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ŚRĪ AUROBINDO CIRCLE

FIFTH NUMBER

BOMBAY

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# Sri Aurobindo Circle - Fifth Number

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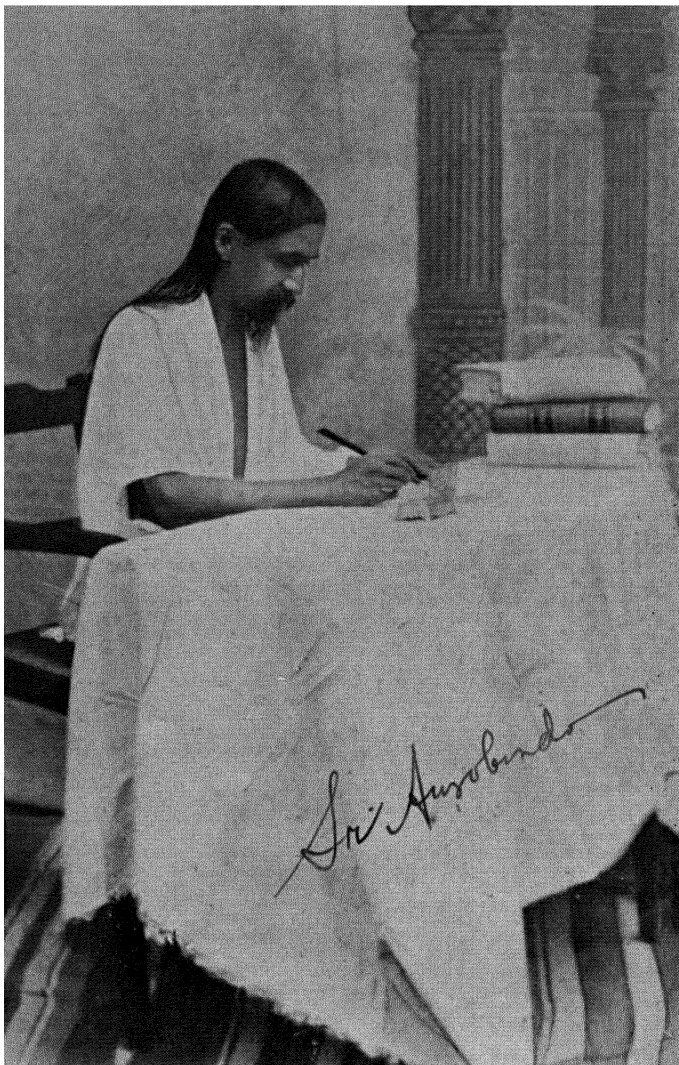
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*Sri Aurobindo*

## CHITRANGADA\*

**I**N Manipur upon her orient hills  
Chitrangada beheld intending dawn  
Gaze coldly in. She understood the call.  
The silence and imperfect pallor passed  
Into her heart and in herself she grew  
Prescient of grey realities. Rising,  
She gazed afraid into the opening world.  
Then Urjooon, felt his mighty clasp a void  
Empty of her he loved and, through the grey  
Unwilling darkness that disclosed her face,  
Sought out Chitrangada. "Why dost thou stand  
In the grey light, like one from joy cast down?  
O thou whose bliss is sure. Leave that grey space,  
Come hither." So she came and leaning down,  
With that strange sorrow in her eyes, replied:  
"Great, doubtless, is thy love, thy very sleep  
Impatient of this brief divorce. And yet  
How easily that void will soon be filled!  
For thou wilt run thy splendid fiery race  
Through cities and through regions like a star.  
Men's worship, women's hearts inevitably  
Will turn to follow, as the planets move  
Unbidden round the sun. Thou wilt accept them,  
Careless in thy heroic strength and beauty,  
And smile securely kind, even as a God  
Might draw an earthly maiden to his arms

\* Sri Aurobindo had completed this poem but the original has been lost, only this fragment remains. It has been revised for publication.



And marry his immortal mouth to hers.  
Then will thy destiny seize thee, thou wilt pass  
Like a great light in heaven and leave behind  
Only a memory of force and fire.  
No lesser occupation can forever  
Keep thee, O hero, whose terrestrial birth  
Heaven fostered with her seed,—for what but this  
To fill thy soul with battle, and august  
Misfortunes and majestic harms embrace  
And joys to their own natures mated. Last,  
Empire shall meet thee on some mighty field  
Disputing thee with death. Thou art not ours  
More than the wind that lingers for a while  
To touch our hair, then passes to its home.”  
And Urjoon silently caressing her,  
“Muse not again, beloved Chitrangada,  
Alone beside the window looking out  
On the half-formed aspect and shape of things  
Before sunlight was made. For God still keeps  
Near to a paler world the hour ere dawn  
And one who looks out from the happy, warm  
And mortal limit of mankind that live  
Enhoused, defended by companionship  
With walls and limitations, is outdrawn  
To dateless memories he cannot grasp  
And infinite yearnings without form, until  
The sense of an original vastness grows,  
Empty of joyous detail, desolate,  
In labour of a wide unfinished world.  
Look not into that solemn silence! Rather  
Protect thyself with joy, take in my arms  
Refuge from the grey summons and defend  
Thy soul until God rises with the sun.  
Friendly to mortals is the living sun’s  
Great brilliant light, friendly the cheerful noise  
Of earth arising to her various tasks  
And myriad hopes. But this grey hour was born

For the ascetic in his silent cave  
 And for the dying man whose heart released  
 Loosens its vibrant strings." She answered him,  
 "Near to the quiet truth of things we stand  
 In this grey moment. Neither happy light  
 Nor joyful sound deceives the listening heart,  
 Nor Night inarms, the Mother brooding vast,  
 To comfort us with sleep. It helps me not  
 To bind thee for a moment to my joy.  
 The impulse of thy mighty life will come  
 Upon thee like a wind and drive thee forth  
 To toil and battle and disastrous deeds  
 And all the giant anguish that preserves  
 Our world. Thou as resistlessly wast born  
 To these things as the leopard's leap to strength  
 And beauty and fierceness, as resistlessly  
 As women are to love,—even though they know  
 Pain for the end, yet, knowing, still must love.  
 Ah, quickly pass! Why shouldst thou linger here  
 Vainly? How will it serve God's purpose in thee  
 To tarry soothing for her transient hour  
 Merely a woman's heart, meanwhile perhaps  
 Lose some great moment of thy life which once  
 Neglected never can return." She paused  
 And great Urjoon made answer, deeply moved:  
 "Has my clasp slackened or hast thou perceived  
 A waning passion in my kiss? Much more  
 My soul needs thee than on that fated day  
 When through Bengal of the enormous streams  
 With careless horsehooves hurrying to the East  
 I came, a wandering prince, companioned only  
 By courage and my sword; nor knew such flowers  
 Were by the wayside waiting to be plucked  
 As these dark tresses and sweet body small  
 Of white Chitrangada. Dost thou remember?  
 O fair young sovereign ruling with pure eyes  
 And little fearless hand fragile and mild

This strong and savage nation! Didst thou know?  
 Didst thou expect me in thy soul? Assuredly  
 Thy heart's first flutterings recognised their lord.  
 And never with such gladness mountain queen  
 Exchanged tremendous seat and austere powers,  
 Her noble ancient right, for only leave  
 To lay her head upon my feet and wear  
 My kisses, not the crown. Content with love  
 All else thou gavest. Now thou speakest sadly,  
 Too like a mind matured by thought and pain."  
 And she with passion cried: "Do I remember?  
 Yes, I remember. What other thing can I  
 Remember, till forgetfulness arrives?  
 O endless moments, O rain-haunted nights,  
 When thou art far! And O intolerable,  
 The grey, austere discomfortable dawn  
 To which I shall awake alone! And yet  
 This year of thee is mine until the end.  
 The Gods demand the rest. With all myself  
 I loved thee, not as other women do,  
 Piecemeal, reluctantly, but my whole heart  
 And being like a sudden spring broke forth  
 To flowers and greenness at my sungod's touch,  
 Ceding existence at thy feet. Therefore  
 I praise my father's wise and prescient love  
 That kept me from the world for thee, unsought  
 Amid the rugged mountains and fenced in  
 With barbarous inhospitable laws.  
 Around the dying man the torches flared  
 From pillar to weird pillar; and one discerned  
 In fitful redness on the shadowy walls  
 Stone visages of grim un-Aryan gods.  
 The marble pallor of my father's face  
 Looked strange to me in that unsteady glare,  
 As if an alien's; and dream-fantasies  
 Those figures seemed of Manipurian lords  
 Strange-weaponed, rude, with faces fierce and gnarled,

Like those they worship. Unafraid I stood  
 With grave and wide-orbed gaze contemplating  
 Their rugged pomp and the wild majesty  
 Of that last scene around my dying sire.  
 About me stood a circle fierce and strong,  
 Men high like rough gnarled trees or firm squat towers;  
 A human fortress in its savage strength  
 Enringed my future with bright jealous spears.  
 To them he entrusted me, calling each name,  
 And made their hearts my steps to mount a throne:  
 Each name was made a link in a great chain,  
 A turretted gate inwalling my rule,  
 Each heart a house of trust, a seal of fealty.  
 So were their thoughts conciliated; so  
 Their stern allegiance was secured. He spoke,  
 And, though of outward strength deprived, his voice  
 Rang clear yet as when over trumpets heard  
 It guided battle. "Warriors of my East,  
 Take now this small white-bosomed queen of yours,  
 Surround her with the cincture of your force  
 And guard her from the thieves of destiny  
 Who prowl around the house of human life  
 To impoverish the meanings of the gods.  
 For I am ended and the shadow falls.  
 She is the stem from which your kings shall grow  
 Perpetual. Guard her well lest Fate deceived  
 Permit unworthier to usurp her days  
 Than the unconquerable seed of gods.  
 Oppose, oppose all alien entry here,  
 Whether by force or guile the stranger comes,  
 To clutch Nature's forbidden golden fruit.  
 Serry your bucklers close to overwhelm  
 The invader, seal your deaf and pitiless ears  
 To the guest's appeal, the suppliant call. He sole,  
 Darling of Fate and Heaven, shall break through all  
 Despising danger's threat and spurning death,  
 To grasp this prize, whether Ixvacou's clan

Yield a new Rama or the Bhoja hear  
 And raven for her beauty,—Vrishny-born,  
 Or else some lion's whelp of those who lair  
 In Hustina the proud, coveting two worlds,  
 Leaping from conquered earth to climb to Heaven.  
 Life's pride doubling with the soul's ethereal crown".  
 He closed his eyes against the earthly air,  
 The last silence fell on him: he spoke no more  
 Save the great name until his spirit passed.  
 Then the grim lords forgot their savage calm.  
 A cry arose, "Our queen!" and I was caught  
 From breast to breast of wild affection; all  
 Crowded upon me kissing feet and hands,  
 Recording silent oaths of love. Secure,  
 Alone in this wild, faithful barbarous world,  
 I ruled by weakness over rugged hearts,  
 A little queen adored,—until at length  
 Thou camest. Rumour and wide-mouthed alarm  
 Running before thy chariot-wheels thou cam'st,  
 Defeat and death, thy envoys and a cry:  
 O Manipurians, Manipurians, arm!  
 Some god incensed invades you,—surely a god  
 Incensed and fatal, for his bowstring huge  
 Sounds like the crack of breaking worlds and thick  
 His arrows as the sleet descends of doom  
 When the great Serpent wakes in wrath. Behind  
 That cry the crash of hostile advent came,  
 Thy chariot caked with mire and blood, its roof  
 Bristling and shattered from the fight, thy steeds  
 White with the spume of leagues, though yet they neighed  
 Lusting for speed and battle, and in the car  
 Thy grandiose form o'ertowering common mould,  
 While victory shone from eyes where thunder couched  
 Above his parent lightning. Swift to arms  
 My warriors sprang, dismayed but faithful, swift  
 Around me grew a hedge of steel. Enraged,  
 Thy coursers shod with wind rushed foaming on

And in with crash and rumour stormed the car  
 To that wide stone-paved hall; there loudly paused,  
 While thundrous challenge of the stamping hooves  
 Claimed all the place. Clanging thou leapedst down,  
 Urjoon, Gandiva in thy threatening grasp.  
 Then I beheld thy face, then rose, then stretched  
 My arms out, pausing not to think what god  
 Compelled me from my throne. But war came in  
 Between me and those sudden eyes. One bold  
 Beyond his savage peers stood questioning forth:  
 "Who art thou that with challenge insolent  
 Intruding; from what land of deathless gods  
 Stormest with disallowed exulting wheels  
 In white Chitrangada's domain? To death  
 Men hasten not so quickly, Aryan lord."  
 Hero, thy look was calm, yet formidable,  
 Replying, by thy anger undisturbed.  
 "To death I haste indeed, but not to mine.  
 Nor think that Doom has claimed me for her own  
 Because I sole confront you. For my name  
 Ask the pale thousands whose swift-footed fear  
 Hardly escaped my single onset; ask  
 Your famous chieftains cold on hill or moor  
 Upon my fatal route. Yet not for war  
 I sought this region nor by death equipped,  
 Inhospitable people who deny  
 The human bond, but as a man to men  
 Alone I came and without need of fear,  
 If fear indeed were mine to feel. Nor trumpets blared  
 My coming nor battalions steel enforced,  
 Who claimed but what the common bond allows."

K. D. Sethna

SUNS

THE golden sphere of the sun in earthly skies  
Echoes a globe of God whose self is light  
Hung over mortal mind in a blue of bliss.  
Even as the soil's cry feels in the warm day  
A wonder-seed within whose circled deep  
Glowes a great life which answers all its need,  
So the mind's longing sees in that far Eye  
All knowledge rounded to a rapturous whole.  
Rishis have risen there and borne bright news  
Back to the multitudes weeping in the dark  
And time has thought the immortal hour was won.  
But when the touch of this high burning orb  
Lay on the gross and heavy heart of man  
Each throb was a white flash, yet in between  
The flashes gaped the gloom of an abyss.  
The utter alchemy no dream called down.  
A sun beyond this sun above the mind  
Waits in a mystery beyond the blue:  
A night more vast than the blind distances  
Between our reveries and the flame they reach  
Is spread between that flame and fathomless truth's  
Gigantic star seen like one diamond speck  
Lost in a time-transcending loneliness.  
Remote from the globed sun is that strange blaze—  
It rounds not human knowledge but reveals  
A gold in which mind's glimmering bents are drawn  
Straight by a pattern holding God's full self

PÔEMS

Of being and consciousness, delight and power  
In a gathering of the immense to the intense,  
A foursquare sun focussing eternity,  
Formless perfection caught in perfect form!  
Here is the all-creating primal Face  
Veiled by its own projected rondure of fire  
Midway the enormous gap 'twixt earth and heaven.  
Here is the all-transmuting final Face  
Which shall remove that fire and make heaven earth.  
That fire is man wearing the mask of God:  
Here is God wearing the true face of man!

19 June 1948

TRIUMPH IS ALL

I build Thee not on golden dreams  
Nor on the wide world's winsomness;  
Deeper than all I set my love—  
A faith that is foundationless!

Not only where Thy silver steps  
Twinkle a night of nenuphars,  
But everywhere I see Thy heaven:  
I love the night between the stars.

O mine the smiling power to feel  
A secret sun with blinded eyes,  
And through a dreaming worship bear  
As benediction wintry skies.

For ever in my heart I hear  
A time-beat of eternal bliss.  
White Omnipresence! where is fear?  
The mouth of hell can be Thy kiss.



The whole world is my resting-place:  
Thy beauty is my motherland:  
Sweet enemies are wounds of age—  
My body breaks but by Thy hand.

Triumph is all—as though beneath  
An unseen flag of rapture's red  
A beating of great drums went on  
With every giant drummer dead!

26 May 1948

### O WHO SHALL TAME THE TARPAN?\*

O who shall tame the tarpan,  
Horse of wild Tartary?  
No word of wisdom in his ear  
Blows out the fire in his eye!

He tosses off the saddle,  
He never brooks the bit—  
His snort at the earth comes clamouring  
For a freedom infinite.

Out of the wastes of passion  
He brings within his soul  
A brutal beauty none can break:  
Earth-life is not his goal.

He shakes up all our slumber,  
He tramples on our light;  
So deep his hoof-prints that they seem  
A scorn of heaven's height.

\*Pronounced "tar" like "far" and "pan" like "man".

POEMS

But the vast and pathless places  
    He longs for are a love  
Lost when he wandered into earth:  
    Wideness now waits above.

So, like a scorching chaos  
    He gallops through our mind,  
And who shall teach him to forget  
    The abyss he has left behind?

We try to make him serve us;  
    But how can ever the pale  
Gleams that we catch of infinite truth  
    Outshine his scarlet gale?

O there must come a lustre  
    Blown like a golden wind  
To bear down his own fury of flame  
    And dazzle his beauty blind!

Alone a giant splendour  
    Beyond the soul that is man's,  
A limitless liberty that falls  
    Out of the untracked trance

Which overhangs the little  
    Seizures of human thought,  
Can leap secure on that bare back:  
    Suddenly, secretly caught

By a strength from unknown summits,  
    Dropping with stunning weight,  
The thunderous magnificence  
    Is led unto our gate.

The burning beast and radiant  
Rider grow one surprise  
Of rapturous harmony that rhymes  
Hell's heat with paradise.

But never can this marvel  
Suffuse our common day  
Until the safeties and the shames  
We treasure are thrown away.

For here is naked beauty,  
Stark impulse with no fright,  
And here truth naked of all mind,  
The Eternal's pure self-sight!

27 July 1948

### TIME

Mystery before and Mystery behind,  
A nothing Now, a tremble and a fall—  
God of the future, Devil of the past,  
Man of the meaningless moment—here I stand.  
Great thought is all; life is a shell by the sea  
When the great thought knows Him who moves in the deep,  
Joining the Self to the Self across the Self,  
Come, Gone and Now are the Flame that licks up Time.

11 May 1948

Arjava (J. A. Chadwick)

OVERMIND—WORLD OF THE GODS

**I**F all the stars were grapes that I might pluck  
We'd fill that goblet where no shadows twine,  
Not with sublunar fitfulness of wine,  
But with the golden ichor of the Blest,—  
That nectar which Tyndarian brethern suck,  
Castor and Pollux, whose comrade feet have pressed  
High paths too hard for wavering mortal zest  
Where no vows dwindle nor mutual loves decline.  
Still grant, O Shining Ones, our lives may bear  
The cup of unflawed light, soul harmony,  
Pellucid diamond that spreads no shade;  
There let the Wine of deathless gold appear,  
Distilled as themes of lovely music fade  
To a hush dew-drenched with immortality.

17 February 1935

BEYOND THE VALLEY-SPAN

Beyond one valley-span  
Range upon range  
Of ever more vast and lofty hills  
Raise the august silences of snow  
Far up in the dome of blueness,  
The height-and-width horizon-enfolding benediction of the sky.

12 November 1936

TIME'S RELEASE

Myriads of purple grapes,  
Rain falling, the ancientness of trees  
—Giant boles with bushy branches crowned.  
How soon the sad soil gapes;  
And of wine but bitter lees  
Remain—and of the boles, dun peaty ground.

But somewhere nectar flows  
Of the unmixed joy; immortal springs  
The Shadowless River by the fadeless groves.  
There, life's rhythm goes  
On feet untiring; fearless wings  
Speed unveering to their haven loves.

22 February 1936

INVOCATION TO SILVER AND TO GOLD

The hush of silver and the song of gold,  
Enwound upon the midnight's axle, sway  
The tideless heart, where centuries untold  
Are fashioned to the swiftness of a day.

A silent dancer on the moving wave  
Goes ankleted with silver of the night:  
A rose-crowned singer of a sky-borne stave  
Climbs goldenly the summit of delight;

Far poised upon the mountain-top of noon,  
Thou signet felt by Form-enshrining mood,—  
Or, deep-indrawn, beneath some midnight moon  
A dream-dance weaved by silver solitude.

6 February 1936

POEMS

FULL-OPENED FLOWER

O thou white undazzling splendour,  
    Quiescent moon,  
Renew thy sway upon our life-tides;  
    Let it be soon.

O thou white silence of the night skies,  
    Bestow thy peace;  
Wind thy cold flame on every thought-way,  
    Give heart's release.

Through rhythmic cycles of thy spiring  
    What culminant hour  
Blooms now when shadows drop defeated,  
    Full-opened flower!

16 June 1935 (Full Moon)

RINGED

Wide with that last oblivion of self  
    The vague fantastic cloudscape slowly dies  
Melting to grey monotony of dream,  
Changing to windless empery of skies  
Where nothing is immured or isolate  
    But oneness evens all—  
    So mighty or so small  
Be they soever, yet must equalize,  
Ringed by the overshadowing Infinities.

29 August 1936

REDEMPTION

WITHIN the night of my earth reverie,  
White flame-blades swiftly cut the veils of gloom;  
A soft cloud floats across the shining sea,  
And the blue light of Thy Presence fills the room. . .

The voice of Love's redemption comes to me  
Bridging eternities of star-swept doom;  
The power of Thy white birth sets me free  
From vaulted rocks of death and Time's ghost tomb.

Now only a fine blue tranquillity  
Enwraps the child-soul in Thy mystic womb,  
Placenta of Creation's memory,  
An arabesque from Joy's exquisite loom.

THE END

Now all is over and done,  
No vagrant dreams arise,  
The magic of moon and sun  
Is lost within the skies.

Now all is gathered peace  
Within the heart's white cave,  
The calm of shining seas  
Uncreased by wind or wave.

Within these solitudes  
No drunk earth-voices come,  
Only blue silence broods  
In caverns lone and dumb.

Romen

A SONG THAT NEVER ENDS

**E**ARTH drowned in a calm serenity of wondrous gloom—  
The voice of the great waters hushed as though in sleep—  
Colours of ethereal beauty awake  
On the dun vastness of a motionless sea.  
Clouds, clouds blue and deep, standing still  
Against the far horizon . . . .  
No voice, no murmur of trees—  
A brooding silence like the dawn.  
A huge oppressed hush that awaits the tempest  
Has spread its coloured wings  
On the face of an earth upward drawn . . . .  
A heaven-hued light comes here mingled with darkness—  
A giant tune struck on the lyre of time—  
A song that never ends.



## THE MOTHER

Aureoled with the flame of the intangible,  
Here she stands upon the dumb-rock of sleep;  
Poised, an immense tranquillity of the sun  
—The Mother of the night-spacèd universe.  
Here into this mire of deep oblivion  
She, the limitless, must track her course  
Into the very heart of death's abode;  
Here she must wear the earthly mask  
Of life's everchanging passion-moods;  
She, who breathes life to the seas and the stars  
And wide worlds of rapture harmonies  
And golden vistas of unchanging bliss  
And peaks of silence housing the heights of trance  
And giant oceans of unbarred power  
And sweetness unconceived by mortal heart,  
Must enter the dungeon-frame of mortality  
To vesture this dun abysmal nakedness  
With the golden passion of the Infinite.

21 February 1949

Eleanor Montgomery

WHERE ARE THE ROOTS?

**H**EAD in the high rare air of the snows,  
Feet on the sand where the sea wind blows,  
Roots in the earth where the seedling grows. . . .

This is the role man yet plays,  
And in a hundred thousand ways  
Tells the sorrow of his days.

Who can call it a life of ease  
Three spheres to solace and appease? . . .  
Until by a miracle man *sees*,

Above the sand, beyond the snows,  
Those upper roots, the endless rays  
Of liquid light, alive in seas  
Above, beyond . . . . and then he *knows*. . . .

PSYCHIC SINGING

In the caverns of my soul I see the Light beyond human eyes;  
In my own depths removed I come upon the shepherd's still waters.  
Seized by the pulse of the cosmic heart of things, my mind belies  
This surge, but my heart in secret soars above all earthly fetters.

Oh my body belongs to earth and plow and to the changing season;  
My mind I've left in the mental sea with its ebb and shallow ceding;  
But soft! my heart in the listening silence high above the reason  
Lifts on the throb of the One Great Hidden Heart unfading.

Fresh from the living heights this whitened blood I feel you bringing,  
O Great Heart of my little mortal heart of love and longing!

DEEP SIGH FOR THE EARTH-BOUND

Humanity yearning like tall pines whispering—  
Bat-men suspended in mock-cloistering shadows:  
I see things darkly.

Sweet Mothering God of Humanity hear the wave of the  
Long deep sigh for the earth-bound rise from this  
Sombre forest floor!

High in the light an eagle wings calling—  
Tall taut pines on tiptoe horizoning  
Restless, ever restless.

Norman Dowsett

DESCENT OF THE MOTHER

**D**EEP into the unconsciousness of Night  
She saw where She would enter His vast play,  
Deep in the murk of the world Her diamond Light  
Must shine until the Dawn of a brighter day.  
Out of the heavens into the gloom of earth,  
Out of the Timeless into the midnight hour;  
Vowed to the mutable chains of a mortal birth  
But with the sanction of His sacred power.  
This the result of a host of souls aspiring,—  
Searching for the Light on unchartered seas,  
This the total endeavour of their desiring  
A way to Her love through all perplexities;  
So in Her great compassion She entered the night  
To lead all seekers back to the Spirits Sight.

DIVINE PRESENCE

A vibrant moment delicate with power  
Thrilled my very soul with pure delight,  
Like the wing of a bee kissing the lips of a flower  
So Her pinions brushed my soul in heavenward flight.  
Her coming awaked the red rose in my heart,  
Where tears of joy lay as the morning dew;  
I would capture the moment ere it did depart  
And yet I stirred not lest away it flew;  
And where Her mystic finger gently traced  
She slowly urged the power of Her control  
And with a sweetness so divine She placed  
Her perfumed petalled cloak upon my soul:  
So gladly I surrendered to Her charms,  
Entranced I lay in Her immortal arms.

N. Parameswaran Tampi

FLOOD OF JOY

The sea is all aflame with lucid peace;  
The silver stars and foam together smile;  
The moon emerges calm athwart the clouds  
And inundates the world with liquid light.  
A silent wave of bliss now floods my soul—  
A wondrous flush of purposeless delight.

THE FIRE

Lord, Thy messenger entered my kingdom  
And enkindled a tiny flame. It has  
Become a stupendous conflagration,  
And I see the city that I had built  
Now lies a smouldering heap of grey ashes.  
No more shall bricks and mortar be. Instead  
Thou hast laid out anew a garden vast  
Where pines of aspiration touch Heaven  
And where jasmin, lotus, and lovely rose  
Open to Thy red-golden smile at dawn.

Suresh Mukhopadhyaya

REVELATION

**D**RENCHED in the immutable silence,  
Released from the vortex of my turbid thoughts,  
I have found the immaculate Core of my Self,  
Veiled no more nor in iron-knots.

Mind has left me, sense stooped down,  
Only the Ineffable reigns therein;  
The wheel of nature rolls not there,  
I hear no more her clamorous din.

Light in torrents floods the veins,  
Cells grow luminous like the pearls  
Knowledge descends, one with the Omniscient—  
The deeper secret now unfurls.

2 May 1946

## *Words of the Mother*

(1)

### DIVINE LOVE

**W**ITH the Divine's Love is the power of Transformation. It has this power because it is for the sake of Transformation that it has given itself to the world and manifested everywhere. Not only into man but into all the atoms of Matter has it infused itself in order to bring the world back to the original Truth. The moment you open to it, you receive also its power of Transformation. But it is not in terms of quantity that you can measure it—what is essential is the true contact; for you will find that the true contact with it is sufficient to fill at once the whole of your being.

(2)

### FAITH

The perception of the exterior consciousness may deny the perception of the psychic. But the psychic has the true knowledge, an intuitive instinctive knowledge. It says, "I know; I cannot give reasons, but I know". For its knowledge is not mental, based on experience or proved true. It does not believe after proofs are given: faith is the movement of the soul whose knowledge is spontaneous and direct. Even if the whole world denies and brings forward a thousand proofs to the contrary, still it knows by an interior knowledge, a direct perception that can stand against everything, a perception by identity. The knowledge of the psychic is something which is

concrete and tangible, a solid mass. You can also bring it into your mental, your vital and your physical; and then you have an integral faith—a faith which can really move mountains. But nothing in the being must come and say, “It is not like that,” or ask for a test. By the least half-belief you spoil matters. How can the Supreme manifest if faith is not integral and immovable? Faith in itself is always unshakable—that is its very nature, for otherwise it is not faith at all. But it may happen that the mind or the vital or the physical does not follow the psychic movement. A man can come to a Yogi and have a sudden faith that this person will lead him to his goal. He does not know whether the person has knowledge or not. He feels a psychic shock and knows that he has met his master. He does not believe after long mental consideration or seeing many miracles. And this is the only kind of faith worth-while. You will always miss your destiny if you start arguing. Some people sit down and consider whether the psychic impulse is reasonable or not.

It is not really by what is called blind faith that people are misled. They often say, “O I have believed in this or that man and he has betrayed me!” But in fact the fault lies not with the man but with the believer: it is some weakness in himself. If he had kept his faith intact he would have changed the man: it is because he did not remain in the same faith-consciousness that he found himself betrayed and did not make the man what he wanted him to be. If he had integral faith, he would have obliged the man to change. It is always by faith that miracles happen. A person goes to another and gets a contact with the Divine Presence; if he can keep this contact pure and sustained, it will oblige the Divine Consciousness to manifest in the most material. But all depends on your own standard and your own sincerity; and the more you are psychically ready the more you are led to the right source, the right master. The psychic and its faith are always sincere, but if in your exterior being there is insincerity and if you are seeking not spiritual life but personal powers, that can mislead you. It is that and not your faith that misleads you. Pure in itself, faith can get mixed up in the being with low movements and it is then that you are misled.



(3)

## SURRENDER AND CONSECRATION

Surrender is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of your life to the Divine. Without this decision nothing is at all possible; if you do not surrender, the Yoga is entirely out of the question. Everything else comes naturally after it, for the whole process starts with surrender. You can surrender either through knowledge or through devotion. You may have a strong intuition that the Divine alone is the truth and a luminous conviction that without the Divine you cannot manage. Or you may have a spontaneous feeling that this line is the only way of being happy, a strong psychic desire to belong exclusively to the Divine: "I do not belong to myself", you say and give up the responsibility of your being to the Truth. Then comes self-offering: "Here I am, a creature of various qualities, good and bad, dark and enlightened. I offer myself as I am to you, take me up with all my ups and downs, conflicting impulses and tendencies—do whatever you like with me". In the course of your self-offering, you start unifying your being around what has taken the first decision—the central psychic will. All the jarring elements of your nature have to be harmonised, they have to be taken up one after another and unified with the central being. You may offer yourself to the Divine with a spontaneous movement, but it is not possible to give yourself effectively without this unification. The more you get unified, the more you are able to realise self-giving. And once the self-giving is complete, consecration follows: it is the crown of the whole process of realisation, the last step of the gradation, after which there is no more trouble and everything runs smoothly. But you must not forget that you cannot get integrally consecrated at once. You are often deluded into such belief when you are having for a day or two a strong movement of a particular kind. You are led to hope that everything else will automatically follow in its wake; but in fact if you become the least bit self-complacent you retard your own advance. For your being is full of innumerable tendencies at war with one another—almost different personalities, we may say. When one of them gives itself to the Divine, the others come up and refuse their allegiance.

