after death." We might add that in the Indian tradition, Yogis and Siddhas are not burnt but buried because a body which has received and assimilated the divine Light and Consciousness shall not be destroyed. The vibrations of the Spirit ever continue to emanate from that material form and that is the reason why the spot where such a body is entombed becomes a centre of spiritual force. " My relics," said Sai Baba, " will speak from the tomb."

Section Four

TRADITION OF INDIAN CULTURE

CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA[1]

It was a happy idea of the Ramakrishna Mission to sponsor, as part of the Birth Centenary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in 1936, the publication of a comprehensive survey of Indian Civilisation and Culture in three volumes under the title, *The Cultural Heritage of India*. Comprising weighty contributions from one hundred scholars on the various aspects of Indian cultural and spiritual tradition, the work was the first of its kind in its comprehensive scope, profundity of treatment and catholicity of outlook befitting the great occasion it sought to commemorate. It was hailed as a remarkable product of co-operative research and soon established itself as the nucleus of a future *Encyclopædia Indica*. It is now many years since the work got out of print and we are thankful to the publishers not only for bringing out a fresh edition but more for taking the occasion to enlarge the scope of the work, add fresh material and revise the old by bringing it up-to-date and rearrange the entire subject-matter in separate volumes so as to make each volume independent and complete in itself. The work as now projected, runs into five volumes, three of which have

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[1] *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Vol. I)—*The Early Phases*. Publishers: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

been published so far, the first being now before us for study.[1]

Time was when books on Indian history began their first chapter with the Vedic Period. It was taken for granted that Indian civilisation dated from its early beginnings in the primitive age of which the pastoral poetry of the *Rig Veda* is a faithful record. This smug position, however, has had to be given up in the face of mounting evidence—archæological, historical, philological and other—that unmistakably points to a long, long prior epoch of civilisation of which, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, the *Rig Veda* marks only the closing phase. Besides, the hymns of the Veda are now coming to be admitted to be much more than the crude incantations of Nature-worshippers that they were once taken to be; they are, on the other hand, a record of the spiritual and mystic past of a race who were highly advanced in the life of the soul. Who were the people that inhabited India during these prehistoric times? Where they autochthonous or immigrant? If immigrants, from where did they come? What traditions did they bring with them and how did they influence or meet the ways and beliefs of the indigenous people? What was the language that was spoken by the classes of that age? Is Vedic Sanskrit the oldest language of the Indo-Āryans or is it pre-Homeric Greek that should claim the privilege? These are the main questions that are dealt with in the first two sections of this volume, viz. Background of Indian Culture and Prehistoric India.

[1] The other volumes already released are Vol. III, *Philosophies* and Vol. IV, *Religions*.

The variety of climate and soil, the flora and fauna that abound in this country of continental dimensions—almost a miniature globe—the diversity of the races that came to inhabit the land down the ages and the interaction between their modes of living and thinking, the gradual evolution of a common Indian way of life out of this incessant ferment—with whatever elements that remained immiscible—are all covered in these learned dissertations. Also discussed is the complex subject whether India was the melting pot for the different races that poured down from Central Asia or whether India was the base from where waves of emigrations flowed northwards and peopled the countries of the Middle East, the Mediterranean and parts of Europe.

Next there is the question of the antiquity of Indian-Āryan Culture. The beginnings of this cultural movement are traced to sources outside India, e.g., Egypt, Mesopotamia, and other countries of the Near East and the possible influences of their civilisations on the Indian are examined. Were the civilisations of Sumer, Egypt and Asia Minor older than the Vedic or pre-Vedic? It is difficult to give a definite answer in view of the conflicting data that keep on coming up continually. Whatever it be, the Indian Culture, as the editors observe, " has an ideology which is of universal appeal and value ". Their further remarks on the subject deserve attention:

> In the history of Humanity as a whole, the first thousand years before Christ has been described as the Axial Period. During these thousand years, the nations of antiquity which flourished at that time, or rather their intellectual and spiritual leaders, gave expression to certain ideas, certain intuitions with regard to the

nature of the Unseen Reality, and also with regard to our relations with it, which are still vital for Humanity, and round which also the mind of modern man in his gropings to grasp at the Unseen Reality is still revolving. It is the ideologies which developed in China, in India, in Iran, in Mesopotamia, in Palestine, and in Greece that furnish the axis for modern thought—the living religions of the world.

Man, after he had become a civilised being and made life possible, and to some extent secure and comfortable, began to think seriously about the problems connected with life—particularly about the Great Guiding Force of Life and Being. It was arrived at by the deeper and the finer consciousness of Man when he had sufficiently advanced in civilisation; it was not merely the promptings of fear and wonder which lay at the root of primitive religion. Man made this great discovery for himself that behind life and existence there is a great Force, a great Presence, which has been viewed differently by different groups of men, conditioned as they were by their economic and cultural background. They discovered, as in India, the *ekam sat*—'the One Single Existence That Is'; and the Indian sages also said that the wise men, evidently in the different societies, described it in a manifold way.

It was to be the Axial Millennium with Humanity as soon as they had arrived at a postulation of this great Unseen Reality behind Life, and mankind as a whole became convinced of it. This was conceived as a unique Force which had to be obeyed without question and which would not tolerate man's homage to be paid to any other lesser conception: that was the Hebrew attitude—the attitude of the Old-Testament prophets.

Behind this monistic idea of the Jewish prophets was the conception of *Aten* as arrived at by the philosopher-king of Egypt, Akhen-Aten (Amen-hotep), who saw in that Force the Lord of Light and of Guidance as manifested in the material sphere by the Sun.

In China the conception of Tao or the 'Way' through which everything in this world is carried under an inevitable Law, was early arrived at, and it is the basis of all deeper religious thought in China, not only of Taoism, but also of Confucianism; and connected with the Tao concept is the great principle of Yang and Yin, i.e. of Light and Darkness, or the Positive and the Negative, or Heat and Cold, or Sky and Earth, or the Male and Female—Puruṣa and Prakṛti, in Indian parlance.