“We have not given ourselves”, they cry and start clamouring for their independence and expression. Then you bid them be quiet and show them the Truth. Patiently you have to go round your whole being, exploring each nook and corner, facing all those anarchic elements in you which are waiting for their psychological moment to turn up. And it is only when you have done the entire round of your mental, vital and physical nature, persuaded everything to give itself to the Divine and thus achieved an absolute unified consecration that you put an end to your difficulties. Then indeed yours is a glorious walk towards transformation, for you no longer go from darkness to knowledge but from knowledge to knowledge, light to light, happiness to happiness. . . . The complete consecration is undoubtedly not an easy matter, and it might take an almost indefinitely long time if you had to do it all by yourself, by your own independent effort. But when the Divine’s Grace is with you it is not exactly like that. With a little push from the Divine now and then, a little push in this direction and in that, the work becomes comparatively quite easy. Of course the length of time depends on each individual, but it can be very much shortened if you make a really firm resolve. Resolution is the one thing required—resolution is the master-key.

(4)

## RESURRECTION

Resurrection means, for us, the falling off of the old consciousness; but it is not only a rebirth, a sudden change which completely breaks with the past. There is a certain continuity in it between dying to your old self, your low exterior nature and starting quite anew. In the experience of Resurrection the movement of discarding the old being is closely connected with that of the rising up from it of the new consciousness and the new strength, so that from what is thrown off the best can join in a new creation with what has succeeded. The true significance of Resurrection is that the Divine Consciousness awakes from the unconsciousness into which it has gone down and lost itself, the Divine Consciousness becomes once more aware

of itself in spite of its descent into the world of death, night and obscurity. That world of obscurity is darker even than our physical night: if you came up after plunging into it you would actually find the most impenetrable night clear, just as returning from the true Light of the Divine Consciousness, the Supramental Light without obscurity, you would find the physical sun black. But even in the depths of that supreme darkness the supreme Light lies hidden. Let that Light and that Consciousness awake in you, let there be the great Resurrection.

(5)

### STEPPING BACK

Most of you live on the surface of your being, exposed to the touch of external influences. You live almost projected, as it were, outside your own body, and when meet some unpleasant being similarly projected you get upset. The whole trouble arises out of your not being accustomed to stepping back. You must always step back into yourself—learn to go deep within—step back and you will be safe. Do not lend yourself to the superficial forces which move in the outside world. Even if you are in hurry to do something, step back for a while and you will discover to your surprise how much sooner and with what greater success your work gets done. If somebody is angry with you, do not be caught in his vibrations but simply step back and his anger, finding no support or response, will fall dead at your feet. Always keep your peace, resist all temptation to lose it. Never decide anything without stepping back, never speak a word without stepping back, never throw yourself into action without stepping back. All that belongs to the ordinary world is impermanent and fugitive, so that there is nothing in it worth getting upset about. What is lasting, eternal, immortal and infinite—that indeed is worth having, worth conquering, worth possessing. It is Divine Light, Divine Love, Divine Life—it is also Supreme Peace, Perfect Joy and all Mastery upon earth with the crowning Complete Manifestation. When you get the sense of rela-

tivity of things, then whatever happens you can step back and look and remain quiet and call on the Divine Force and wait for an answer. Then you will know exactly what to do. Remember, therefore, that it is not before you are very peaceful that you can receive the answer. Practise that inner peace, make at least a small beginning and go on in your practice until it becomes a habit with you.

(6)

### THE SUPRAMENTAL DESCENT

The Supramental descent will be the successful consummation of our work, a descent of which the full glory has not been yet or else the whole face of life would have been different. By slow degrees the the supramental is influencing us, now one part of our being and now another feels the distant touch of its divinity; but when it comes down in all its native power a supreme radical change will seize our nature. We are only going through a time of preparation; but once the world-conditions are ready the full triumphant descent will take place carrying everything before it. Its presence will be unmistakable, its force will stand no resistance, doubts and difficulties will not torture you any longer. For the Divine will stand manifest,—unveiled in its own authentic perfection. I do not, however, mean to say that the whole world will at once feel its presence or get transformed; but I do mean that at least a part of humanity will know and participate in its descent, this little world of ours here.

## *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*

### I

**I**T is the right fundamental consciousness that you have now got. The *tamas* and other movements of the lower universal nature are bound to try to come in, but if one has the calm of the inner being which makes them felt as something external to the being and the light of the psychic which instantly exposes and rejects them, then that is to have the true consciousness which keeps one safe while the more positive transformation is preparing or taking place.

That transformation comes by the descent of the Force, Light, Knowledge, Ananda, etc. from above. So you are right in your feeling that you should open with a quiet aspiration or invocation for the descent of the Light from above. Only it must be an aspiration in this calm and wideness, not disturbing it in the least—and you must be prepared for the result being not immediate—it may be rapid, but also it may take some time.

25 October 1934

### II

Your suggestion that I am telling you things that are untrue in order to encourage you is the usual stupidity of the physical mind—if it were so, it is not you who would be unfit for the Yoga, but myself who would be unfit to be, in the search for Divine Truth anybody's guide. For one can lead through lesser to greater Truth but not through falsehood to Truth. As for your fitness or unfitness:

for the Yoga, it is not a question on which your physical mind can be a judge—it judges by the immediate appearance of things and has no knowledge of the laws that govern consciousness or the powers that act in Yoga. In fact the question is not of fitness or unfitness but of the acceptance of Grace. There is no human being whose physical outer consciousness—the part of yourself in which you are now living—is fit for the Yoga. It is by Grace and a light from above that it can become capable and for that the necessity is to be persevering and open it to the Light. Everybody when he enters the physical consciousness has the same difficulty and feels as if he were unfit, and nothing done, nothing changed in him since he began the Yoga; he is apt to forget then all that has happened before or to feel as if he lost it or as if it had all been unreal or untrue.

I suppose that is why you object to my phrase about your having gone so far. I meant that you had had openings in your thinking mind and heart and higher vital and experiences also and had seen very lucidly the condition of your own being and nature and had gone so far that these parts were ready for the spiritual change—what remains is the physical and outer consciousness which has to be compelled to accept the necessity of change. That is no doubt the most difficult part of the work to be done, but it is also the part which, if once done, makes possible the total change of the being and nature. I therefore said that having gone so far it would be absurd to turn back now and give up, because this resists. It always resists in everybody and very obstinately too. That is no reason for giving up the endeavour.

It is this consciousness that has expressed itself in your letter—or the obscure part of it which clings to its old attitude. It does not want to fulfil the sadhana unless it can get by it the things it wanted. It wants the satisfaction of the ego, “self-fulfilment”, appreciation, the granting of its desires. It measures the Divine Love by the outward favours showered upon it and looks jealously to see who gets more of these favours than itself, then says that the Divine has no love for it and assigns reasons which are either derogatory to the Divine, or, as in your letter, self-depreciation and a cause for despair. It is not in you alone that this part feels and acts like that, it is in almost everybody. If that were the only thing in you or the others,

then indeed there would be no possibility of Yoga. But though it is strong, it is not the whole—there is a psychic being and a mind and heart influenced and enlightened by it which has other feelings and another vision of things and aim in sadhana. These are now covered in you by the upsurge of this part which has to change. It is tamasic and does not want to change, does not want to believe unless it can be done by reassuring the vital ego. But there is nothing new in all that—it is part of human nature and has always been there, hampering and limiting the sadhana. Its existence is no reason for despair—every one has it and the sadhana has to be done in spite of it, in spite of the mixture it brings till the time comes when it has to be definitely rejected. It is difficult to do it, but perfectly possible. These things I know and realise and it is therefore that I insist on your persevering and encourage you to go on; it is not my statement of the position that is untrue, it is the view of it taken by this obscure part of your being that is unsound and an error.

29 July 1937

### III

I have not the slightest doubt that you can do the sadhana if you cleave to it—not certainly by your own unaided strength, for nobody can do that, but by the will of the psychic being in you aided by the Divine Grace. There is a part in the physical and vital consciousness of every human being that has not the will for it, does not feel the capacity for it, distrusts any hope or promise of a spiritual future and is inert and indifferent to any such thing. At one period in the course of the sadhana this rises up and one feels identified with it. That has happened to you now but along with an attack of ill-health and nervous indisposition which has turned this passage through the obscure physical into a dark and intense trouble. With enough sleep and a quieting of the nerves and return of physical energy that ought to disappear and it would be possible to bring the Light and Consciousness down into this obscure part. An intense concentration bringing struggle is not what is needed but a very

quiet attitude of self-opening. Not any effort of sadhana just now, but the recovery of tranquillity and ease is what is wanted at present to restore the opening of the nature.

2 February 1937

IV

What you have felt is a revival or return on you of the lower vital with its demands and desires. Its suggestion is "I am doing the Yoga, but for a price. I have abandoned the life of vital desire and satisfaction but in order to get intimacy with the Mother—instead of satisfying myself with the world, to satisfy myself and get my desires fulfilled by the Divine. If I do not get the intimacy of the Mother and immediately and as I want it, why should I give up the old things?" And as a natural result the old things start again—"X and Y and Y and X and the wrongs of Z". You must see this machinery of the lower vital and dismiss it. It is only by the full psychic relation of self-giving that unity and closeness with the Divine can be maintained—the other is part of the vital ego movement and can only bring a fall of the consciousness and disturbance.

20 June 1933

V

Difficult? It is the first principle of our sadhana that surrender is the means of fulfilment and so long as ego or vital demand and desire are cherished, complete surrender is impossible—the self-giving is incomplete. We have never concealed that. It may be difficult and it is; but it is the very principle of the sadhana. Because it is difficult it has to be done steadily and patiently till the work is complete.

You have to go on rejecting the vital mixture every time it rises. If you are steadfast in rejecting, it will lose more and more of its force and fade out.



That means it is an obstinate but irrational and mechanical survival of the old movement. That in fact is how these things do try to survive. It is bound to go if you do not give it fresh life.

## VI

Care should be taken of the body certainly, the care that is needed for its good condition—rest, sleep, proper food, sufficient exercise; what is not good is too much preoccupation with it, anxiety, despondency in illness etc., for these things only favour the prolongation of ill-health or weakness. For such things as the liver attacks treatment can always be taken when necessary.

But it is always the right inner poise, quietude inward and outward, faith, the opening of the body consciousness to the Mother and her Force that are the true means of recovery—other things can only be minor aids and devices.

## VII

The human body has always been in the habit of answering to whatever forces chose to lay hands on it and illness is the price it pays for its inertia and ignorance. It has to learn to answer to the one Force alone, but that is not easy for it to learn.

16 October 1933

## VIII

The habits of the physical or the vital physical nature are always the most difficult to change, because their action is automatic and

not governed by the mental will and it is therefore difficult for the mental will to control or transform them. You have to persevere and form the habit of control. If you can succeed in controlling the speech often,—it needs a constant vigilance,—you will finally find that the control stamps itself and can in the long run always intervene. This must be done so long as that movement is not fully opened to the Mother's Light and Force, for if that happens the thing can be done more quickly and sometimes with a great rapidity. There is also the intervention of the psychic,—if the psychic being is sufficiently awake and active to intervene each time you are going to speak at random and say "No", then the change becomes more easy.

11 October 1938

## IX

The difficulty you experience exists because speech is a formation which in the past has worked much more as an expression of the vital in man than of the mental will. Speech breaks out as the expression of the vital and its habits, without caring to wait for the control of the mind; the tongue has been spoken of as the unruly member. In your case the difficulty has been increased by the habit of talk about others,—gossip, to which your vital was very partial, so much that it cannot even yet give up the pleasure in it. It is therefore this tendency that must cease in the vital itself. Not to be under the control of the impulse to speech, to be able to do without it as a necessity and to speak only when one sees that it is right to do and only what one sees to be right to say, is a very necessary part of Yogic self-control.

It is only by perseverance and vigilance and a strong resolution that this can be done, but if the resolution is there, it can be done in a short time by the aid of the Force behind.

6 December 1936

X

It is also better to be more strict about not talking of others and criticising them with the ordinary mind. It is necessary in order to develop a deeper consciousness and outlook on things that understands in silence the movements of Nature in oneself and others and is not moved or disturbed or superficially interested and drawn into an external movement.

26 August 1933

XI

You must gather yourself within more firmly. If you disperse yourself constantly, go out of the inner circle, you will constantly move about in the pettinesses of the ordinary outer nature and under the influences to which it is open. Learn to live within, to act always from within, from a constant communion with the Mother. It may be difficult at first to do it always and completely, but it can be done if one sticks to it—and it is at that price, by learning to do that, that one can have the siddhi in the Yoga.

5 June 1934

XII

It is the petty ego in each that likes to discover and talk about the “real or unreal” defects of others—and it does not matter whether they are real or unreal, the ego has no right to judge them, because it has not the right view or the right spirit. It is only the calm, disinterested, dispassionate, all-compassionate and all-loving Spirit that can judge and see rightly the strength and weakness in each being.

12 June 1934

XIII

The lower vital is not a part that listens to reason. There is no *why* to its action; it acts in a particular way because it is having been accustomed to act in that way, and it goes on even if the doing brings a painful reaction.

27 August 1933

XIV

So long as you have not learned the lesson the past had to teach you, it comes back on you. Notice carefully what kind of remembrances come; you will see that they are connected with some psychological movements in you that have to be got rid of. So you must be prepared to recognise all that was not right in you and is still not corrected, and not allow any vanity or self-righteousness to cloud your vision.

24 October 1932

XV

Yes—self-justification keeps the thing going because it gives a mental support. Self-justification is always a sign of ego and ignorance. When one has a wider consciousness, one knows that each one has his own way of looking at things and finds in that way his own justification, so that both parties in a quarrel believe themselves to be on the right. It is only when one looks from above in a consciousness clear of ego that one sees all sides of a thing and also their real truth.

2 March 1933

## XVI

What you write about X is quite correct. It is not necessary to be always serious of face or silent in doing the Yoga, but it is necessary to take the Yoga seriously and silence and inward concentration have a large place. One can't be all the time throwing oneself outward if to go inside and meet the Divine there is one's aim. But that does not mean that one has to be grave and gloomy all the time, or gloomy at most times, and I don't suppose the sadhakas here are like that. It is X's rhetorical way of putting his difficulty—the difficulty of a vital that wants to throw itself always outward in action and creation while another part is dissatisfied with the result and feels that its own movement is frustrated. There are two people in him, one wanting a life of vital expansion, the other an inner life. The first gets restless because the inner life is not a life of outward expansion; the other becomes miserable because its aim is not realised. Neither personality has to be thrown away in this Yoga; but, the outer vital one must allow the inner to establish itself, give it first place and consent to be only an instrument of the soul and to obey the law of the inner life. This is what X's mind still refuses to understand; he thinks one must be either all gloomy and cold and grave or else bring the vital bubble and effervescence into the inner life. A quiet, happy and glad control of the vital by the inner being is a thing he is not able as yet to conceive.

27 May 1937

## XVII

The vital in the physical easily slips back to its old small habits if it gets a chance. It is there that they stick. They go entirely only when that part gets equanimity and a simple natural freedom from all desires.

22 March 1934

XVIII

It is very good indeed. The peace and silence must settle deep in, so deep that whatever comes from outside can only pass over the surface without troubling the settled calm within. It is good also that the meditation comes of itself—it means that the Yoga Force is beginning to take up the sadhana.

18 September 1934

XIX

Yes, a settled peace and strength supporting the intensity and poise in which everything foreign falls off, is the true basis.

16 April 1933

XX

That is of course how it should be. It should go so far indeed that you will feel this peace and vastness as your very self, the abiding staff of your consciousness—unchangeably there.

26 September 1934

XXI

What you have said is perfectly right. To see the truth does not depend on a big intellect or a small intellect. It depends on being in contact with the Truth and the mind silent and quiet to receive it. The biggest intellects can make errors of the worst kind and confuse Truth and falsehood, if they have not the contact with the Truth or the direct experience.

1 August 1932

XXII

I never heard of anyone getting genius by effort. One can increase one's talent by training and labour, but genius is a gift of Nature. By sadhana it is different, one can do it; but that is not the fruit of effort, but either of an inflow or by an opening or liberation of some impersonal power or manifestation of unmanifested power. No rule can be made of such things; it depends on persons and circumstances how far the manifestation of genius by Yoga will go or what shape it will take or to what degree or height it will rise.

28 July 1938

## *The Ideal of Human Unity\**

**I**N other words,—and this is the conclusion at which we arrive,—while it is possible to construct a precarious and quite mechanical unity by political and administrative means, the unity of the human race, even if achieved, can only be secured and can only be made real by the religion of humanity, which is at present the highest active ideal of mankind, spiritualising itself and becoming the general inner law of human life.

The outward unity may well achieve itself,—possibly though by no means certainly,—because that is the inevitable final trend of the workings of Nature in human society which make for larger and yet larger aggregations and cannot fail to arrive at a total aggregation of mankind in a closer international system.

This working of Nature depends for its means of fulfilment upon two forces which combine to make the larger aggregation inevitable. First, there is the increasing closeness of common interests or at least the interlacing and interrelation of interests in a larger and yet larger circle which makes old divisions an obstacle and a cause of weakness, obstruction and friction, and the clash and collision that comes out of this friction a ruinous calamity to all, even to the victor who has to pay a too heavy price for his gains; and even these expected gains, as war becomes more complex and disastrous, are becoming more and more difficult to achieve and the success problematical. The increasing perception of this community or interrelation of interests and unwillingness to face the consequences of collision and ruinous

\* This is the concluding chapter summarising the central theme of a large work—“The Ideal of Human Unity”—by Sri Aurobindo which first appeared in the form of serial articles in the monthly philosophical journal “Arya” conducted by him during the years 1914-21.



struggle must lead men to welcome any means for mitigating the divisions which lead to such disasters. If the trend to the mitigation of divisions is once given a definite form, that commences an impetus which drives towards closer and closer union. If she cannot arrive by these means, if the incoherence is too great for the trend of unification to triumph, Nature will use other means, such as war and conquest or the temporary domination of a powerful state or empire or the menace of a domination compelling those threatened to adopt a closer system of union. It is these means and this force of outward necessity which she used to create nation-units and national empires, and, however modified in the circumstances and workings, it is at bottom the same force and the same means which she is using to drive mankind towards international unification.

But, secondly, there is the force of a common uniting sentiment. This may work in two ways; it may come before as an originating or contributory cause or it may come afterwards as a cementing result. In the first case, the sentiment of a larger unity springs up among units which were previously divided and leads them to seek after a form of union, which may then be brought about principally by the force of the sentiment and its idea or by that secondarily as an aid to other and more outward events and causes. We may note that in earlier times this sentiment was insufficiently effective, as among the petty clan or regional nations, and a unity had ordinarily to be effected by outward circumstances and generally by the grossest of them, by war and conquest, by the domination of the most powerful among many warring or contiguous peoples. But in later times the force of the sentiment of unity, supported as it has been by a clearer political idea, has become more effective and the larger national aggregates have grown up by a simple act of federation or union, though this has sometimes had to be preceded by a common struggle for liberty or a union in war against a common enemy; so have grown into one the United States, Italy, Germany, and more peacefully the Australian and South African federations. But in other cases, especially in the earlier national aggregations, the sentiment of unity has grown up largely or entirely as the result of the formal, outward or mechanical union. But whether to form or to preserve the growth of the sentiment, the psychological factor is

indispensable; without it there can be no secure and lasting union. Its absence, the failure to create such a sentiment or to make it sufficiently living, natural, forcible has been the cause of the precariousness of such aggregates as Austro-Hungary and of the ephemeral character of the empires of the past, even as it is likely to bring about, unless circumstances change, the collapse or disintegration of the great present-day empires.

The trend towards an international world-unification which is now just beginning to declare itself, though the causes which made it inevitable have been for some time at work, is being brought about by the pressure of need and environment, by outward circumstances. At the same time there is a sentiment which is being stimulated by these outward circumstances, a cosmopolitan, international sentiment, still rather nebulous and vaguely ideal, which may accelerate the growth of the formal union. In itself this sentiment would be an insufficient cement for the preservation of any mechanical union which might be created; for it could not easily be so close and forcible a sentiment as the national. It would have to subsist on the conveniences of union as its only substantial provender, and the experience of the past shows that this is in the end unable to resist the pressure of unfavourable circumstances and the reassertion of old or the effective growth of new centrifugal forces. But it is being aided by a more powerful force, a sort of intellectual religion of humanity, clear in the minds of the few, vaguely felt in its effects and its disguises by the many, which has largely helped to bring about much of the trend of the modern mind and the drift of its developing institutions. This is a psychological force which tends to break beyond the formula of the nation and aspires to replace the religion of country and even, in its more extreme forms, to destroy altogether the national sentiment and to abolish its divisions so as to create the single nation of mankind.

We may say, then, that this trend must eventually realise itself, however great may be the difficulties; and they are really enormous, much greater than those which attended the national formation. If the present unsatisfactory condition of international relations should lead to a series of cataclysms, either large and world-embracing like the present war or, though each more limited in scope, yet in their

sum world-pervading and necessarily, by the growing interrelation of interests, affecting those who do not fall directly under their touch, then mankind will be forced in self-defence to a new, closer and more stringently unified order of things. Its choice will be between that and a lingering suicide. If the human reason cannot find out the way, Nature herself is sure so to shape these upheavals as to bring about her end. Therefore,—whether soon or in the long run, whether brought about by its own growing sentiment of unity, stimulated by common interest and convenience, or by the evolutionary pressure of circumstances,—we may take it that an eventual realisation of at least some formal unification of human life on earth is,—the incalculable being always allowed for,—practically inevitable.

We have tried to show from the analogy of the past evolution of the nation that this international unification must culminate or at least is likely to culminate in one of two forms, either a centralised world-State or a looser world-union which may be either a close federation or a simple confederacy of the peoples for the common ends of mankind. It is the last form which seems to us the most desirable because it gives sufficient scope for the principle of variation which is necessary for the free play of life and the healthy progress of the race. The process by which the world-State may come, starts with the creation of a central body which will at first have very limited functions, but, once created, must absorb by degrees all the different functions of a centralised international control, as the State, first in the form of a monarchy and then of a parliament, has been absorbing by degrees the whole control of the life of the nation, so that we are now within measurable distance of a centralised socialistic State which will leave no part of the life of its individuals unregulated. A similar process in the world-State will end in the taking up and the regulation of the whole life of the peoples into its hands; it may even end by abolishing national individuality and turning the divisions that it has created into mere departmental groupings, provinces and districts of the one common State. Such an eventuality may seem now a mere unrealisable idea, but it is one which, under certain conditions that are by no means beyond the scope of ultimate possibility, may well become feasible and even, after a certain point is reached, inevitable. A federal system and still more

a confederacy would mean on the other hand the preservation of the national basis and a greater or less freedom of national life, but the subordination of national to the larger of the common international interests and of full separate freedom to the greater international necessities.

It may be questioned whether the past analogies are a safe guide in a problem so new and whether something else might not be evolved more intimately and independently arising from it and suitable to its complexities. But mankind even in dealing with its new problems works upon past experience and therefore upon past motives and analogies; even when it seizes on new ideas, it goes upon the past in the form it gives to them, and behind the changes of the most radical revolutions we see this unavoidable principle of continuity surviving in the heart of the new order. Moreover, these alteranatives seem the only way in which the two forces in presence can work out their conflict, either by the disappearance of the one, the separative national instinct, or by an accommodation between them. On the other hand, it is quite possible that human thought and action may take so new a turn as to bring in a number of unforeseen possibilities and lead to a quite different ending. And one might upon these lines set one's imagination to work and produce perhaps a utopia of a better kind; such constructive efforts of the human imagination have their value, and often a very great value. But any such speculations would evidently have been out of place in the study we have attempted.

Assuredly, neither of the two alternatives and none of the three forms we have considered are free from serious objections. A centralised world-State would signify the triumph of the idea of mechanical unity or rather uniformity. It would inevitably mean the undue depression of an indispensable element in the vigour of human life and progress, the free life of the individual, the free variation of the peoples. It must end, if it becomes permanent and fulfils all its tendencies, either in a death in life, a stagnation or by the insurgence of some new saving but revolutionary force or principle which would shatter the whole fabric into pieces. The mechanical tendency is one to which the logical reason of man becomes easily addicted and its operations are, too, obviously the easiest to manage and the most

ready to hand; its full evolution may seem to the reason desirable, necessary, inevitable, but its end is predestined. A centralised socialistic State may be a necessity of the future, but a reaction from it is equally a necessity; the greater its pressure, the more certainly will it be met by the spread of the spiritual, the intellectual, the vital and practical principle of Anarchism in revolt against that mechanical pressure. So too a centralised mechanical world-State must rouse in the end a similar force against it and might well end in a crumbling up and disintegration, even in the necessity for a repetition of the cycle of humanity ending in a better attempt to solve the problem. The only thing that could keep it in being would be if humanity agreed to allow all the rest of its life to be regularised for it for the sake of peace and stability and took refuge for its individual freedom in the spiritual life, as happened once under the Roman empire, and even that would be only a temporary solution. Again a federal system would tend inevitably to establish one general type for human life, institutions and activities and allow only a play of minor variations; but with that the need of variation in living Nature could not always rest satisfied. On the other hand, a looser confederacy might well be open to the objection that it would give too ready a handle for centrifugal forces, were such to arise in new strength, and that it could not be permanent, but must turn after all in one direction or the other and end either in a centralisation or a break-up of unity.

The saving element needed is a new psychological factor which will at once make a united life necessary to humanity and force it to respect the principle of freedom. The religion of humanity seems to be the one growing force which tends in that direction; for it makes for the sense of human oneness, it has the idea of the race, and yet at the same time it respects the human individual and the natural human grouping. But its present intellectual form seems hardly sufficient. The idea, powerful in itself and in its effects, is yet not powerful enough to mould the whole life of the race in its image; it has to concede too much to the egoistic side of human nature, once all and still nine tenths of our being, with which its larger idea is in conflict; and on the other side, leaning principally on the reason, it helps too much the mechanical solution. For the rational idea ends

always by being captured by its machinery and becoming the slave of the machine, until a new idea revolts against it and breaks up the machinery only to substitute in the end another mechanical system.

A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. By this we do not mean what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief. Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. What is meant, is the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine reality, in which we are all one and of which humanity is the highest vehicle on earth and that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here, with a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. It means that oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation, but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality; the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete, the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded; a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself so that it may be developed in the life of the race. To go into all that this implies, would be too large a subject to be entered upon here; it is enough to point out that in this direction lies the eventual road. No doubt, if this is only an idea like the rest, it will go the way of all ideas; but if it is at all a truth of our being, then it must be the truth to which all is moving and in it must be found the means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness creating a psychological oneness which would not depend upon intellectual or other uniformity, and compelling a oneness of life which would also not depend on its mechanical means of unification, but would find itself enriched by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

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

## *Limitations of Religion as the Law of Life\**

SINCE the infinite, the absolute, the universal, the one, in a word the Divine is the secret goal and aim of all being and action and therefore of the whole development of the individual and the collectivity in all its parts and all its activities, reason cannot be the last and highest guide; culture, as it is understood ordinarily, cannot be the directing light or find out the regulating and harmonising principle of all our life and action. For reason stops short of the Divine and only compromises with the problems of life, and culture in order to attain it must become spiritual culture, something much more than an intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and practical training. Where then are we to find the directing light and the regulating and harmonising principle? The first answer which will suggest itself and which has been given by the Asiatic mind, is that we shall find it immediately in religion; and this seems a reasonable and at first sight a satisfying answer, for religion is that instinct, idea, activity, discipline in man which aims directly at the Divine, while all the rest seem to aim at it only indirectly and reach it with difficulty after much wandering and stumbling in the pursuit of the outward and imperfect appearances of things. To make all life religion and to govern all activities by the religious idea would seem to be the right way to the development of the ideal individual and ideal society and the lifting of the whole life of man into the Divine.

This pre-eminence of religion, this overshadowing of all the other instincts and fundamental ideas by the religious instinct and the religious idea is, we may note, not peculiar to Asiatic civilisations, but

\* Chapter XVII of "The Psychology of Social Development" which appeared in the form of serial articles in "Arya" a monthly philosophical journal conducted by Sri Aurobindo during the years 1914-21.



has always been more or less the normal state of the human mind and of human societies, except in certain comparatively brief periods of its history, in one of which we find ourselves today, are half turning indeed to emerge from it, but have not yet emerged. We must suppose then that in this leading, this predominant part assigned to religion by the normal human collectivity there is some great need and truth of our natural being to which we must always after however long an infidelity return. On the other hand, we must recognise that often in times of great activity, of high aspiration, of deep sowing, of rich fruit-bearing, such as the modern age with all its faults and errors has been, a time especially when humanity has got rid of much that was cruel, evil, ignorant, dark, odious, not by the power of religion, but by the power of the awakened intelligence and of human idealism and sympathy, this predominance of religion has been violently attacked and rejected by that portion of humanity which was for that time the standard-bearer of human thought and progress, Europe after the Renaissance, modern Europe.

This revolt in its extreme form tried to destroy religion altogether, boasted indeed of having killed the religious instinct in man,—a vain and ignorant boast, as we now see, for the religious instinct in man is most of all the one instinct in him that cannot be killed, it only changes its form. In its more moderate forms the revolt put religion aside into a corner of the soul by itself and banished its intermixture in the intellectual, aesthetic, practical life and even in the ethical; and it did this on the ground that the intermixture of religion in science, thought, politics, society, life in general had been and must be a force for retardation, superstition, oppression, ignorance. The religionist may say that this was all error and atheistic perversity, or he may say that a religious retardation, a pious ignorance, a contented static condition or even an orderly stagnation full of holy thoughts of the beyond is much better than a continuous endeavour after greater knowledge, greater mastery, more happiness, joy, light upon this transient earth. But the catholic thinker cannot accept such a plea; he is obliged to see that so long as man has not realised the divine and the ideal in his life, progress and not unmoving status is the necessary and desirable law of his life, not indeed any breathless rush after novelties, but a seeking after a greater and greater truth

of the spirit, the thought and the life not only in the individual, but in the collectivity, in the spirit, ideals, temperament, make of the society. And he is obliged too to see that the indictment against religion, not in its conclusion, but in its premiss had something, had even much to justify it,—not that religion in itself must be, but that historically and as a matter of fact the accredited religions and their hierarchs and exponents have too often been a force for retardation, have too often thrown their weight on the side of darkness, oppression and ignorance, and that it has needed a denial, a revolt of the oppressed human mind and heart to correct these errors and set religion right. And why should this have been if religion is the true and sufficient guide and regulator of all human activities and the whole of human life?

We need not follow the rationalistic or atheistic mind through all its aggressive indictment of religion. We need not for instance lay excessive stress on the superstitions, aberrations, violences, crimes even, which Churches and cults and creeds have favoured, admitted, sanctioned, supported or exploited for their own benefit, the mere hostile enumeration of which might lead one to echo the cry of the atheistic Roman poet, "To such a mass of ills has religion been able to persuade mankind." As well might one cite the crimes and errors which have been committed in the name of liberty as a sufficient condemnation of the ideal of liberty. But we have to note the fact that such a thing was possible and to find its explanation. We cannot ignore for instance the blood-stained and fiery track which formal, external Christianity has left furrowed across the mediaeval history of Europe almost from the days of Constantine, its first hour of secular triumph, down to very recent times, or the sanguinary comment which such an institution as the Inquisition affords on the claim of religion to be the directing light and regulating power in ethics and society, or religious wars and wide-spread State persecutions on its claim to guide the political life of mankind. But we must observe the root of this evil, which is not in true religion itself, but in our ignorant human confusion of religion with a particular creed, sect, cult, religious society or church. So strong is the human tendency to this error that even the old tolerant Paganism slew Socrates in the name of religion and morality, feebly persecuted

non-national religions like the cult of Isis or the cult of Mithra and more vigorously what it conceived to be the subversive and anti-social religion of the early Christians; and even in still more fundamentally tolerant Hinduism it led to the mutual hatred and occasional persecution of Buddhist, Jain, Shaiva, Vaishnava.

The whole root of the historical insufficiency of religion as a guide and control of human society lies there. Churches and creeds have, for example, stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally misconducted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon religion and rend her to pieces in order to get a free field for their legitimate development; and this because men had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophical truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive. We see too a narrow religious spirit often oppressing and impoverishing the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that a religious austerity was not the whole of religion, though it might be an important side of it, was not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as purity. In politics religion has often thrown itself on the side of power and resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself in the form of a Church supported by power and because it confused religion with the Church, or because it stood for a false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of a Pope, a priesthood or a sacerdotal class. So too it has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated during a long portion of its own history, and erroneously concluded that even a necessary change there would be a violation of religion and a danger to its existence; as if so mighty and inward a thing as the religious spirit in man could be destroyed by so small a thing as the change

of a social form or so outward a thing as a social readjustment! This error in its many forms has been the great weakness of religion as practised in the past and the opportunity and justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the aesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of the human being against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.

Here then lies one secret of the divergence between the ancient and the modern, the Eastern and Western ideal, and here also one clue to their reconciliation. Both rest upon a certain strong justification and their quarrel is due to a misunderstanding. It is true that religion should be the dominant thing in life, its light and law, but religion as it should be and is in its inner nature, its fundamental law of being, a seeking after God, the cult of spirituality; on the other hand it is true that religion when it identifies itself only with a creed, a cult, a Church, a system of ceremonial forms, may well become a retarding force and that it may become a necessity for the human spirit to reject its control over the varied activities of life.

But here comes in an ambiguity which brings in a deeper source of divergence. For by spirituality religion seems often to mean something remote from earthly life, different from it, hostile to it. It seems to declare the pursuit of earthly life and the hopes of man on earth a thing incompatible with the spiritual life or the hope of man in heaven. The spirit then becomes something aloof which man can only reach by throwing away the life of his lower members, either by abandoning it after a certain point, when it has served its purpose, or by persistently discouraging, mortifying and killing it. If that be the true sense of religion, then obviously religion has no positive message for human society in the proper field of social effort, hope and aspiration or for any of the lower members of our being. For each principle of our life seeks naturally for perfection in its own sphere and, if it is to obey a higher power, it must be because that power gives it a greater perfection and a fuller satisfaction even in its own field. But if perfectibility is denied to it and therefore the aspiration to perfection taken away by the spiritual urge, then it must either lose faith in itself and power to pursue the natural expansion of its energies and activities or it must reject the call of

the spirit in order to follow its own bent and law, its own *dharma*. This quarrel between earth and heaven, between the spirit and its members becomes still more sterilising, if spirituality takes the form of a religion of sorrow and suffering and austere mortification and the vanity of things; in its exaggeration it leads to such nightmares of the soul as that terrible gloom and hopelessness of the Middle Ages at their worst, when the one hope of mankind seemed to be in the approaching and expected end of the world, an inevitable and desirable *pralaya*. But even in less pronounced and intolerant forms of this pessimistic attitude with regard to the world, it becomes a force for the discouragement of life and cannot, therefore, be a true law and guide for life. All pessimism is to that extent a denial of the Spirit, of its fullness and power, an impatience with the ways of God in the world, an insufficient faith in the divine wisdom and power which created the world and guides it. It admits a wrong notion about that wisdom and power and therefore cannot itself be the supreme wisdom and power of the spirit to which the world can look for guidance and for the uplifting of its whole life towards the Divine.

The Western recoil from religion, that minimising of its claim and insistence by which Europe progressed from the mediaeval religious attitude through the Renaissance and the Reformation to the modern rationalistic attitude which makes the ordinary earthly life its one preoccupation and seeks to fulfil it by the law of the lower members divorced from all spiritual seeking, is the other extreme, the opposite swing of the pendulum. It is an error because perfection cannot be found in such a limitation and restriction, which denies the complete law of human existence and its deepest urge and most secret impulse. Only by the light and power of the highest can the lower be guided, uplifted and fulfilled. The lower life of man is in form undivine, though in it there is the secret of the divine, and it can only be divinised by finding the higher law and the spiritual illumination. On the other hand the impatience which flees from life or discourages its growth because it is at present undivine and is not in harmony with the spiritual life, is also an error. The monk, the mere ascetic may indeed find by it his own individual and peculiar salvation, as the materialist

may find the appropriate rewards of his energy and concentrated seeking; but he cannot be the true guide of mankind and its law-giver. For his whole attitude implies a fear, an aversion, a distrust of life and its aspirations, and one cannot wisely guide that with which one is entirely out of sympathy, that which one wishes to minimise and discourage. The pure ascetic spirit directing life and human society can only prepare it to be a means for denying and getting away from itself; it may tolerate the lower activities, but only with a view to persuading them to minimise and finally cease from their own action. The spiritual man who can guide human life towards its perfection is typified in the ancient Indian idea of the Rishi, who living the life of man has found the word of the supra-intellectual, supra-mental, spiritual truth. He has risen above these lower limitations and can view all things from above, but also he is in sympathy with their effort and can view them from within: he has the complete knowledge and the higher knowledge. Therefore he can guide the world of humanity as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it.

In spirituality, then, understood in this sense we must seek for the directing light and the harmonising law, and in religion in proportion as it identifies itself with this spirituality. So long as it falls short of this, it is one human activity and power among others, though the most important and the most powerful, and cannot wholly guide the others. If it seeks always to fix them into the limits of a creed an unchangeable law, a particular system, it must be prepared to see them revolting from its control; for although they may accept this impress for a time and greatly profit by it, in the end they must move by the law of their being towards a freer scope and activity. Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature, one's *dharma*. This liberty it will give to all the fundamental parts of our being. It will give that freedom to philosophy and science which ancient Indian religion gave,—freedom even to deny the spirit, if they will,—as a result of which philosophy and science never found in ancient India the necessity of divorcing them

selves from religion, but grew into it and under its light. It will give the same freedom to man's seeking for political and social perfection and to all his other powers and aspirations. Only it will seek to illuminate them so that they may grow into the light and law of the spirit, not by suppression and restriction, but by expansion and a many-sided finding of their greatest, highest and deepest potentialities. For all these are potentialities of the spirit.

SRI AUROBINDO

## *In Quest of Reality*

THIS is, they say, the age of Positivism—no mystic obfuscation, but clear light in the open sun. Let us enquire a little into the nature of this modern illumination.

Positivists are those who swear by facts. Facts to them mean naturally facts attested in the end by sense-experience. To a positivist the only question that matters and that needs to be answered and can be answered is whether a thing *is* or *is not* physically: other questions are otiose, irrelevant, misleading. So problems of the Good, of the Beautiful, of God are meaningless. When one says this is good, that is bad, well, it is a proposition that cannot be related to any fact, it is a subjective personal valuation. In the objective world a thing simply is or is not, one cannot say it is good or it is bad. The thing called good by one is called bad by another, the same thing that is good to you now will appear bad at another time. This is a region absolutely of personal and variable idiosyncrasy. The same with regard to the concept of beauty. That a thing is beautiful or ugly is a subjective judgment; it is not and cannot be an objective statement. Beauty is a formula in your mind and imagination, it is a changing mode of your apprehension. The concept of God too fares no better. God exists: it is a judgement based upon no fact or facts of sense-experience. However we may analyse it, it is found to have no direct or even indirect but inevitable *rapport* with the field of actual reality. There is between the two an unbridgeable hiatus. This is a position restated in a modern style, familiar to the Kantian Critique of Pure Reason.

There are two ways of facing the problem. First, the Kantian way which cuts the Gordian knot. We say here that there are two realms in which man lives, but they are incommensurables: the truths and categories of one cannot be judged and tested by those



of the other. Each is *sui generis*, each is valid in its own right, in its own dominion. God, Soul, Immortality—these are realities belonging to one section of our nature, seizable by a faculty other than the Pure Reason, viz., the Practical Reason; while the realities given by the senses and the judgments of the logical mind are of another section. It may be said one is physical, the other metaphysical. The positivists limit their field of enquiry and knowledge to the physical: they seek to keep the other domain quite apart as something imaginary, illusory, often unnecessary and not unoften harmful to true human interest.

To a more detached and impartial view this may appear very much like the ostrich-policy. If a thing really exists, one cannot negate it by simply closing one's eyes. This involves a dichotomy which the logical mind may like to impose and live by, but man cannot be thus artificially segmented. And if both the worlds are found in him both have to be accepted and if they are found together, there must be some sort of commensurability between the two.

Indeed the second way of approach to the problem is the positivist's own way. That is to say, let us take our stand on the *terra ferma* of the physical and probe into it and find out whether there are facts there which open the way or point to the other side of nature, whether there are signs, hints, intimations, factors involved there that lead to conclusions, if not inevitable, at least conformable to supraphysical truths. It is usually asserted, for example, that the scientist—the positivist par excellence—follows a rigid process of ratiocination, of observation, analysis and judgment. He collects facts and a sufficient number of them made to yield a general law—the probability of a generic fact—which is tested or exemplified by other correlate facts. This is however an ideal, a theoretical programme not borne out by actual practice, it is a rationalisation of a somewhat different actuality. The scientist, even the most hard-headed among them, the mathematician, finds his laws often and perhaps usually not by a long process of observation and induction or deduction, but all on a sudden, in a flash of illumination. The famous story of Newton and the falling apple, Kepler's happy guess of the elliptical orbit of the planets—and a host of examples can be cited as rather the rule than the exception for the methodology of

scientific discovery. Prof. Hadamard, the great French mathematician,—the French are well-known for their intransigent logical and rational attitude in Science,—has been compelled to admit the supreme role of an intuitive faculty in scientific enquiry. If it is argued that the so-called sudden intuition is nothing but the final outburst, the cumulative resultant of a long strenuous travail of thinking and reasoning and arguing, Prof. Hadamard says, in reply, that it does not often seem to be so, for the answer or solution that is suddenly found does not lie in the direction of or in conformity with the conscious rational research but goes against it and its implications.

This faculty of direct knowledge, however, is not such a rare thing as it may appear to be. Indeed if we step outside the circumscribed limits of pure science instances crowd upon us, even in our normal life, which would compel one to conclude that the rational and sensory process is only a fringe and a very small part of a much greater and wider form of knowing. Poets and artists, we all know, are familiar only with that form: without intuition and inspiration they are nothing. Apart from that, modern enquiries and observations have established beyond doubt certain facts of extra-sensory, supra-rational perception—of clairvoyance and clair-audience, of prophecy, of vision into the future as well as into the past. Not only these unorthodox faculties of knowledge, but dynamic powers that almost negate or flout the usual laws of science have been demonstrated to exist and can be and are used by man. The Indian yogic discipline speaks of the eight *siddhis*, supernatural powers attained by the Yogi when he learns to control nature by the force of his consciousness. Once upon a time these facts were challenged as facts in the scientific world, but it is too late now in the day to deny them their right of existence. Only Science, to maintain its scientific prestige, usually tries to explain such phenomena in the material way, but with no great success. In the end she seems to say these freaks do not come within her purview and she is not concerned with them. However, that is not for us also the subject for discussion for the moment.

The first point then we seek to make out is that even from a rigid positivist stand a form of knowledge that is not strictly positivist has

to be accepted. Next, if we come to the content of the knowledge that is being gained it is found one is being slowly and inevitably led into a world which is also hardly positivistic. We have in our study of the physical world come in close contact with two disconcerting facts or two ends of one fact—the infinitely small and the infinitely large. They have disturbed considerably the normal view of things, the view that dominated Science till yesterday. The laws that hold good for the ordinary sensible magnitudes fail totally in the case of the infinite magnitudes (whether big or small). In the infinite we begin squaring the circle.

Take for instance, the romantic story of the *mass* of a body. Mass, at one time, was considered as one of the fundamental constants of nature: it meant a fixed quantity of substance inherent in a body, it was an absolute quality. Now we have discovered that this is not so; the mass of a body varies with its speed and an object with infinite speed has an infinite mass—theoretically at least it should be so. A particle of matter moving with the speed of light must be terribly massive. But—*mirable dictu!*—a photon has no mass (practically none). In other words, a material particle when it is to be most material—exactly at the critical temperature, as it were—is dematerialised. How does the miracle happen?

In fact, we are forced to the conclusion that the picture of a solid massive material nature is only a mask of the reality; the reality is that matter is a charge of electricity and the charge of electricity is potentially a mode of light. The ancient distinction between matter and energy is no longer valid. In fact energy is the sole reality, matter is only an appearance that energy puts on under a certain condition. And this energy too is not mechanical (and Newtonian) but radiant and *ethereal*. We can no longer regret with the poet:

‘They have gone into the world of light’

for, we all are come into a world of light and we ourselves, the elements of our physical frame are made of the very texture of light.

So far so good. But it is evidently not far enough. For one can answer that all this falls within the dominion of Matter and the material. The conception of Matter has changed, to be sure: Matter

and energy are identified, as we have said, and the energy in its essential and significant form is light (which, we may say, is electricity at its highest potential). But this does not make any fundamental change in the metaphysical view of the reality. We have to declare in the famous French phrase "Plus ça change plus ça reste le même" (the more it changes the more it remains the same). The reality remains material: for light, physical light is not something spiritual or even immaterial.

Well, let us proceed a little further. Admitted the universe is a physical substance (although essentially of the nature of light—admitted light is a physical substance, obeying the law of gravitation, as Einstein has demonstrated). Does it then mean that the physical universe is after all a dead inert insentient thing, that whatever the vagaries of the ultimate particles composing the universe, their structure, their disposition is more or less strictly geometrical (that is to say, mechanical) and their erratic movement is only the errantry of a throw of dice—a play of possibilities? There is nothing even remotely conscious or purposive in this field.

Let us leave the domain, the domain of inorganic matter, for a while and turn to another set of facts, those of organic matter, of life and its manifestation. The biological domain is a freak in the midst of what appears to be a rigidly mechanistic material universe. The laws of life are not the laws of matter, very often one contravenes the other. The two converging lenses of the two eyes do not make the image twice brighter than the one produced by a single lens. What is this alchemy that makes the equation  $1^2 = 1$  (even if we do not put it as  $1+1=1$ )? Again, a living whole—a cell—fissured and divided tends to live and grow *wholly* in each fragment. In life we have thus another strange equation: part = whole (although in the mathematics of infinity such an equation is a normal phenomenon). The body (of a warm-blooded animal) maintaining a constant temperature whether it is at the Pole or at the Equator is a standing miracle which baffles mere physics and chemistry. Thirdly, life is immortal—the law of entropy (of irrevocably diminishing energy) that governs the fate of matter does not seem to hold good here. The original life-cells are carried over physically from generation to generation and there is no end to the continuity of the series, if allowed to run its normal

course. Material energy also, it is said, is indestructible; it is never destroyed, but changes form only. But the scientific conception of material energy puts a limit to its course, it proceeds, if we are to believe thermodynamics, towards a dead equilibrium—there is no such thing as “perpetual movement” in the field of matter.

Again the very characteristic of life is its diversity, its infinite variety of norms and forms and movements. The content and movement of material nature is calculable to a great extent. A few mathematical equations or formulae can after all be made to cover all or most facts concerning it. But the laws of life refuse systematisation. A few laws purporting to govern the physical bases of life claim recognition, but they stand on precarious grounds. The laws of natural selection, of heredity or genetics are applicable within a very restricted frame of facts. The variety of material substances revolves upon the gamut of 92 elements based upon 4 or 5 ultimate types of electric unit—and that is sufficient to make us wonder. But the variety in life-play is simply incalculable—from the amoeba or virus cell to man, what a bewildering kaleidoscope and each individual in each group is unique in its way! The few chromosomes that seem to be the basis of all diversity do not explain the mystery—the mystery becomes doubly mysterious: how does a tiny seed contain the thing that is to become a banyan tree, how does a speck of plasma bring forth from within an object of Hamletian dimensions! What then is this energy or substance of life welling out irrepressively into multitudinous forms and modes? The chemical elements composing an organic body do not wholly exhaust its composition; there is something else besides. At least in one field, the life element has received recognition and been given an independent name and existence. I am obviously referring to the life element in food-stuff which has been called *vitamin*.

Life looks out of matter as a green sprout in the midst of a desert expanse. But is matter really so very different and distinct from life? Does Matter mean no Life? Certain facts and experiments have thrown great doubt upon that assumption. An Indian, a scientist of the first order in the European and modern sense, has adduced proofs that obliterate the hard and fast line of demarcation between the living and the non-living. He has demonstrated the parallelism, if not

the identity, of the responses of those two domains: we use the term fatigue in respect of living organisms only, but Jagadishchandra Bose says and shows that matter too, a piece of metal for instance undergoes fatigue. Not only so, the graph, the periodicity of the reactions as shown by a living body under a heightened or diminished stimulus or the influence of poison or drug is repeated very closely by the so-called dead matter under the same treatment.

It will not be far from the truth, if it is asserted that matter is instinct with a secret life. And because there was life secreted within matter, therefore life could come out of matter; there is here no spontaneous generation, no arbitrary fiat nor a fortuitous chance. The whole creation is a mighty stir of life. That is how the ancient Rishi of the Upanishad puts it: Life stirred and all came out.

Now, let us advance another step forward. Beyond matter there lies life and beyond life—consciousness. Is consciousness too a mere epiphenomenon as life was once thought to be in the empire of matter? Or can it not be that consciousness is an extension—an evolute—of life, even as life is an extension, an evolute of matter? In other words consciousness is not a freak, even as life was not; it is inherent in life, life itself is a rudimentary movement of consciousness. The amoeba feeling or pre-sensing its way towards its food, the twig bending towards the direction in which it has the chance of getting more light, the sudden appearance of organs or elements in an organism that will be useful only in the future are indisputable examples of a purposiveness, a forward reference in the scheme of Nature. In the domain of life-play teleology is a fact which only the grossest brand of obfuscation can deny. And teleology means—does it not?—the stress of an idea, the pattern of a consciousness.

Consciousness or thought in man, we know, is linked with the brain: and sentience which is the first step towards thought and consciousness is linked with the nervous system (of which the brain is an extension). Now the same Indian wizard who first, scientifically speaking, linked up the non-living with the living, has also demonstrated, if not absolutely, at least to a high degree of plausibility, that the plant also possesses a kind of rudimentary nervous

system (although we accept more easily a respiratory system there). All this, however, one has to admit, is still a far cry from any intimation of consciousness in Matter. Yet if life is admitted to be involved in matter and consciousness is found to be involved in life, then the unavoidable conclusion is that Matter too must contain involved in it a form of consciousness. The real difficulty in the way of attributing consciousness to Matter is our conception of consciousness which we usually identify with articulate thought, intelligence or reason. But these are various formations of consciousness, which in itself is something else and can exist in many other forms and formulations.

One remarkable thing in the material world that has always attracted and captivated man's attention, since almost the very dawn of his consciousness, is the existence of a pattern, of an artistic lay-out in the composition and movement of material things. When the Vedic Rishi sings out:

“These countless stars that appear glistening night after night, where do they vanish during the day?”

he is awed by the inviolable rhythm of the Universe, which other sages in other climes sang as the music of the spheres. The presence of Design in Nature has been in the eyes of Believers an incontrovertible proof of the existence of a Designer. What we want to say is not that a watch (if we regard the universe as a watch) presupposes the existence of a watch-maker: we say the pattern itself is the expression of an idea, it involves a conception not imposed or projected from outside but inherent in itself. The Greek view of the artist's mode of operation is very illuminating in this connection. The artist, according to this view, when he carves out a statue for example, does not impose upon the stone a figure that he has only in his mind, but that the stone itself contains the figure, the artist has the vision to see it, his chisel follows the lines he sees embedded in the stone. It is why we say that the geometry in the structure of a crystal or an atom or an astronomical system, the balance and harmony, the symmetry and polarity that govern the composition of objects and their relations, the blend of colour schemes, the marshalling of lines and the building of volumes, in a word, the artistic make-up, perfect in detail and in the ensemble that characterise all nature's body

and limbs and finally the mathematical laws that embrace and picture as it were Nature's movements, all point to the existence of a truth, a reality whose characteristic marks are or are very much like those of consciousness and Idea-Force. We fight shy of the word—consciousness—for it brings in a whole association of anthropomorphism and pathetic fallacy. But in our anxiety to avoid a ditch let us not fall over a precipice. If it is blindness to see nothing but the spirit, it is not vision to see nothing but Matter.

A hypothesis, however revolutionary or unorthodox it may seem for the moment, has to be tested by its effective application, in its successful working out. All scientific discoveries in the beginning appear as inconveniences that upset the known and accepted order. Copernicus, Newton, Galileo, Kepler, Maxwell or Einstein in our day enunciated principles that were not obvious sense-given axioms. These are at the outset more or less postulates that have to be judged by their applicability.

Creation as a movement or expression of consciousness need not be dubbed a metaphysical jargon; it can be assumed as a scientific working hypothesis and seen how it affects our view, meets our problems and difficulties, whether it can give a satisfactory clue to some of the riddles of physical and psychical phenomena. A scientific supposition (or intuition) is held to be true if it can be applied invariably to facts of life and experience and if can open up to our vision and perception new facts. The trend of scientific discoveries today is towards the positing of a background reality in Nature of which energy (radiant and electrical) is the first and overt form. We discarded *ether*, only to replace it by *field* and *disposition*. We have arrived at a point where the question is whether we cannot take courage in both hands and declare, as some have already done, that the substratum in Nature is consciousness-energy and on that hypothesis better explain certain movements of Matter and Life and Mind in a global unity. Orthodox and die-hard views will always protest and cry that it is a *mésalliance*, a misjoinder to couple together Matter and Consciousness or even Life and Consciousness. But since the light has touched the higher mind even among a few of the positivist type, the few may very well be the precursor of the order of the day.



After all, only one bold step is needed: to affirm unequivocally what is being suggested and implied and pointed to in a thousand indirect ways. And Science will be transformed. The scientist too, like the famous Saltimbanque (clown) of a French poet, may one day in turning a somersault, suddenly leap up and find himself rolling into the bosom of the stars.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

## *Our Yoga and the Challenge of Pragmatism*

TWO philosophers had set out for a walk. Passing by a lake they happened to see in it two fishes. 'Look' said one, 'the fishes are playing.'

'How do you know they are playing?' asked the other.

'How do you know that I do not know they are playing?'

'How do you know that I did not know that you do not know?' . . .

And we do not know where the argument ended. No body cared to look closely at the fish. For all that we know, they may have been peacefully asleep, and our philosophers forgetting that their feet are nailed to the earth were battling in the clouds or in the rarefied air of the void. Such has been the state generally of Philosophy in the West. There have been, however, occasional outbursts of thought-movements which are bold and brilliant and appeal to the realistic sense of the serious thinker. One such fascinating idea in the field of higher thought is the utilitarian element as the *raison d'être* in any philosophic system. We shall make a brief study of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo in this context and place it *vis à vis* the modern concept of Pragmatism. Before proceeding to examine its implications, it is pertinent to recall to our mind the general philosophic environment in the West that gave birth to this challenge in the last century.

Philosophy is indeed an enquiry into the truth, the meaning and aim of life, but the study is carried on in the West not along the current or touching springs of life as in the East, but mainly in what has been so appropriately termed, a 'conceptual vacuum'. In the East the Seer precedes the philosopher; in the West, it is the thinker at his best who is the philosopher, mentioned with respect in scholarly circles and admired vaguely by the intellectual classes of various types. While the latter seeks to ideate the meaning of life, the former propagates to competent minds the truth as seen and realised by himself. The starting-point of the seeker of truth in the East was a daring attempt at direct experience and seizure of the truth behind life as

we see it and philosophy came in later as a means of systematised presentation of such truths to the intellect. But in the West, it was just the other way. Life, or rather so much of it as could be conveniently handled, was pressed into the conceptual mould of the mind for reinterpretation in terms of the developing sciences and their theories. But the human mind is by no means the highest or the infallible instrument of man for sounding the depths of Life. In its very nature it is analytical and it naturally proceeds to consider things piece by piece and arrives at conclusions which are at best one-sided where they are not wrong-sided. Inevitably any system of thought based mainly on the operation of the Intellect suffers from the same limitations. Philosopher after philosopher in Europe have struck upon brilliant ideated truths and were so much overwhelmed by the Power of the Idea that they took it to be the All-truth, the sole truth of life and proceeded to interpret everything in its terms and wove out whole systems of thought seeking to justify the standpoint.

Thus Plato enunciated his Doctrine of Ideas. The Universal Class was for him the only truth; men may die but Man lives. The truth of the individual unit had no place in his scheme of things. It is interesting to recall that there is a parallel conception of *jati* and *vyakti*, Class and Individual, in the Indian systems of Philosophy. Arguments have been advanced as to whether *vyakti* is paramount or the *jati*; the conclusive note however seems to have been struck with the reconciliation, so characteristic of Indian thought, that the truth lies in the concept of the individual as qualified by the Class, *jati vishishta vyakti*.

Locke observed that Knowledge comes to us from experience and through our senses—the mind, he said, was a clean slab on which are recorded sense-experiences. Sensations are the stuff of thought and it follows, he concluded, that Matter is the material of mind. Berkeley looked at the problem from another side and proved, as convincingly as the other, that everything being just a bundle of perceptions, Matter is but a state of mind, a form of mind. The German philosopher Kant who has exercised a most pervading influence on European thought, sought for the truth of life, not within it but outside of it and perceived it in what he termed the Transcendent Unity of apperception. Later the French Philosopher

Bergson denied any basis for the materialism of Locke or the Idealism of Berkeley, or even the Transcendentalism of Kant and went on to fix the meaning of the universal movement on the *Élan Vital*. All existence is a becoming, a movement and *Life*, he said, was the sole truth of the Universe, and the world and all its creations were expressions of this surging stream of vitality that we call life.

But the Truth of existence is not one and single; it is many-sided and could not be thus imprisoned in the formulae carved out of the mind. Based upon Intellect, operating with the means developed and circumscribed within the range of the intellect, these philosophies never exerted any effective influence beyond the range of the intellect. Philosophy became just one more of the sciences best left to the care of the specialist in his laboratory. It had no vitality in it to impinge upon the normal life and mind of man and orientate his life one way or the other. That was possible, for instance, in ancient India for the reason that philosophy pointed to truths that were *lived* and could be lived by any one with the requisite competence therefor. Philosophy here has been dynamic. The truth of Adwaita, for example, has influenced, not merely influenced, but shaped in a positive manner the thought and life-outlook and to a large extent the other-worldliness of millions. Whether that is the sole Truth and a life based upon the perception of that Ideal is the highest possible end for man is a different question altogether. What matters is the fact that that Philosophy was not a theory, a result of profound speculation but a perceived and lived truth.

Cold logic—the rightful boast of European science—has also been its curse. The attempt to segregate thought from life resulted in the shearing of its living roots and even the most fascinating flower of such thinkings could not but fade and turn out to be lifeless. It was a metaphysical structure built by the mind, whose value for the proper use of life and its betterment was void of practical importance. For, “if it does not correspond to facts knowable or known to us, if its concepts cannot be verified by us as facts of experience, then the best of systems is just a ‘flower of reason’, if not a cobweb of mental constructions in the world of ideas that are divorced from facts and are not valid for acceptance as truths that can be lived.” Philosophy became but another name for scholasticism and Cicero’s

appraisal of European philosophy that ‘there is nothing so absurd but that it may be found in the books of the philosophers’ seemed after all not far from truth.

It was inevitable that this overtone of intellectualism should have provoked a sharp reaction. After Hegel in the 18th century, such a turn was inescapable if European thought was not to perish in the ruins of its own ideation. In his *Study of History*, Prof. Toynbee remarks that Challenge is a most important factor in the survival or failure of Civilisation. Faced with a situation that questions its very right to exist and threatens to exterminate it, the Civilisation turns round, seeks for and tries to refind the central truth that lay at the basis of its life. Its efforts are directed to renovate its forms suitably to the new demands and in the measure of its success it justifies or fails to justify its claim for a further extension or another commencement of life. This is a truth that extends to all Nature; and the challenge with which Philosophy in Europe was confronted was this: the question was asked, do these systems of thought have a practical bearing on life? Does their application result in effecting our way of life in any particular manner? Do they ennoble life or rob it of its zest? Philosophy was thus challenged to prove its credentials for acceptance by serious minds since it claimed to fathom the secret of human living. It was natural that this new departure in the lines of thinking—Pragmatism as the guiding rule of life and thought—should have taken roots in the growing race of Americans in the last century, a people whose feet are firmly set on earth, whose heart-beats are close to the roots of life.

Thought, they said, cannot be divorced from life. It is a part of life, meant for life and to be cultivated with an eye to life. We must seek for the truth of Existence in life itself and not in an ideative isolation. Philosophy, they continued, ‘has been occupied not with objects but with a priori concepts of objects’. “Philosophy lives in words, but truth and fact well up into our lives that exceed verbal formulation” said William James, the noted protagonist of the new school. Every philosophy is valid to the extent it affects life, is true in the measure of the enrichment and growth it imparts or is capable of imparting to life. With typical turn of phrase, they argued that the truth of an idea or a concept lay not in its invulnerability in

logic or epistemology but in 'its cash-value or efficacy'. Charles Sanders Pierce, originator of this attractive stream of thought, said 'to find the meaning of an idea examine the consequences to which it leads in action.' He may not have been, perhaps, fully conscious of the full import and significance of the Idea he was voicing; but the utterance was an inspired one and we whole-heartedly accept it, but with an extended connotation as we shall see in due course.

Thus Pragmatism shifted the emphasis from the origin and nature of knowledge in Philosophy to its practical implication. As a modern American author puts it pithily: "Scholasticism asked, what *is* the thing—and lost itself in quiddities; Darwinism asked, what is its origin—and lost itself in nebulas; Pragmatism asks, what are its consequences—and turns the face of thought to action and future."