In India, possibly based on certain conceptions which worked already in the minds of pre-Āryan peoples, the great concept of Brahman or the Supreme Spirit, a kind of Mana (as the Polynesians named it), which is both transcendent and immanent (*kad-a-ul*, as it has been called by the ancient Tamil sages of South India—" That which is beyond, and also within ") in our mundane existence, was arrived at; and along with that went also the great concept of a Moral Order in the universe, which was analogous to the Chinese Tao, and came to be known to the Vedic people as *Ṛta* or the Supreme Truth, or as Dharma in later times, meaning " that which holds things in itself, and represents their true nature ".

The third section on Vedic Civilisation is devoted to the legacy of the Veda and the Upaniṣad. The ceremonial, social, cultural and spiritual aspects of the Vedic Religion and its subsequent development—in continuation of the tradition, not in revolt against it—into the philosophy and Sādhana of the Upaniṣads are dealt with by a number of scholars. Though the familiar stamp of the Western Indologist is descernible in certain lines of their approach, we do notice a marked tendency in these papers to leave the beaten track of the nineteenth century scholarship and evaluate the concepts and practices of the Veda and the Upaniṣads in the light of India's own tradition. The most notable of these writings is the paper on *Vedic Exegesis* by Śrimad Anirvan. This masterly survey of the history of the Vedic Interpretation from the age of the Brāhmaṇas to the present day is perhaps the best contribution in this volume faithfully reflecting the genius of the Indian spirit. He brings out, in his fascinating account, the role played by each of the several schools of interpretation in the preservation of the Vedic heritage and at the same time points to their shortcomings. He places his unerring finger on the lacunae

in Vedic studies after the disrepute into which ritualist interpretation has fallen and the collapse of the modern "scientific and rationalist" method of the Western scholars caused by the fatal misapplication of the Theory of Evolution. He says:

> The problem of Vedic exegesis then is the problem of reviving the spirit and recreating the inner experience of the atmosphere in which the mantras took shape. Mere intellectual ingenuity and superficial judgment will not help us, because here we are dealing with things of the Spirit where an interpretation can hope to be true only when understanding has come through spiritual communion and insight. . . . Like the mystic Asvattha tree with "its root above and the branches below", the Vedic tradition, in a broad sense, stands at the very source of almost all forms of Indian spiritual cults. And the interpretation of this tradition can be attempted with best results if we do not place the Vedas on the isolated heights of the past, but with a total vision of the present retrace our steps to the roots discovering, with a penetrating insight, the links at every step. But this movement in breadth must be supplemented by a movement in depth. One has to discover the master-idea that has been behind this historical development. And here, it is the Spirit that must question the Spirit in that stillness of "the ocean where the womb of the World lies sunk in the depths of the Waters".

The writer welcomes, in this context, the approach of Sri Aurobindo which, he writes, "has brought to bear on the subject the principles of a spiritual depth-psychology," and "will always be regarded as opening a new chapter in Indian Vedic interpretation."

It would have been extremely relevant and helpful to the reader if this were followed up by a paper on the central features of the Psychological Method of Interpretation adopted by Sri Aurobindo in unveiling the Secret of the Veda and also the support he has derived for his findings from the very utterances of the Ṛsis of the Veda.

The fourth and the last section treats the next phase in the development of the Indian Religious Tradition, the rise and growth of the so-called heterodox systems of Jainism and Buddhism. Though they disclaim the sanction of Vedic authority, it is pointed out that their essential character derives from the spirit of the Veda and Vedānta. In their condemnation of excessive ritualism and animal sacrifice, they are in the good company of some of the Upaniṣads.

Jainism, unlike Buddhism, is still a living religion in India. Its literature, unlike the Buddhist, is not confined to religion and philosophy alone. Jaina writers have written largely and competently on logic, grammar, poetry and poetics, lexicography, etc. "They have a monastic system without a monastery." They have elaborate rules for the conduct of their monks and they are followed to the letter even today 2,500 years after they were laid down! The cardinal doctrines of the Jaina philosophy are: (1) *Syādvāda* (or *saptabhangivāda*), *may be* or *may not be* doctrine which rules out dogmatism in any sphere. Everything can be looked at from seven standpoints and each account is different from the other. In effect it means, all statements are relative and none absolute. (2) *Nava-tattva*, nine eternal substances: jīva, ajīva, puṇya, pāpa, aśrava, samvara, banda, nirjara and mokṣa.[1] The Jīva is eternal and eternal its possibility of progress. This religion establishes a sympathetic link not only between man and man but also with all living beings in creation.

[1] Conscious soul, unconscious non-soul, merit and demerit, flow into jīva, cessation of flow into jīva, bondage, destruction of the effect of karma, and liberation.

Buddhism is here described as a religion which struck " a course midway between the rigorism of the Jains and the secularism of the sacrificial Brāhmaṇas ". It opened the gates of the Highest Truth to all men of whatever class not only in India but carried the Message to countries beyond its frontiers. " The cultural heritage of India was shared by most of the Asians through the grace of this religion," and along with Religion, the " Buddhist art and architecture, language and literature, and above all, translations of the Buddhist scriptures and the subsidiary literature in all the languages of the countries where the religion made its home."

The original Doctrine of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path for their realisation with its psychological and ethical implications for the individual and the society, its continuation in more or less the same form in the southern countries like Ceylon, Siam, Burma, etc. (Hinayāna) and its transformation elsewhere in the North as the Mahāyāna and the introduction of a pronounced strain of esotericism after the 8th century A. D. as the Tantrayāna or Vajrayāna with sharp results in the end, are all well described in these papers. The state-support enjoyed by Buddhism in the heyday of its career and its decline as an institutional religion following changes in the faith of the Rulers are underlined. Attention is drawn to the gradual deterioration in the morale of the monasteries which were the mainstay of this propagating Movement and also the paucity of men of real spiritual and intellectual eminence in the later times—a factor which told against the continued growth of Buddhism.

All told, this sumptuous volume should be welcome to all, to the scholar, to the layman, to the devout as well as to the free thinker. The vast amount of documented material that is laid out in these pages assures its utility as a book of reference for all serious students of Indian Culture and the spirit of tolerance that breathes throughout the book makes it a most pleasant and fruitful reading to the general public.