It must be noted however, that this was not altogether a new mode of thought. It was in fact a fresh formulation of the instinct with which man has, from the beginning of time, learnt to distinguish between the good and the not-good, between that which helps him acquire strength and that which diminishes his stature. Francis Bacon had put it succinctly when he said the 'rule which is the most effective in practice is also the most true in history'. We need not concern ourselves with the pros and cons of the controversy that greeted this fresh departure of thought; nor is it necessary for our purpose to examine the propriety of extending the pragmatic method to all fields of activity that concern man, including the confines of religious philosophy, as is done by philosophers like Dewey. Suffice it to note that the one important conclusion re-established by Pragmatism as a way of thinking was that no system of thought or mode of life could claim allegiance of the human mind unless it served for the distinct enlargement and progress of man. For here on this globe, man is the central figure; he is no spectator. Well has it been said that it is for Gods and angels and not for man to be the spectator on this arena of human life.

## II

But is man so important after all that he should be the sole gauge of all progress in the world? Does this mighty movement of Nature

really revolve round this dot of human life that appears one moment and disappears the next? Is it not more correct to say that man is yet one more creature thrown up by Nature to subserve the execution of some Law Eternal of her own—whether it be the Wheel of Karma or the perpetual clash of a Manichean Duality or the blind drive of a mechanical Energy? The relative importance and consequence of Man has formed topic for endless debate. Sri Aurobindo is one with the progressive line of thought in the West in investing the Homo Sapiens with a cardinal importance. He accepts the truth of Evolution but in a spiritual sense. Man is the highest form of life evolved by Nature so far and is the crown of her labours. It is in him that Nature, evolving Nature, seeks a conscious embodiment of her purpose and will, a leader who will lead the creation along the most fruitful course. The scrupulous care with which the human organism has come to be developed in the long course of millenniums, nay, of aeons, and the tireless energy and amazing eye for detail exhibited in designing this miniature universe, the microcosm containing and reflecting within a single frame the elements of the entire universe—Macrocosm, bespeak the importance which the Builder of the worlds attaches to this puny yet significant product of her labours. Yet it may be asked if man, as he is today, is fitted for the role he may have been designed for. Has he the necessary equipment, the sight and the power with which to mount the steed of Life and direct it to the heights of consummation? Man has grown, but grown in certain directions alone at the cost of an apparent set-back in other parts. Thus for instance, with the growing shift of emphasis on the development of the thinking faculty, the physical part of him has suffered a visible diminution. The Body Beautiful as an ideal is preserved not in life, but in Art Galleries, in sculptured monuments to the Grecian culture of the body. Physical strength—‘brute strength’ as it is called—is indulgently associated with the comparatively unadvanced races and its importance as a solid base for the mighty edifice under erection is totally forgotten. Or again, with the growth of the thinking and reasoning mind, certain faculties of direct knowledge with which man was gifted, e.g. the instinctive guidance, which is really a kind of intuition in the physical, that was self-operative has now receded into the background. The mind has to labour and arrive at know-

ledge which was effortlessly grasped and automatically acted upon in the earlier cycles of human progress. The *forte* of man today is the faculty of thought with Reason for its adjutant. It has indeed worked wonderfully well, and discovered many mysteries of Material Nature. Man has mastered the elements to a considerable extent, has probed deep into the exterior secrets of Nature and has erected a civilisation which he now finds beyond his limited mental capacity to control and direct for an assured drive towards the necessary orientation. He has unleashed Forces whose origin he knows not and whose inexorable tempo he vainly tries to arrest so as to suit the faltering steps of his Intelligence. He lacks the requisite stature of the spirit and lacks also the light in the mind that is required to assume a directing control over the concatenation of forces and events following upon the fortuitous discoveries which he has either partly anticipated or wholly stumbled upon. The crux of the problem facing man is simply this: his "material progress and mastery is not the result of and in keeping with a spiritual progress and mastery which alone has the power to contradict and counter-act the terrible danger coming from these new discoveries. We cannot and must not stop progress, but we must achieve it in an equilibrium between the inside and the outside." (The Mother: New Year Prayers) How is man going to do it? Nature has flung the Question before him and awaits the answer. For on the nature of his response depends her future course of action. Should man fail to realise the gravity of the hour and be found lacking in the will to rise above his present limitation and shape himself into a surpassing perfection of the present formulation of his being, Nature will be obliged to cast him off on the roadside even as she has left the Dodo and the Dinosaur before and proceed to build yet another vehicle for the realisation of her Purpose.

Leaving aside the question of his ultimate destiny for the moment, no one disputes that man, as he is at present, is a very imperfect creature. With a physique that is no match for most of the other developed species on earth, a life-force severely circumscribed and constantly failing to meet the demands of the body and the mind, a mind that is mostly at the mercy of invasive visitations from the unknown or partly and vaguely felt regions—call it the subconscious and the subliminal—man is hardly in an enviable position. Nor



does anyone question that it is this imperfection in the make-up of man that is reflected in the imperfect order of the world without. Imperfect men can but create imperfect patterns of society. It is, to say the least, illogical to expect harmony, ordered progress and happiness in a community where the members constituting it are themselves each full of disharmony in the individual frame of being not to speak of the discord between the members themselves. All our laws, social reforms, Plans, political permutations are at best ameliorative measures that may succeed, for the time being, in softening the rigour of the friction, in erecting a simulacrum of what is called Unity in society, unity of community but what really amounts to nothing more than a forced association, a fastening of the fringes here and there, an adhesion for limited ends and not a cohesion in fellow-being and brotherhood. Nations will continue to war, societies will continue to rival and clash, gallows will continue to besmirch the face of Earth as long as the root of the problem is not tackled in a definitive manner. Indeed, of the ever-increasing problems with which man is faced, the first and most important one—on the fruitful solution of which depends the solution of the rest—is *himself*. In a sense he is the heart of the evolving Spirit's body on Earth and as long as the heart suffers from a malaise, as long as its beats lack the rhythm of health, the body will continue to ail however much one might embellish a limb here and a limb there.

Man is imperfect. From the present state of his development he has to proceed and reach the acme of his possible progress. A harmony in the growth of all the elements of his being—body and mind, life and soul—is the condition indispensable for his perfection, the urgency of which has to be fully realised. Again man is divided from the rest of his fellow-beings by separation in consciousness. At heart he feels he is separate, his interests are different from those of others, and they are to increase and bear fruit in cooperation with those of others if advantageous or in suppression of them if necessary. All social conventions and legal restrictions serve to curb down this primitive trait in man; they do not eradicate it. The present-day Unity, political and social is just a union under the compulsion of expediency and self-interest now masquerading under the plea of altruism, now disguising itself as fellowship in fraternity. True and

lasting unity can proceed only from a feeling knowledge and understanding deeper than has been generally possible till now. At first, there must be a psychological realisation at least of such a necessity leading to a possible change in the natural constitution including the inner make-up of man. As with man, so with the aggregate of men. Collectivities approach each other for self-aggrandisement alone and when they clash they do more sharply than in the case of individuals because they are just aggregates of diverse egos. Within itself again, the collective Ego is eternally at war with its constituents, both struggling for supremacy over each other. Here again the solution has to come from the individual reaching a reasonable stage of a psychological, an inner perfection; he has to realise his true place in the totality which is at once his field and expression; he has to harmonise himself with the higher needs of his own being first, and thus grow to be competent to promote the well-being, jointly and severally, of the collective Whole. Then it is possible for him to play his part in the just extension of this principle of oneness and union to a larger Whole embracing the many collectivities in its orbit. The inner growth and perfection of man is the one key for the solution of all the diverse problems of humanity. After all, it is the individual in the multiplicity that we call the aggregate, and it is that individual who answers to the demands of a larger life and perfection that counts in the onward march of the group.

All our sciences, all our wisdoms and philosophies are to be measured in terms of their contribution towards the solution of this crucial problem. Do they help man to enlarge the boundaries of his limited vision, to rise above the muddy waters of the whirlpool of his self-centred movements, to reach towards an increasing perfection of his manhood, in a word to ennoble, to enrich and even transform life into the image of its Ideal that has been the dream of the Seer-Poets of all lands from times immemorial? A line of thought, a way of living that fulfils these demands has pragmatic value in excelsis, beyond the challenge of Logic or Theology and merits serious consideration at the hands of every earnest seeker after Truth, every lover of humanity. And it is in this light that we view the place of Sri Aurobindo's system as related to Pragmatism, and show that the ideal way of life that could be lived and the means for its realisation as seen

and taught by Sri Aurobindo is the highest form of Pragmatism in an extended and higher sense of the term. And the way of life and the means leading to it is Yoga, not as is commonly understood in the West, or even in India, but in a specific sense of the term as we shall presently see. For Yoga is an art of life and as every art has a technique and practical application, Yoga too has its own line of procedure and practice and consummation. And this is especially so, in the case of the Yoga that is characteristic of the Personality of Sri Aurobindo.

### III

It is a fundamental tenet of this Yoga and the philosophy based upon it that the Universe is a reality, since the basic and ultimate Reality—call it the Brahman—is its conscious Creator. This creation, our universe is a progressive manifestation of that Reality which is the Supreme Spirit and the Earth is the significant centre of this unfolding movement of the Spirit. The earth is as it were the solid body of the Spirit providing the base for its superb edifice under preparation; and it is as such that supreme importance is attached to it, not by man alone who is a self-conscious creature obliged to live on it somehow, but by those Forces also that are generated, of necessity, in the course of Evolution, as well as by those which have helped in its formation. These are the demiurges who hold it as a most prized possession and guard it sleeplessly from the malevolent. For there are two classes of Forces, those who work for progress, light and knowledge and those who restrain and oppose all formative powers of progress and are themselves entrenched in the steep rock of Ignorance. It is these latter against whom protection is necessary—these dark forces of malevolence as the ancient seers of India perceived and taught. Indeed the Atharva text reads:

‘Yam rakshanti asvapnah vishwadanim devah bhumim prithivim imam ’ (XIII--1)

In other words, there is a meaning, a purpose in the existence of this earth and the teeming multitude of soulful forms that proceed from it. Each formation is a part of the whole with a specific purpose before it. Life is real and whether the creature is aware of it or not

it is moving towards the fulfilment of the purpose. This outlook leads to certain notable consequences on life and action. First, there is a recognition that nothing is *waste*; there is nothing so insignificant that it can be brushed aside as useless. The smallest details acquire an importance all their own, the precise nature of their significance depending on our interpretation of the Goal of life. The seeker values life in the world as a field for the expression of his personality and as the ground providing for the working out of his destiny. His own life he looks upon as a sacred trust from a Higher Power of which he has to make the best use, to perfect it in the truth of the spirit and make it an illumined centre of faultless activity. He takes to *action* as a direct means of forging his own individual growth and as the effective means for canalising the outflow of his increasing strength and purity towards the good of the race. He works not because he cannot help it, not even to help maintain the existing set-up of society, but in order to contribute his own share for the ennoblement and uplift of the general life, for executing the Divine Intention in creation to which he has joyfully dedicated himself. He puts a premium on action as a part of his Sadhana for normalising in the exterior parts of his being the working of the higher faculties developed in his inner life and also for preserving a happy harmony in the development of his inner substance and his outer being. It is demanded of the Sadhaka of this Integral Yoga that he bring to bear even on the smallest action he is called upon to do, all the culture that pertains to his inner development. This emphasis, by Sri Aurobindo, on a spiritual life, a life lived in the deeper truths of existence, providing a basis for and inspiring a concurrent life of action enhances the value of action, enlarges and sublimates the Yoga of the Gita. The external life of the Yogin shall be a faithful reflection of his inner life and his enlightened activity in the world a means of mutual enrichment between the inner and the outer life.

Recognition of a purpose behind life lends true earnestness and dignity to human living. There is no Original Sin besetting man and this creation towards redemption from which it is his duty to mournfully strive. The disease that afflicts is not Sin but Ignorance. It is an ignorance that is universal in character. All the imperfections of our world proceed from the twistings and limitations imposed by this

pervasive Ignorance. But Ignorance is not co-terminous with Creation. It is a phase in the long course of development of the worlds. Ignorance is not a permanent strand woven into the web of this our creation. It is really an incomplete state of knowledge struggling for a fuller knowledge in the larger reaches of the being for a harmonic and wholesome expression. It is not a total absence of knowledge, it is an imperfect knowledge which seizes the Truth in parts and mistakes them for the whole truth, it struggles towards perfection even when it is perverse. With the progressive growth of Knowledge, Ignorance recedes and disappears. Hence the effort of man has to be directed towards an increasing growth from his present imperfect condition into a perfect status of being. His life is a progression from the wrong and perverse to the Right and Perfect, from a lesser truth to a greater truth, from a tiny arc to a complete circle.

When the life of a man is governed mainly by the demands of his physical needs and propensities, his movements, responses and stresses are markedly different from and inferior to those of one who lives largely a life of action, surging with vitality, and spends himself out in activity. Remarkably different from both is the way of life, thought and action of the thinker who lives normally on the levels of the thinking mind. The man who has built an inner life, the life of the spirit, is still different from the rest. Each order of life is real and all of them together constitute a progressive series. Each way of life has something distinctive of its own which gives it a stamp of difference. It is not that man passes from stage to stage in the manner indicated; in life, all these exist simultaneously in one, some more vivid, some less and dull, and some more pronounced, some less and inchoate. And according as the one or the other is predominant in shaping the main stream of his life, we describe the man as leading that particular life. The law of things in any order of life dominated and controlled by Ignorance is necessarily different from the law operative in another order where the governing principle is different from that of Ignorance. Man undergoes the drive of action and interaction of the mechanical laws that characterise creation in its present stage of Ignorance and is subject to evil, misery and suffering that issue from it only so long as he confines himself to it; the moment he takes steps to live, at least by a part of himself to begin with, in another

and higher sphere of life, it is the laws of that order of life that begin to operate and correct the workings of the lower order. The farther he outlives the life of ignorance, the freer he is from the touches of the forces that operate in that sphere. It does not mean, of course, that he withdraws from life itself for the supposed reason that it is shrouded in an incurable ignorance; he leaves the life *of* ignorance and grows into a life of knowledge.

In a sense, man is awakening to the inevitable Dawn of Knowledge, to the necessity of reaching to it and is fumbling for the proper means to attain to it. The knowledge however is not a mental knowledge, not even a knowledge of the intuitive and inspirational kind, though that is of great value in as much as it proceeds from a source higher and purer than that of the knowledge we are accustomed to normally. That knowledge which he has to aspire for is not mental and limited to one part of man; it is vibrant in the entire consciousness of him. It is this fullest kind of knowledge which Sri Aurobindo calls the Integral knowledge. His teaching affirms that it is possible for man—and shows the way to realise it—to develop his consciousness to such a state of sensitivity and receptivity that it could, by a spontaneous movement embrace the content of knowledge in its entirety, directly. When this Knowledge dawns and rises to be normal, man is informed in all his parts with the right perception, the right thought and the right movement.

In the absence of a faultless and direct knowledge to lead and enlighten him, man sees in half-lights and false lights, walks in half-lit nights, acts from a dark corner, a wrong angle. He mistakes his ego to be his true soul, the spirit and serves the ego and not the soul, and carries out its dictates. His world moves round his own ego and naturally clashes with other egos. Clash, strife and battle are the inevitable result, all tending to give an appearance (which struck keen observers, Naturalists like Darwin) of competition rather than cooperation, war rather than love, understanding and sympathy being the basis of life and progress. This however is just a phase, not the entire or final truth. If man suffers today from clash in the impacts of other men and goes under before the onrush of the universal forces around him it is because he has, in his ignorance, closed himself in his small shell and maintains doggedly his precarious and apparent isolation in the world

around. He has to outgrow and shed off this isolation and learn to desist from shrinking from the universal contacts and this he can do only by enlarging his consciousness, by progressively identifying himself with the Life of the larger universe to which indeed he belongs in a concrete sense. It is a fact of spiritual experience, a truth glimpsed by many in the higher flights of their idealistic thinkings, that behind the apparent diversities and oppositions on the surface of things there is a truer base—corresponding to what Spinoza spoke of as *Substance* ‘stand under’—in the deeper layer of existence where all beings find their unity, also equality among themselves. It is there that all meet in union. We may call it the Oneness in Spirit spread all over the creation. To get at that truth, represented in the individual initially by the Psyche, by means of an intensive aspiration and discipline is an essential part of this Sadhana. From this centre spring naturally the true relations with others; love and harmony radiate like light from the sun and to such a man truly,

“ . . . a kelson of creation is love”. (Walt Whitman)

This recognition of the incomplete and self-cabined life man leads and the possibility of developing a larger life participating more freely and harmoniously in the greater life around and the inevitability of harmony displacing disharmony with the progressive displacement of ignorance by knowledge are the salient features at the doors of this Yoga.

There is also a recognition of the disjointed nature of the component parts that make up the personality of man. At present, the being of man is constituted of different parts, each with its own particular way of life, mode of working and distinctness of purpose. The physical part plunged in its roots in the Dark, what Sri Aurobindo calls the Inconscience, and with its preponderant inertia, the life itself with its natural preference for dynamic upsurges and the mind partly submerged and partly emerging out of these two and swinging alternately between both, an emotive element struggling for free expression from below, all these form a chaotic conglomeration. When one part is developed, the others are neglected or it is built up at the cost of the others. This teaching insists that every one of the different

parts has rightful claim and share in the life of man. Each is to be perfected in conjunction with the rest, the perfection of one carries with it the eventual completion of the others. The Yoga initiates a movement of integration whereby the progress of each part of the being is followed by a period of assimilation during which the other parts receive and absorb what the leading element has won and conferred upon them; and it is only when they are thus regenerated and made better bases for further progress that the next movement of spiritual advance could follow for their proper role.

The problem of man, thus, resolves itself into a radical Ignorance with its many branches overshadowing and embracing the complex being of man. To this are to be traced all his natural deficiencies that weigh down his capacity for right action, and befog him amidst dubious twilights of groping knowledge; it is these deficiencies that set on him the shocks which dilute happiness, subject him also to the sufferings that mortify life, and bring about the disharmonies that dismember the members of his own being. Man is possessed of an intelligent will to overcome and overpass the boundaries of this Ignorance; in fact he has accomplished a good deal by his mental effort. The first important step in the eventual elimination of Ignorance has been already taken; there is a general recognition of the presence of such a distorting Agency and a beginning has been made to combat it. But these efforts have failed to make substantial progress; the realisation is coming upon man that mental will alone cannot overcome this Titanic Ignorance. Ignorance has to be displaced and that can be done, according to this Teaching, only by a higher Power of Knowledge, a direct power from the Divine Being that governs the human Creation. It is a higher form of the Spirit, the superconscient principle that could alone deliver the human consciousness out of the bounds of Ignorance and of the clings to the Inconscience that hold the mind and body of man in their grip. It is this principle of supreme Knowledge and Will, a characteristic mode of the Spirit at the summit of this creation, a Power and faculty of which our own mind and will are distant derivations in a diminished form, that is termed the Supermind by Sri Aurobindo.

To strive for and achieve the establishment of this principle of Supermind is the central aim of this Yoga. The Supermind is that



creative poise of the Divine Consciousness which alone could give the lift to the higher step in the evolution of the human spirit into that which is the sole solution of the Problem of man. To make the higher Divine principle directly active in this life on Earth, to raise life to its fuller expression of the hidden truths of the Spirit, to actualise what to us may be ideas and Ideals—Ideals of Knowledge, Beauty, Harmony, Delight—this is the aim of the Integral Yoga. And this is superbly pragmatic, for the pragmatism of the Yoga is based upon the eternal verities of the spirit, the abiding factors that determine standards of conduct answering to the needs of terrestrial life lived for the sake of the Universal and the Divine from which it is derived.

M. P. PANDIT

## *The Time-Spirit and the West*

“THE discords of the worlds are God’s discords and it is only by accepting and proceeding through them that we can arrive at the greater concords of his supreme harmony, the summits and thrilled vastnesses of his transcendent and his cosmic Ananda.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the hardest thing in the world for the Western mind to understand—indeed, the Western mind will not generally make the attempt to understand it, but rejects it out of hand.

Nowadays the Westerner who has a social conscience, or consciousness, is either saturated with formal Christian ethics or is an ethical-materialist. In either case whatever offends his own notions, or detracts from his mental or material comfort or idealism, he labels as “evil”, and promptly denies it any validity whatever in the scheme of things.

Not only the Westerner but every normal human being agrees that some things are better than others, in the scale of relative values in this existence of ours. War must give way to peace, disease to health, poverty to plenty, and pain to serenity. Indian philosophy says that the human task is to supplant tamasic and rajasic action by sattwic conditions. The whole thinking world would agree that this is the worthy object of human endeavour; it is only on the question of how to set about it that opinions differ. In particular, the West seems to start off on its crusade for peace, health, wealth, and serenity under such a misapprehension of the hard facts of life as to render its efforts towards achieving these good things almost completely futile.

Whether the approach in the West be from the traditional Christian, or from the increasingly popular ethical-material standpoint, the attitude towards the unwanted part of life is that it is evil, a mistake and unnecessary, not of God but of the Devil, and

<sup>1</sup> “Essays on the Gita”, Second Series, Sri Aurobindo, p. 161.

that somehow or other it must be pushed violently out of existence. The fact that it belongs to God, just as surely as the part of life of which we happen to approve belongs to God, hardly occurs to us for a moment. The day and sunshine and happiness we can see is Divine, so we think; but the night and darkness and suffering we instinctively put to the account of powers outside the Divine.

This wrong-headed and lop-sided conception of life must prevent any clear light of faith from the Divine getting through to the plane of action. In our anxiety to range ourselves on the side of God—or Marx—or Peace—or the Party—against the Devil of this, that, or the other evil or heresy, we Westerners shut out the possibility of comprehending the centre on which this universe swings, its very *raison d'être*. Thus, in our fight against war we make war, in our struggle to bring social independence we enslave ourselves, and in our passion for human equality we oppress each other. Bewildered and dismayed we stand among the rubble of one war fearing the next which seems about to burst upon us, and wondering what on earth has gone wrong with our world.

Our myopia has the effect of persuading us to attack the external symptoms of our ills and diseases, while ignoring the inner causes from which they spring. The inveterate externalisation of all our conceptions and impressions makes it impossible for us to get below the shallowest surface of circumstances for meaning. Among ourselves we cannot agree on any single principle that shall be universally accepted as our common guiding principle, on which we could all fix our eyes as on a star to lead us to a new Bethlehem of our desires. It is true that we agree—superficially at least—that we all want material security, for example. But this does not get us very far because, lacking a practical conception of what security is actually possible, we differ tragically about the means to be used to get it. One man wants to achieve it by immolating himself and all other men blindly to the State, another wants it through peace at any price of human responsibility, another by enriching himself with goods and power, even at the expense of unwilling neighbours. The trouble with all these conflicting, useless endeavours is that they do not go below the surface of the matter, much less getting to the bottom of it, and for one fundamental reason. They are all

based on the misconception that the particular "evil" they attack can be obliterated and pushed out of the universe, just as one could shove something off the edge of a cliff to destruction. This strange and blind error of the materialist, who fights against disharmony by sheer resistance to its symptoms is all the more tragic because he advances it as the one "practical" method of relieving humanity.

If the sincere battler for the right—whatever it is for the moment—could see that "the discords of the world are God's discords and that it is only by accepting and proceeding through them" that he could come to the inner realisation of what he is after, not only his methods but his whole life would be changed. By refusing to shut himself off from any aspect of life he would come to understand the mainsprings of his existence. He would begin to see the Divine everywhere. This is, perhaps, the very heart of the trouble which so especially troubles the Western part of our world—there is no appreciation of the immanence of the Divine.

That this whole universe and all it contains is God, and the splendour of God, never occurs to us in the West. It doesn't even occur to the best of us; our priests, artists, poets, and philosophers, with the rarest exceptions, preach, paint, and write about things, and circumstances, and conditions, never about the glory that exists behind all things, all circumstances, and all conditions. The very words of the founder of our preponderating religious systems have been put aside, or forgotten, or never believed—"But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."<sup>1</sup> The modernised version of these startling and invigorating words might well be rendered—"But seek ye first for what ye shall eat, drink, wear, and enjoy; and the Kingdom of God and his righteousness shall be added unto you."

If only we Westerners could realise that it is God in his Kingdom that is always "destroying in order that he may new-create, who is Time, who is Death, who is Rudra the Dancer of the calm and awful dance, who is Kali with her garland of skulls trampling

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 6. 33-34.

naked in battle and flecked with the blood of the slaughtered Titans, who is the cyclone and the fire and the earthquake, and pain and famine and revolution and ruin and the swallowing ocean.”<sup>1</sup>

Such imagery and such a notion, to a Western mind must seem to come near to sheer blasphemy. We want, through the weakness of our spirits, to think only fair and comforting things in association with God—*our* God, of course. We cannot yet stand the stark and awful truth, the harsh and fierce aspects of our common humanity and existence. The feeble attempt to find a solution to the problems of life by rearranging the pieces and external conditions that make it up is as useless now as ever. There is no real help in political, social, or personal revolution, but every virtue in spiritual struggle. This is a hard thing for us to understand, and the darkness seems to have fastened down upon us even more solidly than ever during these post-war years. To seek God, to peer and struggle through the surrounding darkness of misery and our own sin, or through the blinding glitter of pomp and circumstance, so as to detect and recognise the glory shining calmly and eternally behind it all—this is the way to wisdom. One glimpse of the Eternal Qualities behind the screen of fate will give more knowledge and power over life’s problems than any amount of revolution and political action can ever do.

What, then, should be the enlightened attitude of mind, of West as well as of East, towards the catastrophic complexity of conditions that is about us to-day?<sup>2</sup> Abstention from action is as useless as action which ignores the fundamental fact that these conditions are of God. Seeds have been sown, harvests must be gathered. To endure, to pray, to do one’s duty in that state of life to which one has been called, to try to see God; to seek first the Kingdom of God—first, last, and all the time; to strive incessantly to see the Glory of God everywhere, behind everything, at all times, under all conditions; this is the noble Aryan path.

<sup>1</sup> “Essays on the Gita”, Second Series, Sri Aurobindo, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> The answer to this pressing and tormenting problem is set out in practical terms on pages 165 to 167 of Second Series “Essays on the Gita” by Sri Aurobindo. The attention of all readers who are involved in this problem is earnestly directed to this passage.

To go forward in this state of mind is to meet one's duty, to go hand in hand with one's destiny. The work for each one will be put before him; if it is God who is sought, the task and the unfoldment will appear quite naturally as his path. If we are sure it is God's will that we seek to do, and not that of our own ego, there will be no doubt as to what is required of us. Then each of us shall "accept in its deeper sense, which the superficial mind does not see, the greatness of the struggle, the glory of the victory—if need be, the glory of the victory which comes masked as defeat—and lead man too in the enjoyment of his opulent kingdom.

"Not appalled by the face of the Destroyer, he will see within it the eternal Spirit imperishable in all these perishing bodies and behind it the face of the Charioteer, the Leader of man, the Friend of all creatures."<sup>1</sup>

A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK

<sup>1</sup> "Essays on the Gita", Second Series, Sri Aurobindo, p. 167.

## *Growth of Man's Social & Political Life*

FROM the point of view of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga it is not enough to study man's individual self-development. We have to see how the principles and methods of this Yoga can lead to an integral divine life on earth, a new life of the race,—a new life, both individual and collective. In this article we need not trace the evolution of life generally on this planet; our purpose will be served by starting with the appearance of the true man, the man of reason, Homo Sapiens, as the Scientist calls him, some fifty thousand years ago. This intelligent being, we can take it as a fact, has always been a gregarious creature. "All record of him shows him to us as a social animal, not an isolated body and spirit." So many other animals, that we know of, have always led a lone existence or an existence with his mate as his sole companion. Unlike these, man has ever been a unit in a group as far as his outward life is concerned. In the primeval forests where he was born, he was a creature too weak in body to cope by himself with the sabre-toothed tiger, the giant bear or the huge sized mammoth, who were already in possession. Later on, no doubt, as his intellect developed, he invented various ways of circumventing his formidable enemies. But for many thousands of years, at the start, he had to tackle his foes *en masse*. If there were any big or complicated snares to set up in the forest in order to entrap these beasts, so many had to get together to do the work. Then when, say, a mammoth fell into the pit and got impaled on the pointed stakes planted therein, an alarm was raised and people collected in large numbers for their share of the meat. Often, as is guessed, a regular orgy followed, the hungry ones sang and danced in great glee, gorged for hours, and when they could hold out no longer, lay down to sleep all round the remnants of the carcass. Then again, from pictures and figures in some of their ancient cave dwellings and cave temples, we learn that these primitive ancestors of ours held ceremonial dances before they went out hunting,

in order to ensure good sport. They drew on the wall a picture of the animal they were going to hunt and painted carefully on it a heart pierced by an arrow or spearhead for luck. Wizards dressed themselves in animal skins and danced weird ceremonial dances, as a picture in an ancient cave depicts. All this indicates that these people hunted together, feasted together, danced together, and (shall we say?) indulged in some kinds of incantation together—in other words, lived and worked as members of a pack or herd. This habit of hunting in teams continued even after man manufactured lethal weapons, with which he could face a beast alone. The advantages of co-operation seem to have been realised even in the work of manufacturing weapons and tools. Some ancient encampments of the same period have been unearthed in Eastern Europe, which show that these people had regular factories where they shaped implements and utensils on a large scale out of mammoth bone and mammoth tusk. From the lay-out of these excavations, one or two very large, it would appear that the corporate life of these people was very well-ordered. Wall paintings have been discovered which seem to indicate that they had chieftains to rule over them—chieftains who carried some kind of a staff or mace, symbolic of their authority. Without dwelling on this point any further it may, we think, be taken for granted that man, even in the Stone Age, had evolved some kind of communal life and had formulated some standards of what should be done and what should not be done, however crude they might have been. These hunters of the Stone Age led a migratory life, following the migrations of the animals they subsisted on. Their organisation of corporate life must have been on a tribal basis—a tribe or clan being an extension of a family, the original group. We have said already that all we know of early man goes to show that he was always a social animal. That is to say, the law of the herd always ruled him, and not his individual law of self-development. But, as the Master says, “logically and naturally from the psychological view-point the law of personal need and desire is primary, the social law comes in as a secondary and usurping power.” Man thus, is a dual personality; he is driven by his individual impulses as well as by his group impulses. He has a life of his own and he has a life of his group. His conduct, too, is therefore bound



to be twofold, expressive of his twofold urge. The two urges may find a harmony or they may clash, and the action and reaction of the two have built up the history of man's civilisation. The clash between the two urges and the two kinds of interest is not over yet. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The possibility of their opposition and the attempt to find their equation lie at the very roots of human civilisation and persist in other figures when he has passed beyond the vital animal into a highly individualised mental and spiritual progress."

It would be necessary for us to trace briefly the path of this impact between the two sets of interest and impulse and show how it has evolved man's corporate life from epoch to epoch. After the Age of Stone and bone implements came the Age of Bronze; after the Age of the wandering hunter came the Age of the settled cultivator. It was in the valleys of the great rivers—the Nile, the Euphrates, the Indus and the Ganges and the Yang-tse-kiang, that man first discovered the secret of agriculture. With this discovery, the whole trend of his life changed completely. The development of his corporate life received a tremendous push. First and foremost, he had no longer to rush about the whole time in quest of food. His agricultural operations left him ample leisure, and he devoted this leisure to the improvement of his mode of living in all directions. This change of occupation made of him a more refined, skilful and intelligent being than he had been hitherto, but at the same time a life of greater ease made him a great deal softer than what he had been as a nomad in the wilderness. Still he had to defend his fields against the wild people (the prototypes of his former self) who came down from their hills and spoiled his fields whenever they got the chance. The cultivators had already joined together for the purpose of digging canals and putting up dykes in order to irrigate their fields. This was a necessary process in all these river valleys, but most so in Egypt. Now they combined for the purpose of fortifying their settlements and of training themselves in various ways to beat back the wild nomadic herds—described severally as giants and ogres and demons in the myths and legends of these old agricultural peoples. It is easy to understand that the new organisation of society was regional rather than tribal, based on the common

interests of the dwellers of a particular region. Within the limited compass of an article it is impossible to set forth the stages by which these early agricultural settlements coalesced to form in time large kingdoms and empires like Egypt and Assyria and Babylon. Nor can we go into the causes that produced only a cluster of city-states as in Greece, a number of little tribal kingdoms as in Arabia, a definite priestly dominion as in Tibet, states controlled by merchants as in Carthage and Venice. The Greek cities ultimately made room for the shortlived Macedonian empire which after Alexander's meteoric career of conquest broke up into several smaller kingdoms which in their turn dwindled into insignificance and vanished. Rome, the city of the seven hills, expanded into the vast military and administrative organisation of the Roman Empire, was the mistress of the world for several centuries and then crumbled to pieces before the onslaught of barbarians from the East. All these various states with their own particular forms of government were only stages in the evolution of man's political life. They were never meant by nature to survive and they did not survive. Each one of them left its own legacy to the whole race. On a careful study of the nations and states of today we can make out more or less clearly what each has inherited from, say Greece or Rome or Carthage. Yet in our quest of a perfect corporate life we cannot go back to any of these older forms. However great was the contribution of Athens in the regions of art or literature or philosophy, we cannot wish to go back to a form of group life, democratic though it may appear to be, where women and Helots had no voice in the affairs of the State and where school-masters were but slaves in status. The vast Empire of the Romans, great and gorgeous as it was, carried in itself its seeds of decay. It was never broad based. All culture, all life was focussed in Rome itself. The result was that the provinces and the provincial people could do nothing to save the empire once the rot set in at the centre, so much so that during the last fights with the barbarians Rome had no efficient troops to bring in from the provinces and was forced to enlist barbarians from the invading hordes for her defence. This, and the constant attempt to keep down the Plebians, constituted the weakness of the Romans. But there was one great quality that they had which we must not forget. They did not suffer from any obnoxious

superiority complex and freely bestowed the Roman citizenship on selected people in a subject country. Not only this; amongst the men who sat on the imperial throne there were, very few though they be, some Gauls and Iberians. Anyhow, Rome made a great and bold experiment in man's corporate life. It is worth careful study on our part, but it can never be repeated. It has served its turn in political evolution and is gone for good. The British imperialist claimed that his people had adopted Roman methods of expansion, but it is a very dubious claim. What is easier to substantiate is that the present-day colonising nations—British, French and Dutch—borrowed a great deal of their technique from the system of extension initiated and developed by the Phoenicians and Carthagenians—by means of establishing a net-work of trade centres. But it is obvious that in the modern environment neither the Roman nor the Carthaginian method would be of any use. Even the British system of colonial expansion that was so successful at one time rapidly lost favour till it was recognised at the commencement of this century, (especially after the lesson of the Boer War), that the only way of keeping the Empire intact was to make it a true commonwealth of nations. The British system has now, after giving Burma, India and Ceylon substantial freedom and recognising the sovereign status of Egypt, turned over a new leaf and struck the true path towards establishing a federation of many self-governing states, of diverse races, diverse faiths and diverse languages. France and Holland are still riding the high horse and asking for infinite trouble. The castigation they have had at the hands of Germany has apparently not been enough to chasten their thoughts and make them realise that Asia will no longer submit to the tutelage of Europe.

For clearing up our ideas it is necessary that we should examine the nature of such empires as the Egyptian and the Assyrian, and also give some thought to the form and character of the ancient Hindu Kingdoms, such as existed in India before the rise of Chandragupta's Empire. It is easy enough to turn up one's nose and summarily declare Egypt to be an absolute tyranny and the Pharaoh an oriental despot. But even a superficial student of ancient history knows that monarchy in Egypt or Assyria or old India had a sacrosanct character, the monarch being looked upon as a divine incarnation or, at least,

a symbol of divine power. He was closely associated with a priestly hierarchy and the due performance of a series of religious rites on which the prosperity of the state depended. That at a particular stage of human development, when the average subject was infra-rational, this type of government was eminently suitable and gave a tremendous push to the evolution of man's life, is easy enough to understand. It is equally easy to understand that the system would be useless and obsolete as soon as he passed from the conventional to the rational stage of development.

A few lines from Sri Aurobindo's "The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity" would give us clearly the ancient Indian view of organised group life in the pre-Mauryan Hindu state: "The spiritual mind of India regarded life as a manifestation of the self; the community was the body of the creator Brahma, the people was a life-body of Brahman in the Samashti, the collectivity, it was the collective Narayana, as the individual was Brahman in the Vyashti, the separate Jiva, the individual Narayana; the king was the living representation of the Divine and the other orders of the community the natural powers of the collective self, Prakritayah." Elsewhere the Master describes the old Indian state as "a complex of communal freedom and self-determination with a supreme co-ordinating authority". To call this supreme head of the state a despot would be irrational, for he himself was as much guided and restrained by Dharma as the people of the state and the smaller groups constituting the whole. In such a state accepted conventions, old customs and recognised institutions, all diverse aspects of Dharma, would acquire a character of sanctity. The whole system had for its basis the village community and the township; the former has rightly been called a village republic, while the latter can be described as a larger urban unit of self government with its guild organisations and metropolitan assemblies. As long as this system lasted in its purity there was no clash between the central state authority and communal freedom. It was the business of the King to preserve in the name of Dharma a perfect understanding between the two. The understanding was possible because of the synthetic turn of the Indian mind and life. The Hindu socio-political system, says the Master, "tends to fuse together in different ways the theocratic, the monarchic and aristocratic, the plutocratic

and democratic tendencies in a whole". This wonderful system decayed with the decay of the old Indian culture and civilisation and the outward need of creating large and powerful empires to stem the tide of foreign invasions. Still, in spite of all the vicissitudes of fortune that India has had to undergo in her long life, she "still lives and keeps the continuity of her inner mind and soul and spirit with the India of the ages". Nor has she ever completely lost her old spirit of assimilating and harmonising diverse elements which helped her to keep alive when so many other ancient peoples were crushed out of existence by the avalanche of barbaric invasions.

That is all that need be said here about the growth of political life in ancient India. The civilisation and culture of the Greeks and Romans were completely submerged by the heavy flood of savage invasions from the East. The Teuton, the Frank, the Goth, the Hun and so many other wild tribes rushed into Europe and established themselves in various portions of that continent. The Western Roman Empire ceased to exist, but the Eastern with its capital at Constantinople continued to function in a way and ruled over a very small portion of the Balkan peninsula till the capture of the Metropolis by the Turks in 1453. It did not however exercise any influence over the political life of the rest of Europe. From the sack of Rome to the fall of Constantinople, an interval of a thousand years, Europe passed through a period of ignorance and darkness, known to history as the Middle Ages. It is necessary for us to understand clearly the state of things during this epoch in order to be able to realise the full meaning and importance of the next period, ushered in by the Reformation and the Renaissance.

When the Franks, the Teutons and the other tribes settled down in different regions of Europe, they established small independent states, most of them bearing tribal names—such as France, Hungary, Anglia, Sussex, Jutland etc. Each of these states was governed by its chief, aided and advised by an assembly, not necessarily elected. In the course of time, they combined to form larger and still larger states which were ruled over by kings. These tribes worshipped their deities and had a crude system of religion with a rough ethical standard of their own. When they overran the Roman Empire, they did not imbibe Roman culture; nor did they take to the religion

of the Romans. In fact, Rome had very little religion herself. The upper classes affected various kinds of philosophy, while the common people were satisfied with pageants and ceremonials of a showy and complicated kind. None of these things appealed to the primitive-minded barbarian. On the other hand, the simple faith of the early Christian attracted him powerfully. The Church which was already a well-organised institution ruled over by the Pope took full advantage of this attraction. Large numbers of these barbarians were converted to the new religion and eagerly submitted to the guidance of the Holy Father, even in lay matters. Of course, all this took time but ultimately by advice and discipline and coaxing and even pampering the Church acquired a great hold over these wild people and lured them into a civilised way of life. The great ideal of the time was a united Christendom, of which the Pope would be the spiritual head and a duly anointed Emperor, the sword-arm. To achieve this ideal, the defunct Roman Empire was revived under the name of the Holy Roman Empire, and Charlemagne, the Frankish King, was consecrated as Emperor by the Pope. Europe at this time was covered over by a number of small states, counties, duchies and principalities—all owing allegiance to the papacy. The Eastern Roman Empire shrunk into a small kingdom, and the semi-oriental tract of country which later on became the Russian Empire, were throughout this period outside the current of European life, social, political or cultural, which was all controlled by the Pope. In the eleventh century William, duke of Normandy, conquered England with the blessings of the Pope. Early in the thirteenth century King John of England granted the Magna Carta to the barons of that country, practically at the dictation of the papal legate. Still, we can say that independent nation states were in the course of formation, at least in France and England. Of course every state was, during this period feudal in its nature. The King was the suzerain from whom the barons as vassals held land on condition of rendering military service. The tenants likewise held land from this overlord, the barons, and turned out to fight for him whenever called upon to do so. The lowest stratum was that of the landless serf who had no rights whatsoever. Literacy was confined more or less, to the Clergy, while fighting was the monopoly of the Knight. A third class was, however, already rising into a

position of affluence and importance. This class consisted of craftsmen and merchants, often organised into guilds, who lived and carried on their business in cities. They occupied a position between the baron on the one side and the peasant on the other, and increased their influence by playing class against class. When the Crusades started they got a further chance of enhancing their importance. Princes and noblemen, all over Europe, were agog with excitement and wanted to rush off to Palestine and acquire glory by fighting for the faith. But in order to equip themselves and their retainers, considerable sums of money were required, and they borrowed freely from the rich guildsmen. The latter did not mind lending money as it gave them a hold over these rather stupid fighting men, who were not only shortsighted but utterly lacking in thrift. When they returned from Palestine, they were penniless and had no means of repaying the loans that they had incurred. The merchants were very clever people; they willingly cancelled the debts, wholly or partly, and acquired in lieu thereof valuable political rights, setting up municipal governments in various cities and levying their own civic guards. This was a side-line along which human group life manifested itself. In course of time, most of the free cities merged themselves in the new nation-states, of which we shall speak later on. But right up to the end of the last century, Hamburg, Bremen, Lubeck, important centres of trade, held their own as free cities in the German Empire. Coming back to the Middle Ages, we can say definitely that there was a constant struggle for power between the King and his feudal nobility all over Europe. Originally the King was looked upon as the chief amongst the barons, *primus in pares*, but gradually he claimed to be not only the leader of his people but also the owner of all the land in the country. In England, for instance, he was at first called the King of the English, but gradually he was recognised as the King of England. The barons did not take all this lying down; whenever the King was weak, or got into trouble they wrested certain privileges and rights from him. The best example of this was the granting of the Great Charter by John, King of England. At that time the common people did not count. Yet, to please them, the barons got a clause inserted in the Charter embodying the principle of "no taxation without representation"; but, as soon as it ceased to be necessary, the clause was dropped, for we find no mention of it

in the Confirmation of the Charter granted by John's son only a few years later. John did not grant the Magna Carta out of the largeness of his heart. It was forced from him by his vassals who were backed by the papal legate (as we have already said) and by the French King. Between the Church and the State, too, there was a never-ending struggle in these medieval kingdoms, and the King when he was firmly seated on the throne, resented any interference by the Pope or by his representatives. The murder of Becket, was, no doubt, an extreme case, but the tussle was there always. There is no room in this essay to dilate any further on the condition of things in a medieval state. The whole corporate life of the people was organised on the basis of feudalism and the special privileges claimed by the Church. Feudalism was as much an essential part of these states, as caste was in the old Hindu Kingdom. Here, there is an important political principle involved. Is it necessary that there should be no smaller groups between the individual and the largest group (the nation) to which he owes allegiance? Obviously it is not necessary today. The largest organisation of group life that we have is the nation-state. Between the individual and this state there are very many smaller group units to which he owes some allegiance. But there is no longer any clash. A man can obey quite easily the general laws of his country, the laws enacted by his province, the regulations of his city corporation, and the rules imposed on him by his university without feeling any incongruity. But in the Middle Ages this divided allegiance was indeed a very serious thing. A man banned by the Church was ennobled by the State, or vice versa. A man ostracised for misconduct by his castemen received a gift of land from the King—and so on. A cleric of France was, ordinarily, very much closer to an English cleric than he was to the baron or peasant of his own country. An English Knight looked upon a French Knight as a brother, but he considered a yeoman of England as something of an alien. Man's corporate life has developed through the smaller groups to the nation group; the family, the clan, the tribe, the caste, each has played its part. These smaller groups have, Sri Aurobindo says, sometimes facilitated and sometimes thwarted the formation of larger groups. Backward and forward, the pendulum has swung, but, on the whole, man has progressed towards his ultimate goal. We have already



said that in the Middle Ages there was a monopoly of learning and a monopoly of soldiering: Towards the end, however, of this epoch both these monopolies received a rude shaking. The printing press dealt a severe blow to the one and the newly invented gunpowder to the other. In the reforming movements initiated by Wycliffe in England and by John Hus in Bohemia we see signs of a dawning rationalism and self-assertion in the common people. The peasant revolt in England, associated closely with the rise of Lollardism, was a protest against the domination of the nobility. These are all indications that, even before the open intellectual and spiritual revolts of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, conventions and privileges as the bases of society had begun to be questioned and challenged. Also towards the end of the fifteenth century we find definitely that a spirit of discovery had awakened in the European mind. The voyages of Columbus, John Cabot, Amerigo and Vasco De Gama, were but its outward manifestation. The slogans "Back to Aristotle" and "Back to the Bible" indicated that man was getting ready to question all that he had been taught to believe. Once the intellect was awake, it could not but attack all vested interests and special privileges. This is precisely what happened. Feudalism was doomed. Two typical Kings of this period, Henry VII of England and Louis XI of France, played a prominent part in depriving their great vassals of all political importance by raising standing armies and by employing commoners, even men of mean extraction like the famous Olivier le Diable, as their ministers and advisers. In England this new policy succeeded very well, because the long drawn Wars of the Roses had weakened the barons as a class considerably. In France it took a little longer time; first Richlieu and then Mazarin, each in his own way, set themselves so persistently to crush the turbulent nobility and they succeeded so well, that Louis XIV could with reason say, "The State! I am the State". Anyhow, the new kind of state, with a King no longer dependent on the nobility, seeking active support of the common people, served by a standing army and defying the church if it was troublesome, came into existence. Luther gave an effective shaking to the infallibility of the Pope and even the Catholics had to bolster up their faith by reasoning and to maintain their power and influence by purely secular, even violent, methods. For one whole

century, the struggle between the Catholics and the Protestants over a great part of Europe was but a tussle between the Imperial House of Hapsburg and the princes of the Empire who sought to be independent kings. In France, the party that was responsible for the long drawn religious struggle was the League which was hand in glove with the Hapsburgs and the papacy. The Holy Roman Empire, that we have already mentioned, was in the melting-pot. It had to go in order to facilitate Dame Nature's experiments with the new organisation of group life, the nation-state.

But what about democracy? Was there a democratic constitution at work, anywhere in Europe, at this time? We can answer the question straight off in the negative. In no country in Europe was there any vestige of government by the people. Venice, while it lasted, had not a King, it is true, but it was a close oligarchy controlled entirely by big merchants in their own interest. Some of the important modern states had not evolved as yet. Germany and Italy were both clusters of a number of sovereign states. Russia had not yet emerged as a modern civilised country. Later on, the Romanoff Czars began to claim the headship of the Eastern or Greek church and adopted the Roman Imperial Eagle as the symbol of their authority. Austria, which during the Crusades was only an archduchy became an immensely important country in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, when the Hapsburg Emperor Charles V claimed to be the overlord of half the continent of Europe. The only country which had at this time, an elected house of representatives was England. It had inherited from early times a tradition of independence, but it became absolutely subservient to the Crown in the Tudor period. Moreover, the franchise was such, the mode of election was such that the lower house was entirely under the thumb of the house of peers. Students of history know how, during the Stuart period, this parliament challenged the power of the Crown, how it fought the King in the open field, how it beheaded one King and drove out another before it became the real repository of power in the country. England is rightly called the mother of parliament, and its gift was the English institution of constitutional monarchy which came into vogue all over Europe after the fall of Napoleon. But before this the whole of Europe had received a tremendous shaking when the

people of France, after killing their King and queen and innumerable aristocrats and priests, had proclaimed in a triumphant voice the creed of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The common people all over Europe were moved deeply by this declaration. Kings and nobles everywhere quaked in their shoes for fear that their own tenantry would follow in the footsteps of their brethren in France. They followed a twofold policy. They combined to crush the revolutionary government of France and at the same time tried to appease the people as best they could. So much so, that in England the conservative party itself set about extending the franchise in order to bring on the voters' list, classes that had hitherto been unrecognised. Pitt's idea was clearly to pacify the working classes in time and avoid a revolution. The idea worked all right in England, and step by step, the people achieved substantial freedom in a few decades. We see the indication of that achievement in the thumping victory gained by the Labour Party, a party that has justified its accession to power by giving its countenance to various progressive measures which have enhanced England's prestige in the eyes of the Asiatic peoples. We have referred above to the declaration of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity by the French people. It did not however bear fruit even in France, for after a wild orgy of bloodshed for a decade the people allowed all power to pass into the hands of Napoleon, who got himself crowned as Emperor by the Pope, and, like the Hapsburgs and the Romanoffs, adopted the Roman Eagle as the symbol of sovereignty. It was, in appearance, a revival of the old Holy Roman Empire, but nothing more than a mere appearance. For man in Europe had outgrown the age of conventions and he was not going to accept any holy yoke. Had not revolutionary France formally installed the Goddess of Reason! But, as Sri Aurobindo has warned us again and again, the rational mind of man is by no means a safe guide; if the vital in man is persistent, the mind caves in, veers round and ends by being an advocate for the too forceful vitality. Man may not be willing to bend himself, again, before the old gods, but he has in his blindness, conjured up such powerful devils, that his whole life is in jeopardy today. More of this anon.

Napoleon's subjugation of the greater part of Europe gave a tremendous impetus to the spirit of nationalism which appeared to

man to be consistent with his worship of reason. It is a well-known fact that the establishment of nation-states in Germany and Italy, half a century later, was the direct result of the enslavement of these two nations by Napoleon. The powerful secret societies, Tugendbund in Germany and Carbonari and Giovanni Italia in Italy, kept alive the flame of ardent patriotism in the two countries. This brings us to the consolidation of nation states (mostly of the constitutional monarchy type) over the greater part of Europe. In fact, the whole of Europe except the two autocratic countries Russia and Turkey (and France, unable to make up her mind about any form of government—now a kingdom, now an empire and now a republic, according to her passing whim), played with this new form of political life. Whatever may be said about the abstract value in practical politics of any particular form of government that has been essayed in recent years, one thing is certain—democracy has made its mark as an indispensable political method for mankind. No government can dispense with an elected assembly in the future. Hitler and Mussolini, Lenin and Stalin, even the Grey Wolf of Turkey, all have found it necessary to have an assembly, even as a plaything. There is, however, one important fact we have got to remember. From the point of view of evolution, the form of government at any particular time is but of passing interest, it is the goal alone that is of importance. The Egyptian, the Hindu, the Greek, the Roman, the Persian, the Chinese and so many other ancient peoples each developed its own mode of social and political life in consonance with its genius and with reference to its environment. The medieval European evolved a feudal society and feudal state. The very next period brought into existence, a more or less, absolute monarchy. Then, with the awakening of political consciousness in the common people the King agreed to be guided, more and more, by an elected national assembly. So far so good. Liberty of the people was steadily on the increase. But fraternity, equality, so cherished by the French Revolution, were as far from realisation as ever. We have seen how, in the prehistoric period, man abandoned his hunting life in favour of the life of a settled agriculturist and how this change of occupation brought about a great change in his social, cultural and political life. Now in the nineteenth century there occurred another epoch-making change in

man's occupation. This was brought about principally by the invention of the steam engine. Various kinds of factories worked by steam power made their appearance everywhere—more so where coal and iron were abundant. In England all this was very apparent, and every day the agricultural countries of the South dwindled in importance and the manufacturing and mining centres of the North gained in power and influence. A new class arose in the country,—industrial and mining magnates,—who rapidly amassed wealth and by sheer weight of money began to control everything in the country. By this time the two top castes, the Cleric and the Knight (corresponding to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas of India), had become eliminated in most countries in Europe. They did not count any longer in the new scramble for power in the state. With the rise of industrialisation the struggle resolved itself into a straight fight between Capital and Labour, (corresponding to the Vaisya and Sudra castes of Hindu society). It was more and more apparent every day that democracy was becoming a plaything in the hands of the wealthy capitalist, the philistine of the nineteenth century, who, not satisfied with the power he wielded in the sphere of commerce and politics, sought to control every activity of the nation—art and science and literature and even religion. This class so distinguished itself by its utter disregard for the interests of the other classes, that by the commencement of the present century people had lost all faith in the sham democratic constitutions under which they lived. The world was ripe for bold experiments in new forms of government and seemed disposed to appeal to force, if necessary. Across the Atlantic a new nation, an offshoot of the old British empire was daily growing in wealth and power. It had evolved a federal constitution based on democratic principles, but curiously enough, it was able to reconcile its democracy with an industrialisation that knew no restraint, with a colour prejudice that ran even to the lynching of Negroes, with the creation of gigantic trusts and their gangster methods. Obviously this was no improvement on the British way of organised social and political life, imperfect though it was.

England, France, and Holland had acquired vast colonial possessions in Asia and Africa, which were ruled entirely in their own economic and political interest though they were not above characterising

their colonial empires as "Divine dispensation" or "White man's burden". Divine dispensation, certainly, because, as Sri Aurobindo points out, Nature does bring about foreign domination when a people persistently neglect to do what they should do for developing their political life. But misdeeds committed out in the wilderness are apt to cause terrific reactions in the mother country. A nation cannot persistently cultivate heartlessness in its African possessions and yet continue to be kind and patient at home. And reactions come sometimes in a very peculiar way; they look almost like retribution. After the first Great War it was said by many people that the atrocities committed by the Germans in Belgium were but the indirect result of the inhuman treatment meted out by the Belgians to the natives of Congo. It is no use multiplying such instances. But it is obvious that the creation of nation-states in Europe had not eradicated man's brutal instincts. Things had to happen to drag out into the open his incipient brutality. We are not concerned here with the ethical aspect of things. There are no ethical laws that govern the conduct of nations towards one another—at least none that are accepted by any nation. The conduct of one man towards another, or of one sub-group towards another, in a state is regulated by effective regulations, the breach whereof is punished by the sovereign. But where a nation has been guilty of unfair or inhuman conduct towards another nation who can punish it? The guilty nation itself will in all probability call it a patriotic act. Once, we remember, Germany blew a whole recalcitrant village in East Africa to dust and recommended such decisive action to other colonial powers. There are so many ways of doing what we call the wrong thing. Was the action of the Germans any worse than starving a native village, slowly and deliberately to death? Anyhow, the incipient brutality of the Prussian Junker had to be brought out in the open before it could be scotched for good. The power-lust of the Nazi, the Fascist and their Jap ally had to let itself loose, to make it clear to the world that there was something radically wrong in group egoism even when it called itself patriotism. There is no sanctity about a nation-state, as such. It is only a half-way house on the strenuous path leading to the ultimate goal of human unity. The nation idea and the state idea do not always coincide but that is

a question into which we have no room to enter. We can take it that, generally speaking, a nation is really composed of many races but this fact is kept in the background, a fiction of racial unity set up and on the basis of geographical and historical association along with "common interest, community of language, community of culture and all these in unison", a nationhood is founded. We have said already that from the beginning an individual had two interests to serve, his own individual interests and those of the group to which he belonged. This group, originally the family, has expanded by stages to the nation which is, so far, the largest unit of group life. That it cannot and will not stop here is obvious. We have heard of so many leagues and unions in history that it seems natural for nations to combine for a common purpose, for achieving a common object. But so far, such combinations have been temporary except where states have entered into a permanent agreement and established a federal government. Such a federation, whether it be of the Germanic or the American form, may endure if there is a strong vital necessity for it. But the process is inapplicable on a world-wide basis. A world state can never be brought about either by intellectual or by sentimental reasons. The Holy Roman Empire of the Christians and the Caliphate of the Mussalmans are obsolete institutions that cannot be revived under modern conditions. A fiery religious zeal such as sustains a Crusade or a Jihad is not the sort of foundation on which a world state can be built up. Nor can the world-wide empire of the Roman type be established by Roman methods which would endure for any length of time. Today a rich and powerful nation may temporarily be in possession of a terrific destructive weapon which for the time being would tend to make it invincible in warfare. But for how long? That weapon cannot remain a close secret for any length of time; its principles can be rediscovered by another people or a still more potent weapon invented. When that happens, all are on the same level again. The new empire which flourished for a time by the strength of the new weapon will share the fate of so many other empires of old. It is bound to break up into many fragments and ultimately disappear. But, as we have noticed before, each attempt at unification of smaller units has left behind it a residue of experience which makes a future attempt easier.

The idea of human unity is a familiar one today, though cynics still scoff at it as something impracticable—too good to be true! But there is a general agreement that all nations should get together and devise some way of preventing a repetition of the two disastrous world-wars that we have been through. No one is shameless enough today to push forward the slogan of “might is right”. An international organisation which would try and settle disputes that arise between nation and nation is generally declared to be desirable. With this end in view, the League of Nations was established after the first World War. Why and how that august body failed to do any real good is now a matter of common knowledge. Sri Aurobindo wrote about the League at that time without any enthusiasm. The opportunist element prevailed over the idealistic. After the second great war, we have now the U.N.O. It may have slightly better luck than its predecessor. But we are afraid, man has a long way to go yet to achieve on the international level, even that unity which he has achieved on the national. As a matter of fact, the problem of human unity can never be solved today on a vital and physical foundation. Up till now, the political arrangement of the world has rested almost wholly on this basis. So it is natural that attempts at an international understanding would also proceed along the same lines—i.e. by means of conferences, discussions, compromises and treaties. But superficial remedies are not likely to cure our present ills. When the nation state came into existence, it sought to put an end to the aggressive self-assertion and centrifugal tendencies of individuals and smaller groups composing the nation. The attempt has been very largely successful because it provided its people with a powerful religion of nationalism. This religion has seldom been critical and intellectual; it has been largely sentimental, and sometimes even spiritual in its fervour. A religion of humanity has now appeared, but so far, it is principally based on the intellect, and this is not enough. Also, as the Master says, “in order to accomplish all its future this idea and religion of humanity has to make itself more explicit, insistent and imperative”. Otherwise it may touch the few, but will never become the rule of life. To be the real thing it must be freed from all egoism—the egoism of the individual, of the class and of the nation. This religion must recreate society in the image of Liberté,



Egalité, Fraternité, to borrow the slogan of the French Revolution. A certain amount of liberty has been achieved in states with a democratic constitution, but it is not the liberty which is the eternal quality of the soul, it is an outward and mechanical freedom. Likewise the equality which all forms of Collectivism have sought to establish is not the equality of the soul but an entirely external equality, not spontaneous, but mechanical in its character. Brotherhood has not been considered essential and all that a collective state has aimed at is mutual help in an equal association. But true freedom, equality and brotherhood cannot be, as Sri Aurobindo says, "achieved by the external machinery of society by man as long as he lives only in the individual and communal ego". Brotherhood is something that is contrary to the very nature of ego. It exists only in the soul, and by the soul, it can exist by nothing else. It is thus clear that man's egoism must go before he can achieve, in a true sense, liberty, equality and fraternity,—for these three things are the very nature of the soul. In order to eliminate the ego-sense, in order to realise the soul, it is necessary to bring the supramental light down into our terrestrial life, and this can only be done by the effort of the individual striving to rise to supramental consciousness. As man is today, it is the individual who must climb up to the sunlit peak as a pioneer; it is he who must realise there the glory of a harmonious diversity in oneness. Of the ultimate descent of supramental light and power into our life on earth, Sri Aurobindo says, "But if a collectivity or group could be formed of those who have reached the supramental perfection, there indeed some divine creation could take shape; a world of supramental light could be created here amidst the receding darkness of this terrestrial ignorance".

In the meantime man must push forward and go on widening the horizon of his political consciousness vitally, mentally and rationally, as best he can. It is necessary for us to take a cursory view of what he has done in the last hundred years. We have already referred to the advent of industrialism and the consequent change in man's political life. We have mentioned how a new class of capitalists arose and collared all power and influence in the state. The corresponding class of workers who were attaining a certain standard of political consciousness were no longer prepared to submit to a

process of exploitation by the capitalist. They were fed up with a sham democracy which was practically founded on inequality, and apparently did not mind parting with individual freedom if they could thereby attain equality with the hated class of capitalists. This is where socialism comes in, but we must remember that it is a socialism which is bound to bear the impress of the old democratic ideas that had preceded it. The combination of individual freedom with strictly collectivist ideas cannot but bring about a certain amount of confusion and this is precisely what has happened. "Several fallacies inconsistent with the real facts of human life" have appeared that threaten to bring considerable discredit on the idea of collectivist democracy and which may bring about its overthrow in the near future, just as individual democracy was discredited and set aside previously. Sri Aurobindo has indicated a third line of human thought, —Anarchism, which we shall examine very briefly at a later stage. Before that let us consider the collectivist idea which is at first sight immensely attractive and which has fascinated such a large part of humanity. "Equality social and political enforced through a perfect and careful order by a State which is the organised will of the whole community" sounds flawless. But when the individual will has been crushed out of existence by a diabolically powerful engine, has the phrase "organised will of the whole community" any meaning! Such will may be designedly called the mandate of the people but as a matter of fact it will only be the mandate of an individual dictator or an all-powerful faction. The State will develop into a powerful engine under the control of this dictator, with which he will pulverise all individual initiative and action. Hitler openly boasted that the individual German had never been so happy as he was under the Nazi regime. It is likewise the boast of the Bolshevik dictator that the individual Russian is not only happier than ever before, but more courageous, more determined, more patriotic. It is difficult to believe all this talk about the happiness and courage and patriotism of an unthinking and lifeless unit in a State which has deprived that unit of all that naturally belonged to it. The human unit has undoubtedly been pushed back into an infra-rational stage by the injection of potent drugs. To say that the individual is a consenting party to this process is as reasonable as saying that a tiger prefers performing

in a circus cage to roaming freely in his native haunts, simply because his life is regulated for him, his food is procured for him and he is protected from hunters by the generous circus manager. There is one other point we would lay before the reader. It is extremely doubtful whether any political leader of an autocratic type is ever loyal to any political creed. He is guided almost always by opportunism. Whatever makes the position and prestige of himself or his group safe, he does and then seeks to justify it by his creed. We have seen quite a lot of instances of this in recent years. It is now a matter of common knowledge that for some time before the outbreak of the second World War, England and France were each secretly trying to come to an understanding with Hitler behind the back of the other. In 1935 or thereabouts a certain party in England got Major Yeats-Browne to write a long article in the British press boosting Hitler's sincere friendship for England. After the war broke out, the shameless way in which the German and the British representative at Moscow went on soft-soaping Molotov certainly showed that neither the political creed of England nor that of Germany prevented a close alliance with a Bolshevik State. It is then all talk, mere talk when a State professes a particular creed. A democratic country would as complacently join the Nazi in destroying Bolshevism, as it would do the opposite thing, viz. join the Bolshevik to destroy Nazism. A mystery that is still unsolved is, at whose invitation did Hitler's emissary Hesse, fly across to England? Surely, it is too much to ask us to believe that he visited England without any invitation! It is unnecessary to multiply instances. Egoism is a terrible thing both in individuals and in groups.