MANU

THE publication of *Manu Dharma Śāstra*,[1] an enlarged edition of Dr. Motwani's solid work MANU, which first appeared twenty-five years ago, is most timely. At a time when there is so much talk and clumsy effort at social reconstruction and so many novel plans are being debated upon, it is very useful to have before us a Document of this kind presenting in terms of modern sociology the essentials of a system of life-organisation and progress evolved by the cream of the ancient Āryan Mind millenniums ago. For *Manu Dharma Śāstra*, as the author points out, is not a code of laws drafted by an individual called Manu. Manu is the archetypal Man. The name is a legend for the ideal mentality governing humanity and the thought that goes under that name represents the conceptions formed and lines laid down for the evolution of mankind in all its stages of growth by the Fathers of the race. This treatise is a convenient compilation—by one or more hands—of the Wisdom embodied in the floating tradition of the land as old as the Vedas. Not all of it, surely; there is a good deal of accretion inescapable with the passage of time; but fundamentally it is that.

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[1] Publishers: Ganesh & Co., Madras 17.

After a preliminary examination of the connotation of the terms of the title, *Manu Dharma Śāstra*, the author gives a broad outline in the opening chapter of the work describing the cosmic process of creation, the appearance of life on the planet, the arrival of man, his development into a full-fledged mental being in association with his fellow-beings, his destined role as the leader of evolution moving to its Goal of the Revelation of the supreme Godhead. For this ordered development of man, individually and collectively to be possible, it is necessary that a social organism be brought into being governed by Principles which best promote the flowering of this Ideal of a complete fulfilment of Man and this is precisely the subject-matter of the rest of the book.

With commendable clarity of insight and felicity in expression, the author—who follows the lead of Sri Aurobindo on the subject—discusses threadbare and expounds the idea-truths and practical efficacy of the institutions of Āśrama and Varṇa which form the basic fabric of Manu's typal society. He is most impressive in his exposition of the relation and correspondence between the four āśramas, stages in the life of the individual, and the four social orders, viz. the Brahmacārya Āśrama and the Varṇa of Śūdra; the Gṛhastha and the Vaiśya; the Vānaprastha and the Kṣattriya; the Sannyāsa and the Brāhmaṇa. He works out an inter-relation between each Āśrama and its corresponding Varṇa based upon a common governing motive.

The author draws special attention to one important feature of this social Science of Manu; it envisages

a dynamic, not a static society set to pattern. Each order of life must prepare and precipitate itself into the next higher both in the life of the individual and of the group. The Śūdra, the Vaiśya, the Kṣattriya, are each under constant pressure of the environment and the higher example to develop and grow into the mould of the class immediately above. Dr. Motwani is fascinating in his presentation of Manu's comprehensive scheme of Education—for boys and girls—round the clock, his conception of three-tiered State, his exacting standards for efficient Legislature and sound Judiciary. He compares Manu to Plato and other Greek thinkers and underlines the humanism and catholicity of the former in dealing with living beings.

The second part of the book deals with the influence of Manu's Thought in countries outside India, from Egypt to New Zealand including China and Japan. Compared to the first, we are afraid, the second part is rather weak. Things need a good deal of further proving before the conclusions could be accepted. The author avers that the prehistoric Āryans had already evolved the Vedic civilisation—and perforce the Thought of Manu—in their original home in Central Asia and it was thence that the stamp of Manu was carried by successive waves of Āryan migration to the different parts of the globe. We do not know. Further, the evidences and the inferences of Manu's influence in the several countries listed in these pages are more conjectural than substantive. More positive data is called for. The author himself admits the tentative nature of his findings and invites further studies in the field etched out by him.

The discussion is rounded up with an informative chapter giving the estimate of *Manu Dharma Śāstra* by modern thinkers from Nietzsche to the present Ācārya of Kāmakoṭi Pīṭham.

All told, we welcome this work which represents the finest fruit of Dr. Motwani's studies in Sociology, as a unique exposition of an ageless testament on the significance of Manu.

SUBRAMANIA BHĀRATI

LITTLE is known of Subramania Bhārati outside Tamil Nād. He is remembered as one of the notable patriots thrown up by the surge of Indian nationalism in the early years of the century, a patriot who was also a born poet in Tamil. Beyond that nothing is known or considered worth while to be known. And yet, in the land of his birth and labours, he is held in the highest reverence, almost apotheosised as a divine poet who was the chosen mouthpiece of Bhārata Śakti. There is not a Tamilian on whose lips his notes have not danced, none in whose heart-strings his words have failed to vibrate. Who was this remarkable man? Why was he called Bhārati? What is his uniqueness as a poet? Was he anything more than a bard of nationalism? What did he think? What did he write? And finally, what is his place in the illustrious gallery of the leaders who inspired and shaped the movement of national regeneration and liberation?

It is happy to find light on these questions in the book, *Subramania Bhārathi (A Memoir)*[1] by Prof. P. Mahadevan. The book is the first adequate biography of Bhārati in English. The many-sided personality that forms its subject-matter is unique; but the equipment

[1] Atri Publishers, Madras 17.

of the author is equal to the task. He has brought to bear all the gifts of literary insight and criticism—for which he is well known—on his study of Bhārati and his works; he puts his metrical skill to capital use in his English renderings of choice selections from the poet's writings; his familiarity with the genius of the language in which the poet expressed himself and his own sense of humour, objectivity and facility of expression in English, have all combined to give a most enjoyable and informative biography of Subramania Bhārati—a pleasure so far denied to the non-Tamil-knowing public.

Subramaniam was born on 11-12-1882 at Ettayāpuram where his father Chinnaswami Iyer, a protégé of the local Zamindar, had just succeeded in starting one of the first textile mills in South India. He lost his mother in his fifth year; his father married again but to the good luck of the boy the step-mother was a very affable soul. Subbiah—abbreviated form of the longer Subramaniam—was of a shy and dreamy temperament, paid no attention to his lessons and developed an incorrigible obstinacy; at times he would return home empty-handed, his slate and books thrown away.