Sri Aurobindo has said that the political leader is not the best mind in a nation, but somehow, he manages to make himself heard and obeyed. Why should the individual hand over his property, his well-being, his education, even his volition to a State manipulated by such a leader? It is too high a price to pay for equality. An infra-rational being may submit to this complete regimentation of his life by the state machinery. For a few decades, say, a couple of generations, this kind of arrangement may last, but ultimately man's reason is bound to revolt. He will then look for some other type of group life which would give him equality and allow him individually to shape his life and fulfil it in his own way. This type "disowns the

State idea and declares for liberty and equality based upon free brotherhood in a free community, the ideal both of intellectual and of spiritual Anarchism". Anarchistic thought is already developing. It will develop further as the pressure of the state on the individual increases. But to be of any practical use, it has to have a sure form. The free equality that is aimed at must be based on love and brotherhood and this love and brotherhood must proceed not by instinct or reason or even heart, but by the soul. "For so only", says the Master, "can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in each man found itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in humanity". Spiritual anarchism comes nearer to the real solution of the problem of man's life than intellectual anarchism. But it must give up its present tendency of seeking to suppress and destroy the vital being. Nor is it any good, it has to understand, to rant against civilisation because it has brought a few bad things along with much that is good and great. A bare hard existence denuded of all that is refined and beautiful would not necessarily be spiritual. When spiritual anarchism has realised that it must not try to slay the vitality by denying life, that it must learn to see the divine everywhere in life, it would then be in a position to take man up to that high level whence he will be able to climb up, with ease, to the sun-lit summit of supramental consciousness. "The spiritual aim", says the Master, "will seek to fulfil itself by a fullness of life and man's being in the individual and the race". It is towards this high achievement that man has been growing through the ideal, the typical, the conventional and the rational stages of his development. It is for this that he has laboured through the various stages of his group life—the family, the clan, the tribe, the nation and the still larger units of collective existence. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in God is his goal. Always God first, otherwise these can have no real meaning or permanence.

C. C. DUTT

## “Rebirth” in Sri Aurobindo’s Vision

*A summary of Part 1, “The Doctrine of Rebirth”, which appeared in the last issue (Fourth Number).*

THE doctrine of rebirth has come down to us through three important sources — through Vedantism and Buddhism in the East, and in the West through Pythagoreanism followed by Platonism and Neo-Platonism. According to Herodotus, the Egyptians also taught it, but some scholars now maintain that it was not taught by the early Egyptians, but was later assimilated into their teachings.

In Greece it was taught by Pythagoras and Plato, and by the Orphic and Eleusinian cults. Platonism found its greatest exponent in the third century mystic of Alexandria, Plotinus. He too believed in rebirth. His mysticism infiltrated directly and through Dionysius the Areopagite, Proclus and others into the teaching of most of the later mystics. Between Plato and Plotinus we have another famous figure, Philo Judaeus. He too declared his belief in this doctrine.

In Rome, Cicero, Ovid and Virgil, among others, believed in the immortality of the soul and rebirth.

Pythagoreanism also influenced the teaching of the Celtic Druids of Gaul. Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism penetrated into the Kabbalah also.

Christianity does not preach rebirth but according to many thinkers the idea of rebirth is implicit in Christ’s remark about John the Baptist being Elias.

Many great thinkers, which include Bruno, Schopenhauer, Leibnitz, Fichte, Emerson, Thoreau, have professed a belief in it, especially those influenced by Platonism, Vedantism and Buddhism.

When we turn to the East, especially India, we find that both Vedantism and Buddhism supported rebirth.

Coming to this belief itself, we find that altogether there are five important factors that have contributed to it. The first is the psychological factor. Man is not only afraid of death, but he also clings tenaciously to the outer mental, nervous, physical personality that he calls “I” and dreads

its dissolution. He wants the survival of this exterior personality life after life. This makes him advance a number of plausible arguments to convince himself that he will be born again and again.

The second and third factors are the hedonistic and the moral. It is declared by some of the religious teachers that rebirth is both a justification and an explanation of the evil and suffering to which mankind is subjected. If a man knows that the suffering he has to bear in this world is the result of wrongs done by him in past lives he can bear them with courage and equanimity, and also hope that the good he does in this life will contribute towards making him happy and prosperous in the next. We see behind this reasoning the demand of the moral mind for a right distribution of rewards and punishments according to its own ideas of justice and the hedonistic demand of the vital-physical nature craving for happiness and prosperity.

In India the doctrine of “Rebirth and Karma” has been expounded in greater detail than anywhere else. It has been given an ethical as well as a metaphysico-spiritual significance but, owing to the limited and partial nature of the spiritual realisations that form the bed-rock of its many philosophical and yogic systems, the truth behind rebirth has not been accurately seized and understood in all its implications. Only a moral significance cannot be attached to Karma for it is part of the vast machinery of Nature which is non-ethical. That does not mean that Nature is unethical and unjust; there is justice in this world but it is a cosmic justice, the workings of which stand justified in a supra-intellectual spiritual knowledge, in a cosmic vision which sees the truth behind the action of Universal Nature. It is not a human justice fashioned after the moral notions of the limited human mind.

The fourth factor is the soul’s intuition. This intuition tells man that all is not over at death, that the dissolution of the body does not necessarily imply the annihilation of the whole being. This intuition is behind his efforts to construct a philosophical theory that will justify rebirth.

The fifth factor is metaphysico-spiritual. Man has to answer the questions, “What happens to a person when he dies; does the destruction of the body imply the extinction of the entire personality, or does some part of his being, the soul, survive death? If there is such a soul, does it return to earth and inhabit a mortal frame again? If it does, what is it that obliges it to do so; and to what regions does it travel between death and the next birth?” In answering these questions all the systems of philosophy that teach rebirth do not attach to it the same metaphysical significance.

Buddhism admits rebirth but denies the existence either of a Supreme Self or Spirit, or an individual entity called the soul. It answers the riddle of the universe by saying that all that we call existence is a continuous flowing

stream of sanskaras—mental, nervous and physical ideas, memories, impressions and sensations. It is not the soul that incarnates but it is Karma that creates an ever-changing form which calls itself “I”, having an illusion of separateness. This illusion is caused by the closely related continuity of the stream of sanskaras. The goal of life is to dissolve this changing formation which calls itself “I” and thereby withdraw into Nirvana. We are not told why there should be such a mechanical chain of Karma from which we have to escape into Nirvana, nor are we told how it got created.

If we consider the solution given by the Illusionists, the Advaita Mayavadists, we find that as far as rebirth is concerned their position is almost the same. They assert that the Ultimate Reality is an Impersonal Absolute beyond Time, Space and Causality, featureless, relationless, transcending the dualities and without beginning and end. The world is a creation of Maya, is itself Maya, an Illusion. It seems real as long as one is in the bondage of Maya, but if one withdraws from it and attains liberation, it no longer seems real; even this release from Maya is an Illusion. The reality of the individual soul is not admitted; the apparent individuality of a being is a fiction created by the action of Maya.

In Buddhism, we have Nirvana and the superimposition of a chain of Karma; in the philosophy of the Illusionists, we have an Absolute with the action of Maya proceeding from it, but having no true relation with it.

The Advaita Vedantists of the older school give a better explanation of the cosmic manifestation. They admit the existence of a Self who though Immutable and Eternal in His ultimate status puts forth in the vastness of His own being a self-manifestation in Time, takes on name and form and temporarily becomes the individual being. This individual being is born again and again owing to his desire for and attachment to things of this temporal world. When he ceases to identify himself with them and dissolves his pseudo-individuality by withdrawing into his true Being he realises that he is the Immutable and Eternal Self who transcends all manifestation and yet contains and supports it in His own Being.

If the ultimate purpose of life is to withdraw from the world of ignorance and desire, rebirth cannot have an absolute necessity; for, the Eternal Self can project Himself indefinitely as the cosmic manifestation and take on name and form endlessly without taking recourse to a machinery of rebirth. If there is rebirth it must have a metaphysical significance and a necessity in the cosmic action, because the incarnating soul is not a separate entity existing by itself but is connected with the cosmos. So, escape or withdrawal cannot be the ultimate goal which an incessantly incarnating being has to attain; if it is the goal, then rebirth cannot have an absolute justification,

The Sankhya philosophy also does not help us, because it too, teaches that the purpose of life is to withdraw from the world-manifestation.

The Vaishnava Lilavadists declare that the world is Lila, a play of the Supreme Divine Person who for sheer delight projects Himself as the Cosmos of myriad worlds and contains it in the infinite expanse of His own being. Though the Vaishnava School unveils a great truth of the Spirit, this truth is incomplete. Sri Aurobindo says, “There is more here in the world than a play of secret delight, there is knowledge, there is power, there is a will and a mighty labour. Rebirth so looked at becomes too much of a divine caprice with no object but its playing and ours is too great and strenuous a world to be so accounted for.” It is the meaning behind this mighty labour that has to be understood if the mystery of rebirth is to be unravelled.

The Tantra gives a clue to the solution of the world-riddle, but only a clue, for here too the stress is on the final escape into Superconscience.

If the world was created or manifested only to be escaped from, rebirth cannot have a necessity or ultimate value. The Self was always there from years sempiternal, there was no need of this labouring world with its karmic chain and rebirth, if the ultimate object of manifesting them was only to deny them.

The world is a manifestation of the Supreme Reality. That being so, it must be a real manifestation and not a fiction or an illusion. Since this manifestation is real and proceeds from an All-Knowing Intelligence, it must have a meaning in it and, if it has a meaning, that meaning can be known through spiritual experience. If all the schools of philosophy and Yoga have failed to explain it, it is because they have not behind their systems an all-embracing and all-comprehending realisation in which the truth behind both the Divine Being and His cosmic manifestation, the world of Becoming, is revealed. These systems have no doubt enunciated great spiritual truths, but each such truth has behind it a spiritual realisation that is limited to only one aspect of the Supreme Reality. To understand the meaning of rebirth the nature of this Reality will have to be known in all its integrality and complexity, and the true relation between God, Universe and man, because each individual, though he is distinct from others, is yet not an isolated entity having a separate existence which is unconnected with the world-play; his birth, life, death and rebirth are a part of the cosmic movement which again owes its existence to and proceeds from the Transcendent Reality.

Now, the integrality of the One Reality can only be known in a spiritual vision which apprehends the truth behind all Its aspects and poises—the Immutable One and the mutable Many, Being and Becoming, the Static and the Dynamic, the Impersonal Absolute and the Supreme Divine Person.



These various aspects may seem irreconcilable opposites to the limited human intelligence but, in a unified Truth-realisation, they are seen as statuses of the One Reality. This is the realisation which Sri Aurobindo calls the Supramental Truth-Consciousness. In this Consciousness, Knowledge is not ideative, that is, it does not depend upon a play of ideas nor is it mental-spiritual in which truths of the Spirit are reflected in the mirror of the silent mind, but it is a Supramental Knowledge in which Consciousness is lit up by Its own inherent Light and knows and reveals to Itself Its own Divine nature in all Its totality.

The realisation of this Truth alone can give an answer to the riddle of this world and reveal the nature of God, Universe and man, the relation between the three, and consequently the truth of rebirth.

This being the realisation of Sri Aurobindo, we shall next examine what place rebirth has in his spiritual vision or rather in his Supramental Truth-vision, for this is the only way we shall be able to rise beyond “standpoints” and know what the truth is.

## PART II

### THE SIGNIFICANCE AND JUSTIFICATION OF REBIRTH

**I**N Sri Aurobindo’s metaphysical *summa*, which is based on this Truth-vision, the Ultimate Reality is a Divine Self who to the ascending human consciousness is revealed as an Impersonal “That” or a Supreme “He” but who exceeds both these aspects of Impersonality and Personality. This Divine Personality must not be mistaken for the Personal God of the Scriptures, a glorified image of man himself, nor for a personal Deity to whom worship is offered. No doubt the Divine Being can reveal Himself to an aspiring devotee in a particular form, but He is not limited by any form He may take to manifest Himself. In His real status He is not only the Lord of the universe but is Himself the universe, and bases and supports it in the vastness of His own being and pervades all that exists as the Cosmic Spirit. It is also He who dwells in the inmost heart of every mortal, the Light and the Guide within, the Master of his being. Though He is both

the Universal Self and the indwelling Divine Person, He is yet not restricted to these two statuses, for He is beyond all cosmic manifestation and is the Source of all that exists. He is all existence and is more than all we can ever comprehend as existence. Sri Aurobindo calls these three fundamental statuses of the One Divine, the Transcendent, the Universal and the Individual. Each status does not exclude the other two, but is always identified with them. The Universal is the Transcendent projecting Himself and creating an extension of Himself in infinite space and time; and the Individual is the same reality secretly supporting the creation of individual beings as the Divine Person who yet knows Himself as the Transcendent Supreme as well as the Universal Self.<sup>1</sup>

The pure state of the Divine Reality is Sachchidananda (Existence: Consciousness-Force: Bliss). If the aspiring human being experiences on the “spiritual mind” level the Divine Self as “That”<sup>2</sup> to it Sachchidananda will appear as an Impersonal state, and if it experiences the Divine Self as “He”, Sachchidananda will appear to it as an All-Existent, an Omnipotent Conscient Being, an Enjoyer of Bliss. So, we may state that the Ultimate Reality, the Supreme is known to the human consciousness in a spiritual realisation as an Impersonal-Personal Divine Self who is Sachchidananda. The Truth-awareness and Truth-force of Sachchidananda, its gnostic

<sup>1</sup> To state that the Divine Reality has so many statuses and poises, each absolute in itself, is not to expound Pluralism. It must be borne in mind that these are not arbitrary ontological concepts but truths apprehended in spiritual realisations, each realisation revealing some aspect of the One Reality to the experiencing consciousness. Each such aspect is actually the whole Reality but with a particular frontal status. As we have stated before, it is only in the realisation of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness that the Integral Divine Reality can be apprehended in all its luminous totality, and its various aspects seen in a unifying vision as Its real-statuses.

<sup>2</sup> There is a spiritual realisation in which Reality is experienced as Non-Existence, an utter extinction of all that is known as Existence, Asat. This realisation is also referred to as “That”. There is yet another realisation in which Reality is experienced as an absolute “Otherness”—a state which is neither All-Existence (Sat) nor its negation, Non-Existence (Asat). This realisation is also sometimes spoken of as “That”. Here we are not referring to these two realisations.

light and creative dynamis is the Supermind, spoken of in the Upanishads as “Turiyam Svid” (a certain fourth).

What we know as Creation is an emanatory manifestation of this Divine Self, but a manifestation that is not severed from its source, for it exists in Him and is sustained and supported by Him. The unique character of this manifestation is that it is a descending and ascending involutory-evolutionary movement. By a process of self-limitation the Divine Reality Sachchidananda descends from its status of Pure Being or Existence (Sat) into cosmic manifestation by the concentration and energism of Consciousness-Force (Chit) and Bliss (Ananda), and the creative and Truth-aware dynamism of the Supermind. In its descent from the heights it creates a hierarchy of planes. On each plane there is more and more fragmentation of the original Oneness, a greater and greater limitation of the original Knowledge, Puissance and Bliss. As the Divine Reality descends, on each plane it becomes more and more self-absorbed in a deep trance of involution, and the more it gets involved the more oblivious it becomes of its own Divine Nature, till finally it completely forgets its own Divinity and becomes the opposite of its original status—the supreme All-aware and Omnipotent Divine Consciousness becomes the Inconscient; the luminous Infinite becomes the dark Infinite.

In this involution and descent of Sachchidananda into the Inconscient, typical planes of Mind, Life and Matter are created, thereby constituting in all seven main principles of manifested Reality—Sat, Chit, Ananda, Supermind, Mind, Life and Matter; these are the “Waters” (Apas) spoken of in the Upanishads, the streams of Divine Consciousness, the seven principles of the seven worlds. These worlds are divided into two hemispheres—the higher, Parardha, consisting of Sat, Chit and Ananda, the three worlds of fundamental manifestation of the Divine Reality, and the lower, Aparardha, consisting of the worlds of Mind, Life and Matter. The Truth-principle Supermind has its status between the two hemispheres. It really belongs to the Parardha, it is transcendent to the Aparardha, yet it is not extra-cosmic, for it is by its creative action, that the cosmos is manifested. All these seven principles are present in each world, but only one of them predominates as the ruling principle while the

others are subordinated to it or contained and concealed within it. In the dark Inconscient they are all involved and buried. The ascending evolutionary movement arises from this Inconscient which throws out of its hidden depths the involved principles one after the other in an ascending series. Matter is the first emergent, Life the second, and Mind the third. These principles emerge owing to an upward urge in themselves and in response to a pressure put upon them from their respective typal planes which have been created in the descent.

As the higher principle emerges the lower one is not discarded but integrated into the higher. So when Matter emerged, a material universe was created, yet when Life emerged Matter was not set aside but Life appeared in Matter vitalising and animating it, and a vital-material organised existence was created on earth, a world of living physical beings—first the plants, and then the animals. When Mind appeared, it mentalised the animated and vitalised Matter and a mental-vital-material existence was organised on earth—a world of thinking, living, physical human beings. In this connection Sri Aurobindo writes in his essay “The Ascending Unity”, “. . . The animal prepares and imperfectly prefigures man and is itself prepared in the plant as that too is foreseen obscurely by all that precedes it in the terrestrial expansion. Man himself takes up the miraculous play of the electron and atom, draws up through the complex development of the protoplasm the chemical life of sub-vital things, perfects the original nervous system of the plant in the physiology of the completed animal being, consummates and repeats rapidly in his embryonic growth the past evolution of the animal form into the human perfection and, once born, rears himself from the earthward and downward animal proneness to the erect figure of the spirit who is already looking up to his farther heavenward evolution.” At present in the earth existence only Matter, Life and Mind are fully evolved and stabilised powers; the other unrealised and as yet secret powers, the Supermind and the triune aspects of Sachchidananda have still to be realised. The next principle, the gnostic and dynamic Supermind has now to manifest itself so that the mental-vital-material existence on earth may be reoriented and reorganised on a radically new basis—a supramental basis. This

supramentalisation of terrestrial existence is and has always been the secret goal of evolution. It is this supramentalisation of humanity that Sri Aurobindo has in mind when he writes of man “looking up to his farther heavenward evolution.” That which seems on a superficial and outward examination of facts to be only a biological evolution is in its inner reality a spiritual evolution in which the Spirit imprisoned in the nescience of Matter gradually emerges in an ascending series as various principles of manifested Being till as the luminous Supermind it blossoms forth as an all-transforming overtly divine principle in which all the hitherto evolved principles are uplifted and divinised, thereby finding their fulfilment in a spiritually organised divine life.

But then the question arises—who is it that evolves? Is it the race-consciousness that evolves, with each evanescent individual contributing something towards it and then fading away into oblivion, or is it the individual who evolves, that is, does the Divine Consciousness plunged in the Inconscient regain its spiritual heights through the growth and evolution of the individual?

If the second possibility is admitted, then rebirth becomes a necessity in evolutionary movement which rises gradually from Inconscience to Truth Consciousness, for no earthly being can scale the ladder of existence in a single lifetime; obviously, he would require many lives to do so, for the experience he has to attain is infinite; this experience has to become a wide horizontal expansive movement till his consciousness embraces the cosmic manifestation, and has also to become a vertical ascending-descending movement till it reaches the heights of Sachchidananda and brings down its Divine Light, Power and Bliss into his whole being. This makes the process which governs the life of the individual a continuous rhythmic movement of birth, death and rebirth; which means that the individual has to evolve gradually through a series of lives making rebirth the pivotal mechanism of his evolution in the cosmic manifestation.

So we may state that the individual has to be a recurring individual, one who is born again and again, who gathers fresh experience in each life, grows by this experience and evolves from a lower status of being and consciousness to a higher one.

But there is a contradiction involved in this statement, because if the individual being is dissolved, how can he be a recurring individual? If the individual form perishes at death, then, who is it that is reborn? We do not solve the difficulty by stating that behind the outer being there is an inner soul which is reborn; for then another difficulty arises. A person grows from childhood to youth, and from youth to old age, and knows that the child is the same as the youth and the youth same as the old man because this process of physical growth is connected in his mind through memory; it is memory that links up the different stages of his growth. Now, if we say that at death his outer being is dissolved and his brain disintegrates, and the soul leaves his body and is reborn as another individual, then in what sense and to what extent can it be stated that the first individual who died is the same as the second? Memory which connects one stage of physical growth to another does not here seem to link up one life-experience with another, for an ordinary person does not remember the events of his past life. It would only mean that the soul occupies many bodies birth after birth but there is no connection between these births (except that it is the same reincarnating soul); so for all practical purposes there is no rebirth.

This difficulty is raised by some thinkers. In his “Guide to Modern Thought” Professor Joad writes, “. . . Now nobody who believes in reincarnation holds, so far as I know, that one inhabits the *same body* in different lives. Obviously not, since we know what happens to old bodies, they become worms. People do not normally have any memory of their past lives, so that their memories in each life would be different. . . . Given a different body, different memories and different environment, the difficulty is to see in what sense a man could be said to be the *same person* in different lives. If I may commit an Irishism, if it is really I who live through each one of a number of different lives, then I must be a different person each time.” This question will have to be answered if the doctrine of rebirth is to be accepted.

When an individual thinks of himself as “I” what does he mean? Who is this “I”? Again, what is the personality of the individual made up of? First, we shall see what he appears to be and then later what he is in reality. In the third chapter of “The Synthesis

of Yoga”, Sri Aurobindo writes, “The life of the human creature, *as it is ordinarily lived*<sup>1</sup>, is composed of half-mixed, half-fluid mass of very imperfectly ruled thoughts, perceptions, sensations, emotions, desires, enjoyments, acts mostly customary and self-repeating, in part only dynamic and self-developing, but also centred around a superficial ego”. In the second chapter of the same book he writes, “*In a certain sense*<sup>1</sup> we are nothing but a complex mass of mental nervous and physical habits held together by a few ruling ideas, desires and associations,—an amalgam of many small self-repeating forces with a few major vibrations.”

If then the average human being is only a mental-nervous-physical composite called the ego, who is it that perishes at death and who is it that reincarnates?

Can it be possible that this ephemeral individual is only a temporary formation in Time of a Real Individual, not overtly manifest, who is immortal? Does the outer human casement conceal within it an inner divine soul? And if there is such a soul, is it a finite emanation from the Divine Reality put forth in the cosmic manifestation for a purpose and withdrawn into it, or has it a fundamental status in the Reality? Again, it has been stated above that the individual evolves through various lives, but what is the process in its actual working by which the individual passes from one life to another and evolves? These are the questions we have to examine next, but before we do so we shall first have to examine the metaphysical status of the individual in the universe, and then the psychological structure of his being.

The individual is a creature of Universal Nature, he is a nature organism, but in his inner reality he is a soul which is not created by the action of Universal Energy but is an immortal divine projection of the Transcendent Supreme; which means that the individual is a nature-personality of a soul behind which is his inner reality. This soul is the true psyche.<sup>2</sup> In the first volume of “The Life Divine”

<sup>1</sup> My italics.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo does not use the terms psyche or psychic in the same sense as the Western psychologists, philosophers and spiritualists use them. By the term *psyche* he does not mean either the libido or some as yet untapped fount of creative

Sri Aurobindo describes the soul in man and its relation to his outer being. “The true soul secret in us . . . burns in the temple of the inmost heart behind the thick screen of an ignorant mind, life and body, not subliminal but behind the veil,—this veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us. . . . It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic. It is that which endures and is imperishable in us from birth to birth, untouched by death, decay or corruption, an indestructible spark of the Divine. Not the unborn Self or Atman, for the Self even in presiding over the existence of the individual is aware always of its universality and transcendence, it is yet its deputy in the forms of Nature, the individual soul, *chaitya purusha*, supporting mind, life and body, standing behind the mental, the vital, the subtle-physical being in us and watching and profiting by their development and experience. . . . It is this secret psychic entity which is the true original Conscience in us deeper than the constructed and conventional conscience of the moralist, for it is this which points always towards Truth and Right and Beauty, towards Love and Harmony and all that is a divine possibility in us. . . .”

It is this soul that is the secret cause of man’s lofty ideals and aspirations; it is this soul that makes him transcend his lower animal nature and manifest his essential divinity. It makes man believe in spite of all physical evidence to the contrary that he is immortal, for it is conscious of its immortality and makes the outer man also feel this in certain moments when its influence penetrates through

energy hidden in the depths of the Subconscious or the Unconscious, nor does he use it to denote the sum total of mental, emotional and sensational activities, both conscious and unconscious. He also does not mean by the term *psychic* any supra-physical or occult phenomena which are usually classed in the category of *psychic phenomena*.

The term *soul* too, is used indiscriminately by writers; sometimes they mean by it the heart, sometimes the mind, and very often what Sri Aurobindo calls the *surface desire-soul*. The real soul is a direct divine projection of the Supreme, whilst this *surface desire-soul* is a mixed formation in our ‘natural being’ made up of emotional and lower vital desires crossed by mental strains of idealism, and sometimes having behind it the influence of the true soul.



the veil that exists between his exterior being and his inner soul-ranges. It was regarding this that we said in the first part of this essay, "The Doctrine of Rebirth", that the soul's intuition is one of the causes which have contributed towards the almost universal belief in rebirth.

The soul is put forth in the cosmic manifestation and made to descend into the Inconscient for a divine purpose, and that purpose is the goal of evolution which has already been described. It is not a static but a growing and evolving entity which has eventually to carry terrestrial existence to its divine fulfilment. At first when it is projected into the manifestation it is only a spark of the Divine Consciousness, a *Scintilla Dei*, but as it grows and evolves through a series of lives it develops a personality of itself—a soul-personality or a psychic being (*Chaitya Purusha*). This psychic being passes from birth to birth, gathers round itself mental, vital, physical elements from Universal Nature (*Prakriti*) necessary to form its nature-personality, and uses them as its instruments of self-expression and grows and develops through their experience.

At first the psychic being secretly and indirectly influences the outer being from behind the veil of the mental, vital and physical nature, but as it evolves, it comes forward and puts its impress upon it and directly governs it, and turns all its nature parts to the Supramental Light and Force for their divine transformation.

If then the progressive ascent of the individual through a series of lives is the means by which the evolution of a divine Supramental existence is worked out on earth, the individual must be a real individual—he must have a fundamental reality. We saw in the first part of this essay, "The Doctrine of Rebirth", that, without a real individual, rebirth can have no true significance; that if he is a fiction or an ephemeral form temporarily created in the Cosmos, rebirth has no true justification. For this reason we found that the Buddhist explanation of rebirth which conceives the individual to be only a knot of *sanskaras* in a chain of Karma, was untenable. We also found that the philosophy of the Illusionistic Advaita or exclusive Monism is unable to give a real meaning and significance to rebirth, because whilst it affirms the reality of the One, it denies that of the Many—it states that the individual is an ephemeral forma-

tion, the Self alone is real. Only a Realistic Advaita or a comprehensive Monism, which affirms the reality of both the One and Many and consequently the fundamental reality of the individual, can give a real meaning to rebirth.

Some systems of philosophy fail to make a distinction between true individuality and ego-centric individuality. Other systems, though they admit the reality of an individual soul behind the ego, teach that the liberated soul merges into the Self and loses its individuality. Such a merging is one possibility, because the soul has descended into the cosmic manifestation from the Transcendent Supreme and can turn back from the cosmos and merge itself in It, but this cannot be by any means the final term of its divine consummation. The individual can liberate himself from his narrow ego-centric outer personality and know himself as the true spiritual individual, no less than as a Universal Being, and at the same time know his real status in the Transcendent. His spiritual individuality can persist even after his ego-centric individuality has been dissolved. Sri Aurobindo makes this clear in “The Life Divine”—“The immense importance of the individual being, which increases as he rises in the scale, is the most remarkable and significant fact of a universe which started without consciousness and without individuality in an undifferentiated Nescience. This importance can only be justified if the Self as individual is no less real than the Self as Cosmic Being or Spirit and both are powers of the Eternal. It is only so that can be explained the necessity for the growth of the individual and his discovery of himself as a condition for the discovery of the cosmic Self and Consciousness of the supreme Reality. If we adopt this solution, this is the first result, the reality of the persistent individual; but from that first consequence the other result follows, that rebirth of some kind is no longer a possible machinery which may or may not be accepted, it becomes a necessity, an inevitable outcome of the root nature of our existence”—“A realised unity of the transcendent, the universal and the individual is an indispensable condition for the fullness of the self-expressing spirit: for the universe is the field of its totality of self-expression while it is through the individual that its evolutionary self-unfolding here comes to its acme.”

At this juncture it can legitimately be asked if the psychic being is the true individual and the mental-vital-physical nature-personality only its changing vesture.

The answer is that the central being of man, the true individual is the eternal and unborn Jivatman, the individual Self or individual Atman. He is poised above the cosmic manifestation, presides over the individual's evolution but is himself non-evolutionary; whereas his representative in the manifestation, the psychic being, is evolutionary. "The Jivatman, the psychic being and the Soul are three different forms of the same reality. . . ." says Sri Aurobindo.

In the individual nature the Jivatman represents himself as a "...Purusha upholding Prakriti—centrally in the psychic, more instrumentally in the mind, vital and physical being and nature". On each plane of consciousness he creates an emanatory projection of himself—on the physical plane he is the *annamaya purusha*, the true physical being, on the vital plane, he is the *pranamaya purusha*, the true vital being, on the mental plane he is the *manomaya purusha*, the true mental being, and behind all these is his central representative, the *Chaitya Purusha*, the psychic being supporting the evolution of the total personality.

In the light of this knowledge, we shall now briefly examine the psychological structure of an individual being. Though an individual is a single entity, he is yet a multiple personality; there are ranges of consciousness in him of which his outer mental-vital-physical personality, the ego, has no knowledge.

This ego is a temporary formation of Universal Nature (Prakriti) created in order to express and affirm individuality in a world of universal flux. By a process of individualisation and centralisation Universal Nature creates in its field of cosmic activity a knot of consciousness knowing itself as a separate individual being. As we have stated before, Universal Energy is One, but it takes many forms, and casts itself forth into energies and powers of diverse magnitudes and intensities. There is a Mind-plane with its mental energies, there is a Life-plane or Vital-plane with its vital energies, a Subtle-physical plane with its subtle-physical energies; the ego is a knot of these mental, vital and physical energies. It has no fundamental reality of its own but is only the outer mask of the soul-personality

behind. It is a temporary creation of Prakriti behind which there is the presence of the Purusha who secretly determines, supports and governs it.

The ordinary human being understands by his consciousness only this ego, because he is not aware of the other ranges of consciousness in the inner depths of his being. Behind the threshold of his outer consciousness there is a subliminal region of an inner mental, an inner vital and an inner subtle-physical consciousness, each opening itself and in contact with its own plane of universal existence. The inner mental opens itself to the plane of Universal Mind, the inner vital to that of Universal Life and the inner subtle-physical to that of Universal Matter. These subliminal ranges are the real paranormal ranges; the subliminal is a region of consciousness *alongside* the normal. In the outer consciousness of man the formations of each of these are heterogeneously mixed and held together by the knot of the ego. The subliminal is also open to the infra-normal region of the obscure and turbid sub-conscious depths *below* the level of the outer waking consciousness and to the still deeper nether region of the dark Inconscient, as well as to the supra-normal ranges *above* of spiritual consciousness, at the summit of which is the Supermind.

An individual, by releasing the centralising stress of the ego and by withdrawing and focussing his consciousness inwards, can become aware of himself as the *manomaya purusha*, the *pranamaya purusha*, or the *annamaya purusha*. Corresponding to the three purushas an individual possesses three subtle sheaths over and above the gross physical body—a mental, a vital and a subtle-physical sheath. Wherever the stress of consciousness is, that the individual knows himself to be. But we have stated that whilst the Jivatman represents himself instrumentally in the individual nature as the *manomaya*, *pranamaya* and *annamaya* purushas, he represents himself centrally as the *chaitya purusha*, the psychic being. Therefore, an individual being by withdrawing himself into the inmost recesses of his being, his soul-ranges, can know himself as the psychic being.

To sum up—firstly, an individual is the ego, the outer personality; more inwardly he is the inner being, and in his inmost soul reality, a psychic being. That is why we stated that though an individual is

a single being, he is a multiple personality.

Now that we have examined the psychological structure of a being, we can proceed to the mechanism of rebirth. As we have seen, a man is a complex being; his total personality exceeds his mental, vital, physical outer nature; consequently the dissolution of the body does not necessarily imply the annihilation of the whole being. At the time of death the gross outer body passes through a process of disintegration and dissolution, but the soul goes out of the body through the head and travels in its subtle sheaths through the occult worlds on its way to the psychic world, its place of rest. After leaving the earth it first goes to the subtle-physical world, and from there to the vital and the mental worlds. In each world it stays for a time, and works out the remnants of its past propensities and instincts, and after these are exhausted, passes on to the psychic world. But before proceeding to this psychic world it casts off its subtle sheaths one after the other in each world—in the subtle physical world it sheds its subtle-physical sheath, in the vital its corresponding sheath and in the mental world the mental sheath. The elements of these subtle sheaths are dispersed in their respective planes and are re-assimilated by them.\*

The experiences it undergoes in these worlds may be either painful or pleasant depending upon the tendencies in its nature which create affinities and attractions in these occult worlds. These worlds, in which the being has happy or unhappy experiences, may be interpreted as heavens or hells according to the nature of the experiences.

After the psychic being has shed all its sheaths it retires to the psychic world and assimilates there the essence of all its experiences, and plunges back into its own psychic depths and remains absorbed in a beatific trance till it is time for it to take birth again.

This psychic world does not belong to the lower hemisphere, Aparardha, to which the typical worlds of Mind, Life and Matter belong. It exists in a different space-time. Just as the psychic being

\* Here it may be pointed out that the psychic being is not the same as the *Sukshma Sharira*, the subtle body, which according to certain systems of philosophy is the persistent incarnating entity.

stands behind the mental-vital-physical personality, so the psychic world stands behind the typical mental, vital and physical worlds.

When it is again time for the psychic being to take birth, it gathers round it elements from universal mental, vital and material nature necessary to form a new earth-personality, and gets in touch with the environment of its next birth and its future parents.\* Sri Aurobindo writes in a letter to one of his disciples—“It should be noted that the conditions of the future birth are determined fundamentally not during the stay in the psychic world but at the time of death—the psychic then chooses what it should work out in the next terrestrial appearance and the conditions arrange themselves accordingly.”

This is a general statement of the passage of the soul from the earth to the psychic world, but a number of variations are possible. The experiences of the after-death period depend upon the psychological mould and cast of the particular being, the stage of its evolution, the energies it put forth during its life on earth, and many other factors. For example, if the being has developed its mental nature and if the psychic has moulded it into a truth-creation then the elements of the mental nature do not get dispersed in the Mental world but being spiritualised and psychicised share the immortality of the psychic.

The outer natural being of an ordinary man is spiritually undeveloped. As stated before, he is a composite of mental-vital-physical

\* In this connection Sri Aurobindo has an interesting remark to make. Regarding heredity he writes in his essay “Karma, Will and Consequence,”—“The soul is not the result of our heredity but has prepared by its own action and affinities this heredity,” and in “Rebirth and Karma”—“... the body, life, physical mentality of all past being prolongs itself in me and I must therefore undergo the law of heredity; the parent, says the Upanishad, recreates himself by the energy in his seed and is reborn in the child. But as soon as I begin to develop, a new, an independent and overbearing factor comes in, which is not my parents nor my ancestry nor past mankind, but I, my own self. And this is the really important crowning, central factor. What matters most in my life, is not my heredity; that only gives me my opportunity or my obstacle, my good or my bad material, and it has not by any means been shown that I draw all from that source. What matters supremely is what I make of my heredity and not what my heredity makes of me. The past of the world, bygone humanity, my ancestors are there in me; but still I myself am the artist of my self, my life, my actions.”

formations held together, but not unified, by a few ruling ideas and desires. His outer nature is not under the control of the psychic being and is not shaped by it. Hence after death the elements of these nature-parts, lacking cohesion, are scattered, (after the psychic has drawn from them as much as is necessary for its growth). But if the psychic being has laid its impress upon its nature parts and they are organised around it, they also become immortal.

Again, the interval between births is not the same for all souls. Some are reborn almost immediately, some take three to four years and some highly evolved beings may even take hundreds of years to take the new birth, waiting for certain conditions to establish themselves which would give them the necessary opportunities to evolve further as well as manifest some divine possibility.

Here another interesting fact may be mentioned, though it does not have a direct bearing on the process of rebirth. It was taught in the Pythagorean theory of *Metempsychosis* that the soul of an evil man sometimes passes into the body of an animal. For a long time after Pythagoras died this belief remained among those who believed in some kind of reincarnation, but was later dismissed as a superstition.

The soul of an evil man does not pass into an animal because in the process of evolution there cannot be such a terrible retrogression. Between the evolutionary stage of a human being and that of an animal there is a very wide gap which the consequences of a few evil deeds cannot bridge. This belief is the result of the conventionally moral man's demand for justice—of course, his own idea of justice. However, this idea cannot be ruled out of court as a superstition. The intuition of Pythagoras has an element of truth in it; only the mental interpretation of it is a little crude.

What happens is that when the outer natural formation of a being gets broken up at death some part of the lower vital gets separated and joins itself to the vital physical consciousness of an animal and works out some of its animal propensities. The soul does not pass into an animal, it is only a fragment of the nature-personality that attaches itself this way to an animal.

The experiences of the souls in their *wanderjahre* from this world to the psychic world are many and varied; no single rule can be

laid down to govern so complex a movement as the evolution of the soul from utter inconscience to Truth-consciousness. The true object of rebirth is the growth of the soul; the experiences it undergoes have a value only in so far as they contribute towards its evolution. Sri Aurobindo has made this clear in nearly all his philosophical writings. The following extracts are taken from two of his letters to his disciples. “Note that the idea of rebirth and the circumstances of the new life as a reward or punishment for *Punya* or *Papa* is a crude human idea of Justice which is quite unphilosophical and unspiritual and distorts the true intention of life. Life here is an evolution and the soul grows by experience, working out by it this or that in the nature, and if there is suffering, it is for the purpose of that working out, not as a judgment inflicted by God or Cosmic Law on the errors or stumblings which are inevitable in the Ignorance.”

“... The ordinary theories are too mechanical—and that is the case also with the idea of *punya* and *papa* and their results in the next life. There are certainly results of the energies put forth in a past life, but not on that rather infantine principle. . . . The object of birth being growth by experience, whatever reactions come from past deeds must be for the being to learn and grow. . . . The real sanction for good and ill is not good fortune for the one and bad fortune for the other, but this, that good leads us towards a higher nature which is lifted above suffering, and ill pulls us towards the lower nature which remains always in the circle of suffering and evil.”

Suffering exists for a being because of a limitation of consciousness in him and as a result of that, lack of mastery over the natural forces of the outside world and an incapacity to receive their impact upon his being. In a progressive evolution from Inconscience to the Supramental Truth-consciousness, a limitation of consciousness and consequently of force becomes not only a possibility but an inevitability. Another cause of a being’s suffering is his separation from his divine Source. His consciousness is focussed in the ego and he is consequently oblivious of Him who dwells in the inmost recesses and the highest summit of his being. Only if he withdraws from his ego and learns to live in the Divine Consciousness can suffering cease for him.



What the soul seeks is evolution and this it attains through all kinds of experiences both happy and unhappy. The meaning of its vicissitudes in one life, its failures and successes, its good fortunes and misfortunes cannot be understood except in relation to its past lives as well as its future development. Each soul follows its own curve of evolution and expresses and manifests in this world a unique divine possibility. This does not imply that it remains aloof from other souls or from the general world-play for it is connected with the cosmic action and with other souls also; there is an inter-play and combined action of forces all the time. Only, each soul follows its own line of evolution which has eventually to manifest on earth a particular truth of the Divine. To attain this end, it takes a series of births, gathers wider and wider experience using mind, life and body as its instruments, and finally transforms and divinises them by opening them to the light and power of the Supermind, thus making the creation of a Supramental being on earth possible.

This then is the justification of rebirth; for mere mechanical recurrence of birth in a chain of karma has no meaning if the individual does not evolve and thereby overtly manifest in the world his divine nature.

Regarding the justification of rebirth Sri Aurobindo writes, "But if it is once admitted that the Spirit has involved itself in the Inconscience and is manifesting itself in the individual being by an evolutionary gradation, then the whole process assumes meaning and consistence; the progressive ascent of the individual becomes a keynote of this cosmic significance, and the rebirth of the soul in the body becomes a natural and unavoidable consequence of the truth of the Becoming and its inherent law. Rebirth is an indispensable machinery for the working out of a spiritual evolution; it is the only possible effective condition, the obvious dynamic process of such a manifestation in the material universe."

Now that we have seen the metaphysical significance and justification of rebirth, we shall examine the difficulty raised by Professor Joad. We have explained that it is not the outer personality that is reborn but the psychic being which is the true being of man. The outer personality is only a mould which it builds round itself, and which it discards when its use is over, only to create after a time

another one, in order to grow and evolve. In “The Riddle of This World”, Sri Aurobindo has made a succinct statement of this particular point. He writes, “You must avoid a common popular blunder about reincarnation. The popular idea is that Titus Balbus is reborn again as John Smith, a man with the same personality, character, attainments as he had in his former life with the sole difference that he wears coat and trousers instead of a toga and speaks in cockney English instead of popular Latin. That is not the case. What would be the earthly use of repeating the same personality or character a million times from the beginning of time till the end? The soul comes into birth for experience, for growth, for evolution till it can bring the Divine into matter. It is the central being that incarnates, not the outer personality—the personality is simply a mould that it creates for its figures of experience in that one life. In another birth it will create for itself a different personality, different capacities, a different life and career. . . .”

“As the evolving being develops still more and becomes more rich and complex, it accumulates its personalities, as it were. Sometimes they stand behind the active elements, throwing in some colour, some trait, some capacity here and there,—or they stand in front and there is a multiple personality, a many-sided character or a many-sided, sometimes what looks like a universal capacity. But if a former personality, a former capacity is brought fully forward, it will not be to repeat what was already done, but to cast the same capacity into new forms and new shapes and fuse it into a new harmony of the being which will not be a reproduction of what was before. . . .”

“Another thing. It is not the personality, the character that is of the first importance in rebirth—it is the psychic being who stands behind the evolution of the nature and evolves with it. The psychic when it departs from the body, shedding even the mental and vital on its way to its resting place, carries with it the heart of its experiences,—not the physical events, not the vital movements, not the mental buildings, not the capacities or characters, but something essential that is gathered from them, what might be called the divine element for the sake of which the rest existed. That is the permanent addition, it is that that helps in the growth towards

the Divine. That is why there is usually no memory of the outward events and circumstances of past lives—for this memory there must be a strong development towards unbroken continuance of the mind, the vital, even the subtle physical; for though it all remains in a kind of seed memory, it does not ordinarily emerge....”

It is clear from this statement that what the soul collects and assimilates is the essence of its experiences on earth; it does not remember the stray events and happenings that occurred during its life, but it does contain within it the inner sense and significance of these events in their relation to itself and as far as they contribute to its own growth and development. So it seems that Professor Joad is justified in raising this difficulty; for the outer man is not reborn, he perishes; and therefore we cannot say that it is he who reincarnates. But Professor Joad’s statement ignored the existence of the psychic being who is the real being of man. That which ordinarily a man calls “I” in one life is no doubt not the same as that which he will call “I” in his next life. In that sense there is no rebirth, but this does not make our lives merely stray and unconnected incidents without a purpose and without a memory linking them, for the psychic being behind extracts something essential from this “I” and will do the same from the next “I” forming a linkage between the two “I’s” in its own psychic consciousness.

But we shall be told that such a linkage is of little value for the ordinary human being; as far as he is concerned there is no rebirth for he has no memory which can link all his previous lives. Doubtless, this is true in his present stage of evolution because he has no direct contact with his psychic being, but his evolution has not come to an end. If he can grow into his psychic consciousness and rise to a higher spiritual consciousness he can know his past births. This brings us to the question of memory. Professor Joad’s statement implies that there can be only one kind of memory—the usual perceptive and ideative memory possessed by men. Those who are well advanced on the spiritual path know that there is another kind of memory also, a psychic memory. It is not a faculty of the mind like the ordinary memory which links up physical, nervous and mental sensations, feelings and ideas. The yogi, by withdrawing himself into the depths of his soul-ranges, can possess this psychic

memory and become aware of his past lives. Sri Aurobindo writes, “The soul needs no proof of its rebirth any more than it needs proof of its immortality. For there comes a time when it is consciously immortal, aware of itself in its eternal and immutable essence. . . . So also there comes a time when the soul becomes aware of itself in its eternal and immutable movement; it is then aware of the ages behind that constituted the present organisation of the movement, sees how this was prepared in an uninterrupted past, remembers the by-gone soul-states, environments, particular forms of activity which built up its present constituents and knows to what it is moving by development in an uninterrupted future.”—“The soul’s vision and the soul’s memory are all.” We see from this statement that a continuity of memory does exist—but of a soul-memory.

This implies that the validity of the doctrine of rebirth can only be tested by psychological and spiritual evidence and not by the evidence supplied by the senses and logical arguments based upon such evidence. But till man has reached a stage of evolution when he can have such evidence, Sri Aurobindo’s exposition of rebirth is definitely worthy of acceptance, because it alone gives a real meaning to life, shows man’s right place in the universe and his relation to the Supreme Being. To use Sri Aurobindo’s own words, “. . . the perception of rebirth as an occasion and means for a spiritual evolution fills in every hiatus. It makes life a significant ascension and not a mechanical recurrence; it opens to us the divine vistas of a growing soul; it makes the worlds a nexus of spiritual self-expansion; it sets us seeking, and with a sure promise to all of a great finding now or hereafter, for the self-knowledge of our spirit and the self-fulfilment of a wise and divine intention in our existence.”

S. R. ALBLESS

# *The Armour of Light*

*A Study of the mysticism of St. John the Evangelist and Sri Aurobindo*

The night is far spent, the day is  
at hand: let us therefore cast off  
the works of darkness, and let us  
put on the armour of light.

*Romans. 13. xii*

COMMENTING on the study of comparative religion, G. K. Chesterton remarked that "it was an excellent improvement that sincerely religious people should respect each other. But," he added, "respect has discovered difference where contempt knew only indifference." It has always seemed to me that the attitude which claims a monopoly of revelation for one particular faith is fundamentally more realistic, though less pleasant, (since it admits, even if it hopelessly exaggerates this difference,) than the belief of some well-meaning people that all the great religions eventually "add up to the same thing." They maintain this eccentric attitude, not because they are lovers who recognise the presence of the Beloved wherever he may be found, but because they are afraid that diversity of report must invalidate belief in the existence of God and that the voice of authority should speak in undivided accents. But if we consider all the great faiths as "news of God", to borrow Hopkins' famous phrase, it is possible to admit the truth of Chesterton's distinction without allowing it to become a dilemma. For sometimes it is news of a corroborative character, as in the case of St. John the Evangelist and Sri Aurobindo, a kind of divine counterpoint between the vision of two writers, and sometimes it is of an almost mutually exclusive nature, as in the case of Christianity and some sects of Buddhism; though to a truly integrated vision even these apparent contraries may appear as the negative and positive of a Truth so vast that all the great faiths are only small chinks opening on to its infinity. Therefore in this study I wish to make it clear that I am not labouring

to establish the persistency of certain basic religious truths in saints, sages and seers all over the world, which would require a far greater knowledge of comparative religion than I possess, but simply to try and show that in the Fourth Gospel and the writings of Sri Aurobindo there exists in a very high degree, and sometimes with only slight differences of idiom, "news" of a similar character.

In the three Synoptic Gospels the teaching and person of Jesus appear as they were reflected in three men of the most saintly nature, who were, nevertheless, not mystics: Mark, the companion and perhaps secretary of Peter in Rome, giving a simple, straight-forward and movingly dramatic account of Jesus' life in terms of action: Matthew, writing especially for the Jews, and dealing the most fully with the Master's teaching—his rather pedestrian literary style in such contrast to the vivid speeches of Jesus that, as one modern Biblical scholar puts it "one feels certain they must have come from Jesus himself." Then finally Luke's account, the doctor and companion of Paul, an account written for the Greeks and Romans in a beautiful literary style by a man of letters who loved poetry. In these accounts we see Jesus as the teacher who came "not to call the righteous but to save sinners." He was talking therefore, not to the Arjunas of this world—with the exception of Nicodemus, the princes of the intellect considered him a dangerous agitator and impostor—but to men and women who were often physically, as well as mentally and spiritually, in the dark and who could only understand the most simple instruction. That these simple truths were at once so profound, so full, to a progressing consciousness, of a deepening arcanum, was one of the most characteristic marks of the genius of Jesus.

All the Synoptic Gospels therefore emphasise the ethical side of Jesus' teaching, and if we had no other Gospel we should have to admit that though he presented the truths of Judaism in an inimitable way and brought them to their full flowering of perfection, he added to them no absolutely unique message of his own. It was precisely to correct this impression and to re-state what he felt was the inner meaning of Jesus' teaching that St. John wrote his peerless Gospel. Yet in spite of its emphasis on inner union rather than works (St. Paul's burthen too) and the prominence it gives to the Divine-Human relationship, most Christians tend to equate Christianity with the

teaching of the Synoptic Gospels. Asked what they consider to be the kernel of their Master's message they will invariably reply: "The Sermon on the Mount." But it was not here that Jesus indicated the great word that lay at the core of his spiritual way, but in his reply to the Pharisee lawyer who tempted him saying: "Master which is the great commandment in the law?" His answer was: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." It was this sovereign emphasis of Jesus on human and divine love which St. John perceived as the incandescent centre of his message and which he took as the foundation of his Gospel, weaving it into a marvellous theme of the love of God for man and the love of man for God.

Who was this John who wrote the Fourth Gospel? Great controversy has raged round his identity and scholars will only say with certainty that he was Jewish, thinking in Aramaic but writing in Greek and that he was also the author of the First Letter of John. Some modern authorities think that he was an old man drawing on the experience of a long life and on sources of his own for details of the Master's history: certain it is that he was writing with the intention of correcting the falsities he felt were creeping up round the teaching of Jesus, and in doing this was not afraid to select and re-arrange the historical events of his life and—the mark of the creative genius—to re-interpret them in the light of a profound perception of the truth. He was a contemplative, a poet, a supreme visionary. In John we feel—as we feel with Bach at his greatest moments—that inner translucence which focusses vision like a flawless lens in a condition of purity, stillness and intensity. He had none of St. Paul's psychological 'tensions'. To him there was a polarity, but no radical dualism, between flesh and spirit, the phenomenal and the noumenal world: both had their magnetic centre in the same Reality and were as integral a part of it as human love was part of divine love. The sign that this was so was manifest for him in the Person of Jesus in whom these orders met: a sign that between God and man there was no unbridgeable chasm. If this Gospel has a keynote it is that of *unity*

whether we interpret it in its particular or in its universal sense: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Likewise for John the world was the footstool of the Divine, not to be spurned but transformed by the descent of a higher power—that birth "from above" "of the spirit" which must complete the natural man, the man "born of the flesh." "God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world," Jesus told Nicodemus, "but that the world through him might be saved," that is, by transcending the principle of darkness (or ignorance) into "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Again, "I am come into the world that they (the disciples) might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jesus never suggests to either Nicodemus or the woman at Sychar that moral purification is salvation. "It is the spirit that quickeneth," he says, "the words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Again and again he repeats his symbol of the spiritual rebirth, or transformation, which was not a birth "of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Contrarily, it is only when the Word, in the Person of Jesus, "is made flesh" incarnating the Divine principle, that life is "full of grace and truth."

Jesus' triple demand that God should be loved with the whole mind, heart and soul—will, knowledge and devotion—is developed to its fullest extent in this mystical Gospel. Its key words are spirit, will, truth, love, light, sanctity, joy. Whenever Jesus is pressed to give a moral judgement—as in the case of the woman taken in adultery and the man born blind—he avoids it. His emphasis is not on ethics. It is not the sattwic man that will come to the final beatitude, or whom God seeks to love him. It is the man who is surrendered to the will of the Divine, who is illumined by truth (or knowledge) and lives in the spirit (or highest self). "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." It was this way of grace with its triune requirement of



knowledge, devotion and will which the fourteenth-century English mystic who wrote "The Cloud of Unknowing" expressed as being "knit to God in spirit, in oneness of love and accordance of will."

The Comforter that Jesus is to send to his disciples after his death is "the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not." (When Jesus speaks of the world in this sense he means, of course, the world organised without reference to God.) This Comforter, the Holy Ghost or Spirit, will guide the disciples "into all truth." In his prayer for his followers at the Last Supper Jesus asks the Spirit "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. . . . For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth." And later he tells Pilate: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." This process of sanctification, of making holy or purifying is envisaged by Jesus as a dual activity; on the one hand a search for truth by the individual soul, and on the other the bearing down of the Truth to effect through grace the necessary sanctification; a process of descent and ascent, of personal aspiration and Divine response. As a modern mystic has written: "It is in contemplating Him in the light that I let Him accomplish the transformation in me." All those who dedicate themselves to this search hear the voice of the Divine through his chosen instruments and recognise "that name which only lovers can understand."

Yet those who keep the words—the immortal dharma—of the Master are not those who are guided by a passionless quest for moral virtue, but those who love him. Love is the pre-condition of true becoming, for knowledge comes by love. It is through the state of unitive love that the soul finds the true ground of action, for then, in the words of the great Spanish mystic Juan de Yezpe, St. John of the Cross, "the soul seems to be God rather than itself, and indeed is God by participation." This was Jesus' new commandment, which introduces in the Fourth Gospel the royal theme of Divine-Human love. It is closely connected with his conception of the unity of Creator and created and his teaching about sanctity. "A new commandment I give unto you: that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This love was not brotherly affection or kindly sentiment. It was the very pulse of the spiritual

life; the similitude of the Father in the image of his children; the inmost fire and aspiration of the soul. The man who was filled with this love was fully committed in mind, heart and will to God, even to the surrendering of his life. But though to Jesus love was surrender it was also perfect freedom through the very nature of the Divine to whom it was made. Keyserling has asserted "that he understood love *exclusively* as a form of freedom. Hence his radical impatience of the bondage of all emotional ties." And he adds "On him... who has rooted his consciousness entirely in the domain of freedom, the commandments of Jesus no longer produce a paradoxical impression. For that essence within him in which his consciousness has taken its definite stand is in its nature not selfish, but selfless." It is true that Jesus recognised no compulsion in love either of emotion or duty and that he constantly enjoined detachment; nevertheless even in the interests of emphasis it is perhaps an arbitrary contraction to say that love meant exclusively a form of freedom to him. He recognised in it also an irresistibly dynamic and creative element. It was not only peace and joy; it was the impetus which enabled man to make the heroic leap of faith beyond the secure frontiers of reason and intellect, and as such it has always been advocated by mystics as a royal road to God. Only love can lead the soul into that dark night. "Love may reach to God in this life," says the author of the 'Cloud', "but knowledge never."<sup>1</sup>

When he turned to the unity of the human and the Divine, Jesus illustrated it by the poetic image of the vine. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love... the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." In this paean, as E. S. Bates has written, "the love of man... is inspired by, and is

<sup>1</sup> Knowledge as mental cognition, not what St. John of the Cross called *infused knowledge* and Sri Aurobindo *knowledge by identity*.

often a symbol of the love for God." The distinctions are in fact lost finally in Jesus' prayer over his disciples: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . . that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them."

This is a very summary indication of some of the principal themes in the Fourth Gospel. To reiterate briefly: it is through the possession of truth, the practice of love, the surrender of the will and the knowledge of the unity of all creatures in the Divine that the followers of Christ will come to the final experience of joy. Through the out-flowing of that joy in action, the "bearing of much fruit," God will receive his only appropriate glory, the transformation of life. It is perhaps one of the most significant sayings in this Gospel that Jesus should ask, not that his disciples might be taken out of the world, but that they might be saved from its corruption and by preaching his "glad tidings" begin to establish the true light in its darkness.

What is this transformation? It is not, as I have said before, simply moral purification, though that must be present. St. John is going much further. This "birth from above" "of the Spirit" is always contrasted with the natural man, however high his intellectual and ethical development, and presented as an evolution of a different order, not hostile to the flesh, but its true consummation. It is an aspiration towards the highest principle of the spiritual life. It is *that* which must be drawn down into human life and into the world. When Jesus speaks of this principle incarnated in men he uses a word honoured throughout time by contemplatives—not goodness, not purity, not virtue, but *light*. *Lumen de Lumine*. "Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before you. . . ."

It would however be a complete travesty of Jesus' belief to say that he anticipated this transfiguration of life on any sustained scale. He knew that the way of spiritual regeneration necessitated a test which few were heroic enough to endure. He knew that if he was persecuted the world would not spare his followers; that the true sadhaka was as rare as the great artist, philosopher, or scientist—the leaven of genius is the tough dough of mediocrity.

## II

I hope I have said enough about St. John to suggest that certain basic principles of his message agree significantly with the teaching of Sri Aurobindo. We must remember however that the Johannine Gospel is a very brief document. In some respects it has the extreme compression of poetry; or to put it in another way, the truths St. John enunciates are like those few precious crystals that are left in the crucible when all the other elements have been burned away.<sup>1</sup> St. John did not fill in the spare but soaring outline of his faith with a vast metaphysical structure like the Angelic Doctor, or expound a subtle (and in the West unrivalled) method of contemplation like the Mystical Doctor. As far as we can tell from his writings he had neither a speculative nor dialectical intellect (though he seems to have had some acquaintance with Greek philosophy); nor did he possess psychological knowledge, excepting in the intuitive sense of the great artist or moralist. Possibly, as Jaques Maritain has said of Christ and St. Paul, he was "too exalted to deign to philosophise." Nevertheless the "great lines" of mysticism are present in him, incised as splendidly and profoundly as in the Gita, and perhaps more tenderly, though without the Gita's perfect coalescence of poetry and metaphysic. It is therefore to the lucidity and psychological insight of Sri Aurobindo, and his exhaustive examination of every kind of dilemma that may arise for the contemplative, that every sincere and intelligent seeker after realisation, however devotedly Christocentric, can turn for guidance in that "strait way" laid down in the Fourth Gospel. Those who find in St. John of the Cross—incomparable teacher as he is in many ways—too world-negating a stress and too dismaying a picture of spiritual desolation, will turn with relief to the humanism and optimism of Sri Aurobindo—such a humanism and optimism as there was, I think, in the greatest of all Christian philosophers, St. Thomas Aquinas.

To St. John the Evangelist the approach to God is characterised by three qualities or states, and he weaves them in and out of his

<sup>1</sup> I have not attempted to deal with the Christocentric doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, since it is a question quite outside the province of this paper.

“glad tidings” as the three themes of love, unity and joy. Sri Aurobindo does not use quite identical terms to express the same truth, but they are very similar: bliss, oneness, love. “I would myself say,” he writes, “that bliss and oneness are the essential condition of the absolute reality, and love as the most characteristic dynamic power of bliss and oneness must support fundamentally and colour their activities. . . .” In his *Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo gives much prominence to spiritual love, St. John’s great leit-motif, and he emphasises very much the same things about it. Unfortunately the English word ‘love’ has to bear alone the subtle distinctions of the Greek *eros*, *philia* and *agape*, which is confusing at this point, for when St. John talks of love he means of course *agape*, spiritual love. Sri Aurobindo carefully defines this love which the *bhakta* must cultivate as psychic love, “The true love for the Divine is in its fundamental nature. . . . psychic and spiritual,” and the love to which it aspires to be united as transcendent Love, “a self-existent power of the Divine.” *Eros*, erotic love in its usual unredeemed state, has no place in the practice of the life of the spirit. St. John calls this rather quaintly “loving the world,” and uses the poetic but nevertheless opposite symbolism: “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” (First Letter). Sri Aurobindo, in his modern and more comprehensible idiom transposes these three elements into psycho-physiological terms and defines them as physical, vital and mental, but states that these too may join in love and surrender to the Divine if they “give themselves in the true way—the way of love, not ego-desire.”