The enterprising father who had planned a large future for his son was disappointed and sent him to his uncles at Tirunelveli with the hope that the change would prove beneficial. And indeed it did—for a time. He progressed well and soon became the most popular boy in the school as he began to show precocious genius in composing impromptu verses in Tamil. However, there seems to have been a setback later and he found himself detained in a class without

promotion. Subbiah made up his mind that he had enough of these studies and returned forthwith to his parental home. Though he took no more interest in class-room studies, he was fond of reading classics in Tamil and in English and he assimilated them with ease. He also showed an unusual capacity for inspired utterance. The Zamindar (of Ettayāpuram) came to hear of the remarkable capacities of the boy and sent for him; he was so much enraptured by his talents that thereafter the youngster was treated on a par with other pundits and scholars of the court. Subbiah took it as a matter of course and participated in the functions of assemblies with a poise and confidence that would have done credit to more aged shoulders. As usual with human nature, the other members of the court found it hard to swallow that this callow youth should not only move on equal terms with them but threaten to become the favourite of the patron, and before long one of them decided on a public humiliation of the boy. He had known that the lad had failed to get through his school tests and he chose this tender spot to strike at. Subbiah loftily replied that he had no use for that kind of education. He challenged any one of the assembly to hold debate with him on any subject and that too without prior preparation. The boy was hardly fifteen. Let the author describe the scene:

> The older pundits were taken aback; but one of them was persuaded to pick up the gauntlet. The contest was held at a special sitting of the durbar at which the Rājāh himself was present. Lots were cast and the Pundit was called upon to initiate the debate. The subject chosen was "Education". It soon came to the turn of the lad of fourteen to reply. He made

it such a humorous, incisive and eloquent performance that the entire audience agreed that it was much the better of the two. An old and respected member of the court stood up and spoke for the rest. " God bless you, Subbiah. I declare you winner and it is also the overwhelming opinion of all assembled here. Henceforth be you known as *Bhārati*."

Bhārati's stock rose high. He came to be attached to the Rājāh's court; he became the favourite of the heir-apparent to the Gadi. One of his pleasant duties, we are told, was to read Tamil classics to his patron.

Bhārati married in 1897; bride Chellammal was only seven. Soon afterwards his father died leaving him penniless. Apart from the pecuniary want which stared him in the face, he was feeling the need of a more adequate equipment in formal education. An aunt of his and her husband were settled in Banaras and thither went the young man; he was duly welcomed and petted by the childless couple:

> He took undue advantage of the old couple's fondness for him, and soon developed into a spoilt youth. His manners and habits underwent a change for the worse. He neglected the due performance of his daily prayers, he cut his hair after the English style, having got rid of the odious tuft enjoined by custom and holy śrutis, and loved to dress himself with inconsequent eclecticism from head to foot. The *tout ensemble* gave him more the appearance of a Muslim than a Hindu. But the moustache which he grew proved to be the most offensive part of the translation.

However, Bhārati applied himself diligently and passed the matriculation examination in the first division.

While at Banaras, he took an increasing interest in the political happenings in the country and this news somehow trickled down to his wife in Kadayam in the far south. The poor girl was frightened by her relatives with the spectre of the Andamans for her

husband and she wrote a touching letter imploring him to give up all these dangerous activities.

Some time later Bhārati returned to Ettayāpuram for a while. By now he was politically very much awake and a fervent admirer of Shelley and Byron; he even started a Shelleyan Guild. He was inspired by the history of the French Revolution, by the doings of Mazzini and Garibaldi. He found the semi-feudal conditions in the Zamindari Estate irksome, and made no secret of this aversion in his outpourings against the old order of things, with the result that interested parties succeeded in prejudicing the Rājāh against him. We next see Bhārati in Madurai in 1904 as a Tamil Pundit in a school for a few months—a period noted for his patriotic poetry and poems loaded with political satire—and then in Madras where he was taken by Sri G. Subramanya Iyer to work in the newly started Tamil Daily *Swadeshamitran* of which he himself was the editor.

Bhārati's duties in the *Swadeshamitran* office were not something he could enthuse about; he had to render into Tamil all the news that came in English. The cautious editor would not allow him to write political articles though after some time he permitted him to write on social and allied topics. Bhārati did his work with much gusto. He was paid Rs. 30 per month. In the meanwhile political events were gathering tempo; the nationalist agitation following the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon, the floating of the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in Tamil Nād and the tribulations it was passing through in the rate war by foreign shipping concerns, and the general awakening of the people to their own rights—all these had released

a concatenation of forces into whose orbit Bhārati was naturally drawn as fish to water. He attended the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906 as a delegate and a journalist. Before he returned he met Sister Nivedita for whom he had developed a profound regard for her services to the country, specially to Indian womanhood. The author gives an interesting account of the interview:

SISTER NIVEDITA: My son, are you married?

BHĀRATI: Yes, mother, I'm married. I have also a daughter who is two years old.

S.N.: Very good, but why have you not brought your wife with you?

B. (in faltering voice): It is not usual in our community to bring our womenfolk out with us. Further she knows nothing about politics.

S.N. (not quite pleased): My son, I am sorry to find one more Indian who considers women no better than slaves. What is the value of your education if it does not help you to bring up your womenfolk to your own level? Don't you realise that the country will never advance or prosper if one half of it is ignorant, backward and superstitious?

B.: I'm sorry mother, hereafter—

S.N.: Quite right; hereafter at least don't look down upon your wife. Treat her as your equal, and you will find how soon she learns things for herself. And another thing...

B.: Yes, mother—

S.N.: Forget all caste distinctions. In God's eyes all are born equal and are equal. Love your fellowmen...

B. (eagerly): Yes, mother. I know we are all children of the mother-land...

S.N.: Will you promise?

B. (fervently): I do, mother, I shall...

S.N.: That's right. Some day, I'm sure you will become famous. God bless you.

Soon after his return from Calcutta, Bhārati left the *Swadeshamitran* and with the help of some friends

(particularly Sri S. N. Tirumalachari) started two weeklies, *India* in Tamil and *Bāla Bhārata* in English (1907). *India* was printed on red paper in keeping with its revolutionary character and its circulation soon went up to 4,000 copies. He also began to introduce his poems to the public by reciting them on special occasions. Bhārati had a powerful voice which held the audience spell-bound. He wrote vigorously in his weeklies and directed the withering fire of scorn on the Moderates, especially on their leader in Madras, Sri V. Krishnaswami Iyer—the most renowned patron of arts, letters and public causes in his day. The Moderate leader, however, seems to have taken it all as part of the game and it does great credit to his broad-mindedness that it was his affluence that made possible the first publication of the poems of Bhārati.

The author relates how Sri G. A. Natesan, the suave founder-editor of the *Indian Review* who was a liaison between the warring factions of the citizenry, arranged a meeting between the two political foes. Bhārati was unwilling and said: "I don't like him and he will certainly not like me. Nothing will come of such a meeting. So drop it." But

> Natesan's earnestness carried the day. "All right," replied Bhārati somewhat diffidently, "but on one condition. Don't tell him who I am." To this Natesan agreed.
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> And so one evening, when the lawyer had returned from court and was talking his case in his garden in the midst of his friends, Natesan came in followed by a stranger who stood modestly behind. After greetings and some desultory talk, Krishnaswami Iyer noticed the stranger and asked who he was. "A Tamil poet," replied Natesan promptly, "he has composed many songs; and as you are fond of Tamil poetry also, I have brought him to sing some of them to you." "Indeed, ask him to go ahead then," he replied genuinely interested . . . when at a signal from

Natesan, Bhārati started to sing his *Vande Mataram* song, all sounds ceased. Half-way through as Bhārati got into his stride and the tempo quickened, Krishnaswami Iyer sat up in his chair and followed the poet's voice in undisguised admiration. The first song was followed by two others entitled now *Nāttu Vanakkam* and *Engal Nādu.*

The patron was in a transport of delight. He said: "Wonderful! How fresh, original and inspiring! But, young man, you are hiding your light under a bushel. These songs should be printed and broadcast throughout the country so that our children learn to sing them everywhere." Natesan butted in at this point: "That's exactly what he has come for and where you come in. The poverty of poets is proverbial. And so . . ."

"All right," replied the patron. "I shall see that 10,000 copies of them are immediately printed and distributed free." He is also said to have instructed his clerk to give the poet Rs. 100/- as a token of his esteem. Then he turned to him, and asked: "May I know your name?" Bhārati stood silent and nervous, but Natesan soon came to his rescue. "This is the very same person who has been attacking you in the columns of *India*— Subramania Bhārati. I have dragged him here by main force." Krishnaswami Iyer rose to the occasion. In his pleasantest manner, he is said to have replied: "I don't care for the politician, let's forget him. But I am glad to know and admire the poet."

Bhārati attended the famous Surat session of the Congress in 1907 where the organisation split into two. He had long wanted to meet Tilak, the Maharāshtrian stalwart, for whom he had the highest veneration. Indeed, in his work *Jñānaratam* his poetic imagination conceives Dharmarāja himself, the supreme Justiciar of Right and Wrong, in the likeness of Tilak: "A benign, majestic figure looking remarkably like Tilak, but eternally young." Bhārati

went in search of him from camp to camp, but could not find him. Added to his troubles was rain which had rendered the road to the newly laid Congress Pandal slushy and impassable. Wading through knee-deep mud, Bhārati came across a party of volunteers engaged in repairing a breach in the pathway. A man holding an umbrella over his head was directing operations,

moving from place to place. A captain of the volunteers, he was attending to a piece of essential work which he finished in time to enable the delegates and visitors to use the road with safety and comfort. Bhārati saw him at a distance, and coming nearer felt sure it was Tilak. Even in repose, his eyes seemed two pools of smouldering fire. Bhārati asked no questions, but fell prostrate at his feet and touched them, forgetting the rain, the dirt and the mud. It was enough for him that he had obtained the *darśan* of his hero and leader.

Events took a precipitate turn after the Surat imbroglio; the suppressed and pent-up fury of the extremists erupted in a series of bomb outrages in the country and the Government came down with a heavy hand. New legislation was passed, eminent leaders like Sri Aurobindo and Tilak were jailed. The air was thick with rumours of the impending arrest of Bhārati and it required much pressure by friends before he could be persuaded to go to Pondicherry in the French settlements instead of getting immobilised behind the prison bars in British India. So it was in 1908 that Bhārati entered Pondicherry where he was to be joined later on by Sri Aurobindo and Sri V. V. S. Iyer who together "were to prove the trinity of a renascence in the South which slowly but surely radiated its influence all over India not merely in the political sphere, but in literary, philosophic and cultural fields as well".

At Pondicherry Bhārati secured lodgings from an accommodating landlord.[1] His friends arranged to shift the printing press where *India* used to be printed at Madras, to Pondicherry so that the weekly could

[1] The house where Bhārati spent the larger part of his exile in Pondicherry is now in a semi-dilapidated condition. Efforts by the Bhārati Memorial Committee to acquire the house have not been, however, successful because of the proverbial cupidity which is second nature with a section of our countrymen.

continue. When resumed, the issues of the journal were devoured by the public with avidity, their appetite increasing with each successive measure taken by the authorities in India to suppress their circulation. The police confiscated all copies in transit by post; those found reading it were threatened and remittances for subscription were stopped with the result that the journal (as also the daily *Vijaya* which was started a little later after the resumption of *India*) had to cease publication early in 1910.

That year arrived Sri Aurobindo from Chandernagar *via* Calcutta and Sri V. V. S. Iyer from England after a series of escapades from the Police on his way. The coming together of these three political personalities sent jitters into the British Indian authorities. Spies were sent to watch and report the activities of these exiles; *agents provocateurs* were employed to involve them in compromising situations. They even got the French Police to conduct house-searches. The author narrates an amusing incident:

> They began with the lodging of Sri Aurobindo. The French Officer who was in charge of the police party was young, courteous and cultured. As he came up to Sri Aurobindo working at a table which was littered over with books, he took up one of them and found it to be in Greek; picked up another and found it in Latin. Both were ancient classics. He then turned to Sri Aurobindo and asked him:
>
> "Are these books yours?"
> "Yes", replied Sri Aurobindo.
> "And do you know Greek and Latin?"
> "Yes", replied Sri Aurobindo smiling.
>
> "I beg your pardon then", replied the young officer, "sorry for the intrusion," and he returned with his myrmidons in a hurry.

The vexations continued. In the year 1911, the disturbing political portents in Europe brought England and France together and the British Indian Government took the opportunity to induce the French authorities in Pondicherry to legislate the Alien's Act by which those who were not full-fledged citizens of French India could not stay there for long; of course there were a few exceptions, one of which was that even a non-citizen could stay provided he got five honorary magistrates to support the desirability of his person. The position of the political refugees became difficult. The situation, however, was managed by Bhārati who had come to know one of the leading citizens, Calve Shankara Chettiar.[1] This worthy gentleman collected the required signatures within a day and the authorities were once more checkmated.

All, however, was not politics. Sri Aurobindo had left the problem of Indian Freedom for solution in other hands in the wake of the larger problem of humanity which had come to claim his increasing attention. It is not correct to say, as the author does, that Sri Aurobindo's retirement was a reaction following the immediate failure of the political movement he had led with such distinction; nor is it true that he resigned himself to an indefinite recession of the possibility of Indian Freedom. It had been revealed to Sri Aurobindo, during the series of spiritual realisations

[1] It may be mentioned that it was in his house that Sri Aurobindo stayed for the first six months after his arrival in Pondicherry. The house is still intact and is being looked after by the Āśram under a mutually helpful arrangement with the landlord's family.

that crowded on him from the moment of his incarceration, that his overt role in the national struggle was over, that the leadership to guide the Movement to its destined fruition was another's and that thenceforward his work lay in a different direction. Sri Aurobindo made no secret of it and announced the tidings in unmistakable terms on a number of occasions. In a letter written in 1932 he states:

> I may also say that I did not leave politics because I felt I could do nothing more there; such an idea was very far from me. I came away because I got a distinct Adesh in the matter and because I did not want anything to interfere with my Yoga. I have severed connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence. There was not the least motive of despair or sense of futility behind my withdrawal.

Vide also his interview published in the weekly *India* in January 1910:

> Since 1907, we have been living in an era which is full of hope for India. Not only India, but the whole world will see sudden upheavals and revolutionary changes. The high will become low and the low high. The oppressed and the depressed will be elevated. The nation and humanity will be animated by a new consciousness, new thought, new efforts will be made to reach new ends. Amidst these revolutionary changes India will become free.

Sri Aurobindo launched on a voyage of discovery of the key to the Riddle of the Universe to which all other questions were subsidiary. He sounded to the depths all the wisdom gathered by the human spirit in the East as well as in the West, peered into the future with the eye of the Seer, perfected in his *tapasyā* and commenced to work out and give expression to the body of thought and illumination that was emerging from

his endeavours, for the elevation and eventual transformation of the very nature of man. It was to such a milieu of spiritual and cultural synthesis that Bhārati was drawn. The author writes:

> Apart from the community of their political sympathies, they soon discovered others in a common love of Sanskrit, of poetry and of philosophy. Sri Aurobindo alone kept up his interest in all of them *pari passu*, and at the same pitch all through his life. V. V. S. Iyer did his best work as translator and critic of ancient classics, while Bhārati not only kept pace with both in the catholicity of his literary interests, but also transmuted all his experience to the pure gold of poetry. Under the stimulus of Sri Aurobindo's new humanism, Bhārati undertook an intensive study of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*, making a Tamil version of some of them with his own special commentary. Under the same influence, he also entered the lists against the traditional upholders of Śaṅkara's Māyā doctrine . . . Thus the three came together to refresh themselves from a common pool of intellectual and emotional experience, while each went his own way developing his genius in individual directions. Of the three, Sri Aurobindo was the master-mind and developed, even for an Indian, genius in a unique direction which is as indescribable in the sequel as it was unpredictable in prospect.

In this part of the story the author remarks that neither Sri V. V. S. Iyer nor Bhārati could be said to be shaped by Sri Aurobindo " in any significant facet " of their personalities. This may be—and is indeed very much so—in the case of Sri V. V. S. Iyer who never belonged to what one may call the intimate circle of the Sage. Iyer had no deeper contact with him and except on one occasion (on which we need not dwell here) he did not come within the personal aura of Sri Aurobindo. But it is quite different with Bhārati. The spiritual and religious strains in his personality were almost entirely developed by the influence of Sri Aurobindo. This is not to say that Bhārati had no knowledge of Indian spiritual tradition or had not read the varied scriptures

of the land. Indeed he had as large an acquaintance with them as anyone of his intelligence could be expected to. What he gained from Sri Aurobindo was the real insight, an eye for the core of Truth behind forms, an opening in his being to a sense of the realities of a vaster Existence looming over the material, and the power to render his perceptions into a word-vehicle, at once living and transparent. The author himself says elsewhere in the book:

> Bhārati had certainly a meagre equipment compared to that of Sri Aurobindo. He had already made his *devoirs* to Sanskrit—the fountain-source of Hindu culture. Specially during his Kāśi residence, he must have savoured its glories from many scholars living there. But his systematic study of the yogic side of our ancient literature seems to have been undertaken only under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo. The impress of Sri Aurobindo on Bhārati may be studied in his Preface to the *Gītā*, in his translations of one chapter of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* with comments of his own, and above all, in the pervasive influence of Śakti or Mother or Parāśakti which has become the theme of a considerable body of his devotional poetry.

Eye witnesses narrate how day after day Bhārati would come and join the small gathering around Sri Aurobindo where a variety of subjects used to be discussed. In the earlier days he would question and contest Sri Aurobindo's reluctance to be bound by the letter of the scriptures in his efforts to resuscitate and present the true spirit of the ancient heritage of India; he was particularly vehement, we are told by those present, against Sri Aurobindo's refusal to accept the interpretation of Sāyana as the final word on the import of the Vedas and also his rebuttal of the Māyāvadā of Śaṅkara. However, as time passed by, Bhārati grew less and less vocal in his protests and one day, to the surprise of all, he himself turned round and went at it with

hammer and tongs. There is no doubt that a definite individuality took shape in Bhārati as a result of his continuous contact with the personality of Sri Aurobindo. His forceful rejection of Māyā as the real nature of the world, the synthesis of the life of man and the cosmos which he visioned in line with the Vedic seers, his concept of Superman as essentially a spiritual being liberated from and dominating over Nature, are significant testaments to the inspiration he drew from the Prophet of the Life Divine. In the words of the author:

> Bhārati's own powers matured under the genial warmth of Sri Aurobindo's guidance and encouragement. Patriotism continued to be his primary religion; but it gradually became intertwined with and enriched by the experiences of an expanding intellectual horizon and an awareness of spiritual realities commonly associated with the mystic state.

During his stay of full ten years' in Pondicherry Bhārati wrote largely. Though most of his writings have found their way into print, it is a pity that one manuscript got lost (suspected to have been mistakenly removed by the agents of the C.I.D.). It was a novel in sixty chapters, *Chinna Shankaran*. Bhārati was urged by friends to write it again; but after doing a few chapters he gave up the attempt with the result that Bhāratiana has lost a considerable chunk which is said to have been specially interesting for its autobiographical element. We shall come to his works a little later.

Bhārati decided to end his exile at the end of the first World War and left Pondicherry on 20-11-1918. He was promptly arrested as he set his foot on the Indian soil and was detained in Cuddalore Jail till Dec. 14, 1918 when he was released on his giving an undertaking not to engage in political activities and

to notify the police of every change of his address. Why did Bhārati, the fiery patriot that he was, agree to this course of action which we would never have dreamt of ten years earlier? Indeed, if he had given such an undertaking, then he need not have gone into exile at all! The author discusses the question with candour and sympathy. A decade of confined life in Pondicherry found Bhārati in a state of collapse. His will and mental faculties had been undermined by his addiction to opium—a legacy of his earlier years at the court of Ettayāpuram; added to that constant poverty, the privation and insecurity facing his family had ground his grit and powers of resistance to such an extent that when influential friends pressed him to end the exile and change his environment he gave in.

He went straight to Kadayam and returned to Madras only two years later except for a brief visit to the city during Gandhiji's visit in 1919. His meeting with Gandhiji was typically abrupt and temperamental. The author writes:

> One afternoon when the Mahātma was engaged in conference with Sri C. R., Satyamurti, A. Rangaswamy Iyengar and other workers, Bhārati went in, sat down beside the Mahātma after greeting him with folded palms, and then disclosed the purpose of his unauthorised intrusion. "Mr. Gandhi", he began, "may I request you to preside over a meeting at 5-30 p.m. today at which I am to address the public?"
>
> Gandhiji turned to Sri Mahadev Desai and asked him what engagements he had for that evening. Mr. Desai replied that he had to be present elsewhere at that hour. Gandhiji then turned to Bhārati and said: "I'm sorry, this evening is out of the question. But if you could arrange the meeting for tomorrow evening. . . ?"
>
> Bhārati cut him short with a peremptory negative and added: "Let me take leave of you, Mr. Gandhi. But permit me

to wish you success in your new movement. You have my best wishes in that regard." And he was off the next moment, leaving every one somewhat dazed with his rush tactics. But Gandhiji who had remained imperturable throughout, then asked to know who the visitor was. Although all assembled there knew all about Bhārati, it was left to Sri C. R. to reply: "He is the poet of our Tamil Nād." Gandhiji then said: "You must cherish and protect him then. I hope there are enough people to take care of him."

During these years Bhārati visited a number of places in the South meeting friends and admirers; this period is notable for his erratic ebullitions and sorry exhibitions of his frustration-complex, some of which the author faithfully records in one whole chapter. Witness, for instance, his self-eulogising epistles to his former patron, Rājāh of Ettayāpuram, his unpredictable behaviour at public meetings, his quixotic proposal to challenge Poet Tagore and wrest the Nobel Prize from him, his idea of taking the world by storm, in the manner of Vivekananda, by speaking on Religion, his visit to the Trivandrum Zoo where he proclaimed himself to the lion in the cage: "King of beasts, know that I am Bhārati, king of poets", etc., etc. He had developed a maniacal obsession of unrecognised merit.

On his return to Madras he joined the *Swadeshamitran*. In his spare time he busied himself with public meetings and gatherings of friends. On one occasion he issued a manifesto projecting the publication of a collected edition of his works in forty volumes. He appealed to the public to subscribe Rs. 20,000 in debentures for the purpose and assured them of a profit of over a lakh of rupees. As the author observes, it is a mystery whether Bhārati had anything like the

manuscript material required for so many volumes. For all the available works now published do not come to more than three or four volumes. It is unlikely that so much could be lost. Obviously he was in one of his " moods ".

The end came soon. He used to visit frequently the Sri Pārthasārati temple in Triplicane near his lodgings and sing his songs in its precincts. He also spent a little time with the temple elephant feeding it with bananas or cocoanuts. On one of such visits in June 1921, the elephant suddenly went berserk, seized him in its trunk and tossed him aloft. Bhārati fell down unconscious. He never really recovered from this shock. He was continually ill, drugged himself with opium more and more. He passed away on the 11th of September 1921, prematurely, frustrated and penniless. We are told that his companions had to go round for collection to meet the minimum expenses for his obsequies and only the last minute generosity of a friend made it possible to give him the customary funeral.

There is a pleasantly informative chapter in which the author gives deft sketches of the various interesting personalities associated with the poet. Sri Tirumalachari; his brother Srinivasachari who followed Bhārati to Pondicherry from Madras and carried the printing press with him, making it possible to publish the *India* and *Vijaya*; Surendranath Vokkaliga Arya *alias* Ethirajulu Naidu, an embittered nationalist who turned Christian, went to America on the initiative of the Danish Mission, and was responsible for the abortive attempt to have the Bible translated by Bhārati; V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, " the first Tamilian in

modern times to sail his own ship over the high seas"; Ponnu Murugesan Pillai, a most fervent admirer and host of the poet; Kanaka Subburatnam "who rechristened himself as Bhārati Dāsan, and who was a poet with a precious if thin trickle of the divine afflatus"; Manikam Chettiyar, the suave and helpful landlord at Pondicherry; Va Ra (V. Ramaswami Iyengar), the author of the well-known biography of the poet in Tamil; "Police" Krishnaswami Iyer and others.

Coming to the works of Bhārati, it is a matter of satisfaction that they are now the property of the nation. The government of Madras took over the entire copyright some years ago and in a laudable gesture presented it to the public. Most of his writings are in Tamil—prose, poetry, prose-poetry—and a few, a slender portion, in English. We have no means of ascertaining their chronology with any definiteness. The author gives a synoptic and critical appraisal of these under convenient heads. He first deals with Bhārati's poetry—patriotic, devotional and philosophical. A section each is devoted to:

Kaṇṇan Pāttu, the series of poems (23) on the model of the work of Sukhabraman in the *Bhāgavatam*, bringing to the fore the conception of Creation as the Līlā of the divine Puruṣa and Śakti, represented on the human level in terms of the love of the sexes.

Pāñcāli Śapatham, a long poem in five sections in which he projects the national struggle into the setting of the Gambling Episode of the *Mahābhārata*. "Draupadi becomes Mother India in her tribulations. Duryodhana, Śakuni and Dussāsanan become the forces of evil and of unashamed exploitation. They represent

the gospel of power in its crudest form. Bhīṣma (perhaps consciously caricatured) becomes the mouthpiece of moderates, while a great deal of sympathetic understanding is bestowed on the blind old king Dhritarāṣṭra." We are told that Bhārati considered *Pāñcāli Śapatham* as his *magnum opus* and was disappointed that the public failed to acclaim it with plaudits. The biographer's evaluation of the poem is interesting:

> . . . it would be unusual for an epic whose appeal is almost entirely between the lines to become a best-seller. Nor can we endorse the poet's partiality for the composition as representing the high watermark of his genius. Quite obviously the patriotic complex ran away with the poet, and caused him to assess the work of his epic higher than it is entitled to, on merits. Essentially it is the work of a translator, albeit a gifted, poetic and consummate artist as well. It provokes comparisons with the original, and sets up echoes which, however pleasant, remind us of the derivative character of the poem.

Kuyil Pāttu—an unusual love story breathing the atmosphere of the kingdom of Aesop and Pañcatantra, the Jātaka tales and an Arcadia. The author considers *Kuyil Pāttu* to be the "purest and most gorgeous efflorescence of Bhārati's genius". And he concludes the section:

> The three great poems together illustrate the genius of Bhārati as belonging to the first order. They are magnificent representatives in modern Tamil of the lyric, the dramatic and narrative forms of literature. Even more interesting is the fact that each of them also suggests the other two forms in the course of its evolution. Thus the *Kannan Pāttu* is full of *tableaux vivants*; and a masque can be arranged with the help of passages culled from them to represent *Krishna Leela* in a modern setting. The dramatic appeal of *Pāñcāli Śapatham* is enriched by the lyric intensities of individual characters through whom the author conveys his own *saeva indignatio*. As for the *Kuyil Pāttu* it contains both a superb narrative recalling the easy mastery of his medium by a Chaucer or a Keats and a love-poetry of the most melting kind. The

dramatic element is pushed to the point of becoming melodrama. But the poet stands all through above his material while bending it to his purposes with lordly ease. His glances flit from earth to heaven, while his creative powers proceed to give his fancies a local habitation and a name. The entire poem is not more than 750 lines, but what exciting layers of suggestions and meaning cluster over and under it! It is also the only poem which speaks in the symbols of a universal language—that of love and, by the same token, it is the only poem which can suffer least from translation.

The author mentions a piece of satire by Bhārati, written while at Pondicherry, lampooning Mrs. Besant and her followers. It was entitled *Fox with the Golden Tail* and proved a great hit, especially among those opposed to the politics of the Theosophical leader; the pamphlet ran into two editions in no time. But, the author tells us, Bhārati himself did not think much of it or of the public taste for such stuff. He also speaks of a version according to which Bhārati was "indifferent to the praise of the screed by Sri Aurobindo himself". On a point of factual correction, we would like to inform the author that this writing merely provided an occasion for good-humoured hilarity to the company present when it was read out before Sri Aurobindo, and the poet heartily joined. The work came in for enjoyment and appreciation purely as a *jeu d'esprit* without reference to the personalities involved. It is not correct to say that Bhārati was indifferent. On the other hand he took pains to have the manuscript revised and polished into elegance by competent hands to make it as perfect as possible. (It is another story how Dr. Besant herself reacted to this broadside. When Bhārati wished to meet her some years later, she refused point-blank and it required a good deal of persuasion before she agreed to receive him.)

The author then rapidly views the prose work of Bhārati: his famous Preface to his translation of the *Gītā* into Tamil; imaginative writings like the *Jñāna-ratam*, *Chandrikai*, *One Sixth*; *Essays on Social Reform*, *Upliftment of Women*, *Refinement of Standard in the Fine Arts*, etc. Also noted are prose poems on the beauties of Nature with an undercurrent of Vedāntic monism, and lastly, writings in English comprising his renderings of some of his own poems, of Vedic hymns, the songs of Āḻwārs and Nāyanmārs, his *sententiae* and a few essays remarkable for their grasp of currents in modern thoughts and their significance.

The fame of Bhārati rests on his role as a poet of patriotism; but that was only one aspect of his many-faceted personality. For he was not merely an evangelist of nationalism; he had the vision of the brotherhood of man and unity of nations. He was a humanist. He felt the heart-beats of the oppressed and the depressed in society and was one of the first to toll the knell of social inequalities in the country. He was an inspired reformer. His soul was awakened to the Dynamic Truth of God, Nature and Man and he strove to seize and direct the gaze of his fellow-men to the true meaning of life, to the verities of Love, Beauty, Joy and Power. He was a philosopher with a vision, a Voice with a mission.