Sri Aurobindo confines himself mostly to the love which the being offers to God, and insists that it must be “pure of all selfish claim and desire” and based on the spirit and soul. “The true love for the Divine is a self-giving,” he writes, “free of demand, full of submission and surrender: it makes no claim, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger.” When he turns to the love of creatures he does not give it the royal prominence we find in St. John: nevertheless he has what might almost be described as a gloss—and a very beautiful one—on St. John’s “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.”

It is this: "Benevolence becomes an intense compulsion imposed by love to seek always the good of the loved, sympathy becomes the feeling out of love to contain, participate in and take as part of one's own existence all the movements of the loved and all that concerns him."

It will be remembered that it was by the possession of agape that Jesus told his disciples all men would know they were of God. "To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole Crown and essence of our Yoga," says Sri Aurobindo. But he goes on to add what is also a typically Johannine distinction to the descent of the Divine Love: "It has always seemed to me impossible," he writes of the achievement of this ideal, "unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth—what I call the Supramental—and its Divine Power. Otherwise Love itself blinded by the confusions of this present consciousness may stumble in its human receptacles and, even otherwise, may find itself unrecognised, rejected or rapidly degenerating and lost in the frailty of man's inferior nature. But when it comes in the divine truth and power, Divine Love descends first as something transcendent and universal and out of that transcendence and universality it applies itself to persons according to the Divine Truth and Will, creating a vaster, greater, purer personal love than any the human mind or heart can now imagine. It is when one has felt this descent that one can be really an instrument for the birth and action of the Divine Love in the world." "He that doeth truth cometh to the light," says Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, and he prays for the Truth to purify and illumine the disciples. Again, he avers that God can only be worshipped "in truth". The stress on this need for "the morning light of the supernatural knowledge of God," to base and strengthen and guide love is so emphatic in this Gospel that it is surely not forcing the context to say that it is as important to its theme as the teaching on love, and is in fact indivisible from it.

In order to prepare for the Divine transformation, Sri Aurobindo follows the Gita in teaching that the aspirant must surrender his whole being to the Divine, mind, heart and will. "To be entirely sincere means to desire the Divine Truth only, to surrender yourself

more and more to the Divine Mother, to reject all personal demand and desire other than this one aspiration, to offer every action in life to the Divine and do it as the work given without bringing in the ego. This is the basis of the divine life." ("Whatsoever ye do," St. Paul told the Corinthians "do all to the glory of God.") This surrender as we have already seen, is integral to the message of the Fourth Gospel and is the triple requirement demanded by Jesus of his followers. Yet it is one of the most difficult movements of the spiritual life. "There are but few who understand how, and desire, to enter into this supreme detachment and emptiness of Spirit," says St. John of the Cross, commenting on the saying: "straight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And Sri Aurobindo, though he fortunately never draws such quailing pictures of inward desolation as St. John of the Cross, is too honest a teacher to conceal that the contemplative life, specially a contemplative life overflowing in action such as he envisages, is the most arduous way on which anyone can set foot. "This Yoga . . . needs an inexhaustible perseverance and patience," he tells a disciple. Again "These are the main conditions of preparation (calm, discrimination, detachment, aspiration etc.) for the supramental change: but none of them is easy." "The road of Yoga is long, every inch of ground has to be won against much resistance and no quality is more needed by the sadhaka than patience and single-minded perseverance with a faith that remains firm through all difficulties, delays and apparent failures." Jesus certainly had no illusions about the nature of his 'way'. "Ye must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."

On the question of the doctrine of the person, what parallels shall we find in the writings of Sri Aurobindo with the teaching of St. John the Evangelist? In any attempt to build a bridge between the religions of the East and West this presents one of the most difficult and vexed issues. To examine it properly would indeed necessitate a much greater space than the limits of a single paper. But in view of the present influence in Europe of the Personalism of Nicholas Berdyaev, the Russian émigré philosopher, it would be well to clarify one or two points connected with this problem that seem to challenge the thought of Sri Aurobindo.

One of the difficulties in a discussion concerning the true nature of man is the different connotations ascribed to terms like personality, individuality, soul, psyche, self by East and West, and indeed, the inconsistency with which individual philosophers will use these terms, which often produces quite unnecessary confusions. Another and more subtle difficulty is that man can only know the truth about himself and his relationship to God by interior illumination, at a stage of consciousness that will not submit to mental definitions, and where such expressions as "non-moral mysticism" for the experience of the bhakta, or "the personal and moral nature of the Divine-human relationship" in Christianity lose the cutting edge they possess for the intellect and become ridiculous. "The soul is silent when the mind looks at it," says Paul Claudel: it is only when she thinks herself alone that "noiselessly she goes and opens the door to her divine lover." Therefore to the truly spiritual consciousness the whole question of the doctrine of the person is apt to appear academic and irrelevant. "The goal marked out for us is not to speculate about these things, but to experience them," says Sri Aurobindo, "Churches, orders, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have busied themselves with intellectual creeds, dogmas, rites and institutions . . . and have neglected the one thing needful, the power and purification of the soul." Nevertheless, we must satisfy ourselves of the validity of the soul if we are to purify it. If it is to be gone like a puff of wind into the Absolute some heretics may prefer to stick to the Sorrowful Wheel rather than lose the shred of self-consciousness they already possess.

In a small book called "Man in Eastern Religions", F. H. Hilliard attempts to sum up the various teachings of the East upon the question: What is man? and to demonstrate where this teaching surpasses, and where it falls short of the Christian attitude to man. In Judaism he finds the most profound contribution of all to the view of man, and its full flowering in the teaching of Christ, though admitting that Christian theology dimmed this vision later by accepting so whole-heartedly St. Augustine's attitude to man. Parsism, Confucianism and Islam "are in fundamental agreement" with this Christian view of man as expounded in the Gospels "because they regard man as an individual, while the others, those of Hinduism, Buddhism



and Taoism, agree in thinking of man primarily as *an aspect* of ultimate Reality rather than as an individual whose personal characteristics clearly distinguish him from the rest of the universe and from other persons." The Christian, he goes on to say, believes "that man is to be understood primarily as a person and not a mere manifestation" and "the Christian conviction (is) that personality is the highest kind of category which can be applied to man." "Theosis makes man Divine," wrote Berdyaev in "Spirit and Reality", "while at the same time preserving his human nature. Thus instead of the human personality being annihilated, it is made in the image of God and the Divine Trinity.... The mystery of the personality is intimately related to that of freedom and love. Love and charity can flourish only if there are personal relationships. Monistic identity excludes love as well as freedom. Man is not identical with the cosmos and with God; man is a microcosm and a microtheosis. The human personality can hold a universal content."\* The weakness of these statements is plain, but they are symptomatic of a certain unease which seizes the Christian consciousness when it is confronted with the Atman-Brahman concept. F. H. Hilliard does not define what he means by personality, person, human nature, or what we are to understand by the cryptic words "a mere manifestation." Berdyaev is equally elusive in defining his terminology and it is difficult to meet his criticism adequately in face of his inability to apply

\* Thus Berdyaev again: "The Hindu mysticism of identity, of absolute abstraction from the plural world, of absorption in the Brahman... is an attempt at a mysticism of pure spirituality.... This is an austere and unloving mysticism. The absence of love is explained by the fact that this mysticism is unconscious of personality: it is concerned with abdicating rather than preserving the personality... love is the relation of one personality to another. *Tat twam asi* is a term which denotes not love or the union of oneself with another, but the discovery in another person of identical characteristics, thus suppressing personal being. Love, on the other hand, postulates differentiation, the existence of another personality rather than the identity of personalities.... In Hindu and Platonic mysticism everything is diametrically opposed to the dialogical and dramatic relationship between man and God, between one personality and another. Spirituality is interpreted as being opposed to personality and therefore as independent of love, human freedom, and a relation between the plural and the One. The mystical way is that of gnosis rather than of Eros." (*Spirit and Reality*.)

these three terms consistently, or to realise that when they are used in Eastern mysticism they may have connotations radically different to his own. Sometimes he defines personality as the Divine Likeness into which we must become transformed; yet when he says that the Hindu interprets spirituality "as being opposed to personality" he does not pause to consider that personality here may mean the ego-personality, or what the Mystical Doctor called "the Old Man." At other times he identifies "person" as a kind of Jivatman; human nature and human personality become interchangeable terms and he fails utterly to distinguish with any clarity what part of the whole complex of man is capable of being made "in the image of God."

The real crux of the matter appears to be the refusal of the Christian to concede that man is solely an aspect or manifestation of Reality—an analysis which, somewhat paradoxically, seems to imply a diminution of his status. Though the true ground of his being is in God, he is in fact a complex of soul and spirit, because "there is one Spirit but not one being." The mystics are mercifully clearer about this business than the philosophers, and when we turn to St. John of the Cross we see that the whole issue is dangerously near a decline into logomachy. "He who is joined to God is one Spirit," says St. Paul, and St. John of the Cross tells us that by the substantial (or natural) presence of God in every creature "He preserves them in being, and if He withdraws it they immediately perish and cease to be." But though the Spirit is present in the soul, this presence is not the sum total of the real being, even when the Old Man has been stripped from it, for the soul still maintains its separate identity. In unitive love "the soul seems to be God by participation, though in reality preserving its own substance as distinct from God, as it did before, although transformed into Him." Jaques Maritain, in his commentary on St. John of the Cross adds this: "In the spiritual marriage the created will and uncreated Love remain entitatively infinitely distant, and yet the soul, in its supernatural activity of love, loses or alienates itself in God become in the being or actuality of love more it than itself, the principle and agent of all its operations. All has been said by the Saint himself in that golden sentence. . . . *'they are two natures in one Spirit and love of God.'*" (The Degrees of

Knowledge). And he quotes St. Teresa's "All that one can say is that the soul, or rather, the spirit of the soul, becomes as far as one may judge, one thing with God."

For the Christian then, it is the entitative existence of the soul which distinguishes man, in the final analysis, from being simply a manifestation of Reality, for "there is one Spirit but not one being." This distinction is indeed maintained by St. John the Evangelist in his First Letter. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." Nevertheless, what is *the soul*? Christian mystical theology does not tell us.

When we turn to Sri Aurobindo we find practically the same categories of the being, but rather different qualifications. "The psychic being is the soul, the Purusha in the secret heart supporting by its presence the action of the mind, life and body. . . . The Atman is the Self or Spirit that remains above pure and stainless, unaffected by the stains of life, by desire and ego and ignorance. It is realised as the true being of the individual, but also more widely as the *same being* in all and as the Self in the cosmos: it has also a self-existence above the individual and cosmos and it is then called the Paramatma, the supreme Divine Being. . . . In a certain sense the various Purushas or beings in us, psychic, mental, vital, physical are projections of the Atman, but that gets its full truth only when we get into our inner being and know the inner truth of ourselves." Again, "In the experience of Yoga the self or being is an essence one with the Divine or at least it is a portion of the Divine and has all the Divine potentialities. But in manifestation it takes two aspects, the Purusha and Prakriti, conscious being and nature. . . . The Purusha in itself is Divine, but exteriorised in the ignorance of Nature it is the individual apparent being imperfect with her imperfection. Thus the soul or psychic essence, which is the Purusha entering into the evolution and supporting it, carries in itself all the divine potentialities; but the individual psychic being which it puts forth as its representative assumes the imperfection of Nature and evolves in it till it has recovered its full psychic essence and united itself with the Self above of which the soul is the individual projection in the evolution. This duality in the being on all its planes,—for it is true in different ways not only of the Self and the psychic but of the mental,

vital, and physical Purushas—has to be grasped and accepted before the experiences of the Yoga can be fully understood.”

In the analysis of Sri Aurobindo the soul is an aspect of the Jivatman. The Jivatman presides from above over the life-manifestation; the soul or psychic being “stands behind the manifestation in life and supports it.” “The psychic being is therefore evolutionary, not like the Jivatman, prior to the evolution.”<sup>1</sup> This takes us a step farther than Christianity, but it is not entirely satisfactory, for though it brings us back to St. Paul’s “one Spirit” it does not explicitly maintain the *ultimate* entitative existence of each being without which it is difficult to hold the distinction between immanence and transcendence, a distinction fundamental to Christian thought. However when we turn to “The Life Divine” for assistance we see at once how close Sri Aurobindo is in some respects to Christian thinking on this complex issue: “To overpass differences is quite possible, but that is most easily done in pure experience . . . But . . . even the domain of pure spiritual self-realisation and self-expression need not be a single white monotone, there can be a great diversity in the fundamental unity; *the supreme Self is one, but the souls of the Self are many*<sup>2</sup> and, as is the soul’s formation of nature, so will be its spiritual self-expression. A diversity in oneness is the law of the manifestation; the supramental unification and integration must harmonise these diversities, but to abolish them is not the intention of the Spirit in Nature.”

To a hostile criticism this might appear as having the best of both worlds, but to the intellect the final mystery of the true status and constituency of each being has always presented an enigma, since it resists translation into mental formulas and can indeed only be known when the mind ceases to look at the soul, and when “wonder

<sup>1</sup> “The psychic being . . . is a portion of the Divine, one in essence, but in the dynamics of the manifestation there is always even in identity a difference. The Jivatman, on the contrary, lives in the essence and can merge itself in identity with the Divine; but it too, the moment it presides over the dynamics of the manifestation, knows itself as one centre of the multiple Divine, not as the Parameshwara. It is important to remember this distinction; for, otherwise, if there is the least vital egoism, one may begin to think of oneself as an Avatar or lose balance like Hridaya with Ramakrishna.” *Lights on Yoga*.

<sup>2</sup> my italics.

lays down its arms and imagination its images.” In “The Pool of Vishnu,” when Rajah Amar finally joins the pilgrims, he suddenly realises that his spiritual experiences have taken him far beyond the confines of his strict Buddhist philosophy, but he is content to accept his new revelation, knowing that understanding will one day come to him.

Finally, what of St. John’s transformation of the world?

All students of Sri Aurobindo will know that this divine transformation of the world is the “ideal in action” of his mysticism. Its first requisite is to love and discover God, for without first finding him how can his Will be known? When he has been found—in the inmost being, in the universe, and in his Supreme Transcendence beyond his material creation, the seeker will know, as Christ knew, that it is his Will that his Kingdom shall come on earth as it is in heaven. “The way of Yoga followed here,” says Sri Aurobindo, “has a different purpose from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in matter. This is an exceedingly difficult aim and difficult Yoga; to many or most it will seem impossible.” Truly it is a Kingdom “not of this world” as man, the mental being defines it. But what analogy, if any, is there between Sri Aurobindo’s divinisation of life and St. John’s? We must go carefully here for there would appear to be a distinction between Sri Aurobindo’s explicit and implicit feelings about Christianity. For instance he says: “There is no connection between the Christian conception (of the Kingdom of Heaven) and the idea of the Supramental descent. The Christian conception supposes a state of things brought about by religious emotion and moral purification etc.” Yet in another place he writes this: “The Yoga we practise, is not for ourselves alone, but for the Divine; its aim is to work out the will of the Divine in the world. . . . It is not personal *ananda*, but the bringing down of the divine *ananda*—Christ’s Kingdom of heaven, our Satyayuga—upon the earth.” Again, “It is of this *vijnana* and this *ananda* that Christ spoke as the kingdom of God that is within you.” By “Christian conception”

I take it that Sri Aurobindo means, not the concept of Christ himself, but the narrow limits by which organised Christianity has come to measure the luminous infinity the phrase was originally designed to convey. Otherwise it would be difficult to reconcile the two statements. For if there is no connection between the supramental descent and that "birth from above"—metanoia—"of the Spirit" "the Spirit that quickeneth" of which St. John speaks, then there is no divine counterpoint between these two mystics, only a confusion of voices. But I do not believe that is so. The transformation of which St. John speaks, that *knowledge by love, through truth*, which should give the joy of God, the Divine Ananda to the disciples, that they in turn might become the Light of the world, the very channel for the effectuation of the Divine will—this transformation has possibly never been grasped in its fullness even by those whom Dean Inge has called the true Apostolic succession, the saints and mystics. Indeed I cannot think of any Christian thinker who has come as near the *amplitude* of its meaning as Sri Aurobindo, though there have been sublime exponents of various aspects of it. To Christians the tension between contemplation and action, between the subjective-objective relation of that Kingdom which is *within* and yet not *of* the world, has always been a never-ending battle. Even St. Paul could not solve it. "To me to live is Christ," he told the Phillippians, "and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence I know I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith." To gain the Kingdom of Heaven it was necessary to 'depart' out of the world. But to St. John with his shining vision of the integrality of God, man and cosmos there was no essential conflict at the core of experience, as there is never any conflict to a truly spiritual consciousness. Though St. John contrasts flesh and spirit, earth and heaven, he does not oppose them: he sees always the higher power informing the lower, redeeming and permeating it. The same vision of all things being possible in the life of grace, of spirit informing flesh and ignorance giving way to light, is infused into the mysticism of Sri Aurobindo. In all

his published utterances on Yoga he has emphasised and re-emphasised the necessity for every level of the individual to give way to "the spirit that quickeneth," so that it may bear the light and become pliant in the hands of God. It is a call "to grow into the image of God, to dwell in Him and with Him and be a channel of His joy and might and an instrument of his works." This is not the diminution of life, but "life more abundantly," for like Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, Sri Aurobindo has no scorn of earth. His aim "is to manifest, reach or embody a higher consciousness upon earth and not to get away from earth into a higher world or some supreme Absolute. . . . The fundamental proposition in this matter was proclaimed very definitely in the Upanishads which went so far as to say the Earth is the foundation and all the worlds are on the earth and to imagine a clean-cut or irreconcilable difference between them is ignorance; here and not elsewhere, not by going to some other world the divine realisation must come."

The ideal of St. John the Evangelist and Sri Aurobindo is therefore very much alike; the perfection of the individual in that knowledge by love, through truth, which will lead ultimately to a meeting and engagement with life of transforming power. It is the apotheosis of the life of the Spirit, the perfect marriage of contemplation and action, the illuminative and the creative, which the genius of St. Paul symbolised as "the armour of light," thereby signifying its twin aspects of indwelling truth and outflowing purpose. Fundamentally the 'word' they speak is a simple one, though to live it may demand the climbing of a spiritual Everest. As far as its essence can be crystallised in one sentence it has been expressed with fathomless simplicity in the words: "love is the fulfilling of the law."

MORWENNA DONNELLY

## *Sri Aurobindo and Indian Polity\**

SINCE his retirement to Pondicherry in 1910 Sri Aurobindo remained for a long time almost a mystery to the general public. It is only recently that he has begun to be more and more prominent to the seeing mind of his countrymen and of people in distant lands. The idea is gaining ground that Sri Aurobindo is a mystic, a philosopher or a spiritual teacher who in his Ashram has been training his disciples in Yogic disciplines. A truth, a very great truth, there certainly is in such appraisements. But it is not all what he really is, what he has actually done and is still now doing in the world of the spirit, in the sphere of literature and thought as well as of action. His works published so far are but a fraction of the vast literary and philosophical treasures that have flowed from his pen during these years of seclusion.

It is impossible by any stretch of imagination to fully measure, or by any critical acumen, to justly evaluate, the literary output of Sri Aurobindo, so stupendous it is in its variety and content. Poems without number, plays, essays literary and historical, philosophical disquisitions, expositions of spiritual ideas and ideals, letters—a vast literature by themselves on a wide range of subjects varying from those of ordinary interest to the Yogic but all of them from his own particular spiritual standpoint—have yet to see the 'light. Even quite a large part of his published writings, especially those that formed the *Arya*, has not had that circulation which could have brought home to the intellectual elite of humanity the consummate wisdom, the transcendent truths about the fundamental problems

\* Some views from historical standpoint, mainly based on Sri Aurobindo's recently published book *The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity*. The quotations in this article are all from this book.



of human existence, which Sri Aurobindo revealed through the pages of the *Arya* from 1914 to 1921. And has he not said, as an eminent Indian thinker observed, the last word on these problems? The *Arya* is in a sense an epitome of Aurobindonian thought in many of its aspects.

In one of the sequences in that journal the Master delineated the various expressions of India's creative soul, primarily as a counterblast—and what a powerful and devastating one at that!—to the vile aspersions cast on Indian culture by the author of *India and the Future*, Sir William Archer. The reading public in India, far less in other countries, did not perhaps know how this English vilifier of India compelled Sri Aurobindo to take up the challenge and give a smashing reply whose negative and the then importance stands today far outweighed by the positive light it throws on the cultural achievements of India in the past. Indeed, it leaves the reader wondering if there were any similar writings with which to compare the excellence of this revealing exposition of the secret of India's soul, the essential aim and intention of her historic development, the inner, and therefore, the real significance of the ways in which her children have tried through the ages to give form to their aspirations and strivings.

The first thing that strikes the reader of Sri Aurobindo's recently published book on Indian Polity—a section of his above-mentioned exposition in the *Arya*, called *A Defence of Indian Culture*,—is that almost all the works, the so-called standard ones too, on the history of India are utter misnomers, entirely lacking in the correct perspective of India's cultural evolution. An integral vision, a coherent picture, embracing all the manifold aspects of the creative life of the people is rarely found in what passes for the history of India. Unending narrations of political events may tell us much but not everything about a people, since these events as they outwardly are, do not, because they cannot, indicate the real intention of Nature in them, without an understanding of which we know next to nothing of the true history of a country, far less of the forces that have shaped its destiny. The story of India's political development will be not only inaccurate and incomplete but a fundamentally poor and wrong representation, if it is not told with reference to the true nature and

tendency of her racial being, and the psychology that impelled that tendency to fulfil itself in the endeavour of the people to build up a strong collective life based on the ideals set forth in the Dharma-shastras.

The work of the foreign Indologists for the reconstruction of India's history must always be gratefully acknowledged. But it must also be said that the writings of most of them as well as of Indian scholars who have followed these Western pioneers, betray defects which greatly detract from their value as a faithful record of India's historic development through centuries. Besides, the ulterior motives of many of those European writers and their attitude of superiority towards the Indians, because of their long—fortunately now past—political subjection, are not a little responsible for the deliberate attempts they have so often made to belittle ancient India and her greatness and to prove to the world her incapacity to manage her own affairs. But what is more deplorable is that few Indian historians have so far cared to understand the “inwardness” of their country's history, the central purpose of its existence. And this understanding they can have only through an insight into the true character of India's culture and civilisation, into the spirit that has inspired and moulded the various expressions of her soul. Their exclusive attachment to the scientific method of the West, confined to the obvious and superficial view of things, has blinded these historians to the deep and subtle truths of the dynamic and all-embracing spirituality of India, the centre of her life and culture.

There must therefore be an intuitive seeing into the very depth of things so that ideas and forces that actualise themselves in the outer actions and movements may be comprehended in their proper implications, and facts appear in their true bearing on the dominant tendency and the characteristic genius of the race.

The history of India must be a true mirror of all the inner and outer activities of her people, showing at the same time what part her soul played in every one of them. It must therefore be rescued from its subservience to ends that are anything but genuinely historical.

Trained in a system of education which is a poor and perverted imitation of what the West had long ago rejected, we have never

learnt how to study and appreciate our own past, and no wonder that we should so often exhibit our colossal ignorance of it in all that we are doing today to rebuild our country on the true basis of our national life, as we conceive it. The impact of an alien culture has dulled in us the power to feel what we really are as a race, a race with a magnificent past whose meaning and purpose are being rediscovered and reaffirmed and shown to us in their proper light by a seer like Sri Aurobindo.

## II

As we glance through the pages of Sri Aurobindo's book on Indian Polity, mentioned above, a book small but closely packed with the thoughts and ideas and visions of a seer, we feel transported back to those splendid days of our past when India showed her incomparable political genius in the building up of powerful republics and vast empires and in administering them with superb efficiency and in accordance with the spiritual bent of her mind, enabling the free individuals in them to live up to the highest ideals of the race, so that there might grow up a collectivity comprising such individuals, and moving towards a perfect form through the perfection of its human constituents. Where is the text-book that has dealt with this deeper truth underlying India's political endeavours? Foreign writers have distorted facts and desecrated the pages of Indian history with fabrications in order to prove to the world the weakness of our ancient corporate organisations, and our incapacity to govern and build up any homogeneous and progressive body-politic. Even some of our own scholars are not free from such false notions. Moreover, these ideas find support in another wrong view, also widely held, that India had her attention always fixed on the contemplation of the Spirit to the total exclusion of the things of life. Sri Aurobindo's luminous essay is a flat contradiction of such myths. It exposes and nails to the counter once for all the utter absurdity of such statements. If India was great in her spiritual achievements, she was no less great in her material pursuits, for she regarded them, according to *Arthashastra*, as the basic condition of her spiritual endeavours. India would not have been able to live the rich and

colourful life that she has done through the ages, had her people rejected life as a mere illusion. But, on the contrary, life had no meaning for her if it was denied the scope for the fulfilment of its spiritual possibilities.

How has India managed to have such a long and chequered existence in history and what is the future it points to? There is in every people a common soul, mind and body. And like the individual man, a people also passes through the cycle of birth, growth and decline. And, if at the last stage the soul or the life-force of a people becomes incapable of a recovery or a renewal, the people dwindles and slowly makes its final exit from the world. In this way have passed away many of the ancient peoples who are only remembered in history as the builders of great civilisations. It is a soul idea or a life idea that really governs and inspires the activities of a people. In the history of the world China and India are the only countries with a more or less unbroken record of ceaseless creative strivings. It is these two ancient peoples alone that have retained their old strength and energy and are able to make ever-new endeavours not unworthy of the greatness of their heritage. In the case of the Chinese this is so because of the indomitable power of life that sustains and guides them towards their high destiny in the future, and in the case of India, because the immortal spirit of her collective being and her inexhaustible creative energy have never failed her whenever after a spell of inactivity or lassitude, she has made an attempt to ascend to a new and higher summit of glory.

India's ancient seers envisaged in her the Mother, the Infinite and Compassionate Mother of man, a conscious formation of the Supreme Shakti. And her history shows how true this vision has been. The spiritual mind of India, says Sri Aurobindo, regarded life as a manifestation of the Self, the people as a life-body of Brahman in the *samasti*, the collectivity, the collective Narayana\*; the individual as Brahman in the *vyasti*, the separate Jiva, the individual Narayana. If the physical form of India embodies the Shakti, her human content incarnates Brahman. But to the Tantriks, everything that exists is a form of the Shakti, and to the Vedantin, Brahman

\* The indwelling Godhead in man.

pervades everything. And these two ideas find their identity in the transcendent vision of that creative power of Sachchidananda which is ever behind every endeavour of evolutionary Nature to prepare man for a divine existence upon earth. In the acceleration of this all-important preparation India has already taken a hand. It is a goal towards which she is destined to lead mankind by her already acquired spiritual power. That is why after a brief slumber she is again having a new resurgence of her soul. That is why her greatest Poet and Priest of the Spirit is proclaiming today the highest truth of human existence, the truth of a perfect form of man's social living in which the individual soul rising into a higher consciousness will live in complete harmony with the collective soul of humanity and follow that "sunlit" path of free participation by all in the service and adoration of the One in the Many. This will be the spiritual foundation of the World-State of the future, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo.

Spirituality is indeed the key-note of the Indian mind. "The master-idea" says Sri Aurobindo, "that has governed the life, culture, social ideas of the Indian people has been the seeking of man for his true spiritual self and the use of life as a frame and means for that discovery and for man's ascent from the ignorant and natural into the spiritual existence." As it was thought, and rightly, that for the attainment of this end, the one prerequisite is full freedom and utmost opportunities of self-development for the individual, so also it was believed that man's collective living could grow into its perfect form only when it was smaller in size, having an individuality of its own, and was therefore better able to achieve its purpose and serve more effectively the larger collectivity of the country to which it belonged.

Every step in the forward march of man is first taken by the individual, the individual who is always the pioneer and the precursor. It is the labour of the individual that fructifies into what we call the progress of the race, for it is to him that the vision first comes as also the urge to give shape and form to it. And what is true of the individual may also be true of the collectivity, but the latter cannot so easily move forward if it is larger in size and lacks compactness and inter-communion, as it happened in ancient times

when communications were extremely inadequate to the purpose. Hence the existence then of smaller form of corporate living.

Every individual is more or less a particular type, and the more creative these individuals, the more markedly do they vary, one from the other. These very individuals having developed on the distinctive lines of their *swabhava*, constitute the greatness and glory of the community to which they belong, and by the variety of their achievements immensely enrich and exalt its cultural life. This is how they aid the general progress of the community, and therefore, its integration into a compact whole with an individuality of its own composed of racial, cultural, linguistic and geographical factors peculiar to the region inhabited by the community. In the same way can such groups become free participants in the collective existence of a larger whole, having spiritual, cultural and political ideals which in their fundamentals are common to all the constituent groups, each of which by its distinctive characteristics contributes to the progress and well-being of the larger whole. The central State in ancient India emerged out of this larger collective life both as a necessity and as a natural development. It was strengthened, among other factors, by the formation of representative assemblies for the deliberation of matters of common interest to the whole empire. And its growth had always been inspired by the great ideal of the race, the ideal of unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Indeed there can be no effective unity unless it evolves out of multiplicity. The many is the strength and contents of the one, even as the one is the truth and essence of the many. The autonomous and progressive units were thus the sustaining limbs of the body-politic or the central State, which stood for the oneness of the collective life of the race.

The beginnings of the State in India may be traced to the Vedic times when the unit of corporate existence starting with the family (*Griha* or *Kula*) enlarged itself through the village (*Gram*), the clan (*Vis*), the people (*Jana*) till it embraced the whole country (*Rashtra*). A region inhabited by a community was called a *Janapada* which gradually developed into *Janapadarajya*, a territorial State, and then into *Mahajanapadarajya*, a larger territorial State, with the central authority vested either in a king or in a popular assembly, the *Sabha*

and the *Samiti* of the Vedic age, or in both, the latter always limiting the powers and prerogatives of the former. It was this system which formed the framework and the mainspring of the mechanism of the State that evolved later in ancient India. And what is important about it is that notwithstanding the changes made at different epochs in the shape and character of these political structures, the village-unit ever remained the constant and vital factor as the very foundation for their growth and progress, thus showing the individualistic tendency of India's political being. It is with this village-unit that the Indian idea of democracy is always associated, since all its affairs, secular and religious, used to be looked after by the people's assembly. The *Panchayat* system prevalent almost everywhere in India today, has derived from this. Will Durant, the eminent American thinker and historian, believes that the village community of ancient India is the prototype of all forms of self-government and democracy that have ever been evolved in various parts of the world. The Greek Agora, Roman Comitia or German folk-moot, to which may be traced the democratic institutions of modern Europe, are said to be echoes of the Vedic Samiti; but whereas no discussion was permitted in the former assemblies of Europe, the Vedic Samiti, a sovereign assembly of the whole people (*Vis*), was a deliberative body where speeches were delivered and debates took place.

The aim of the Vedic Aryans in these units of community life was to bring together the various parts of the country under the exalting influence of the Aryan culture. That they had a vision of India's oneness is evident from the river-hymns of the Rig Veda; and their political endeavours indicate that they visualised a vast State representing the collective life of the people and seeking to establish the Aryan ideals as the ideals of the race. The sovereignty of the Dharma as a guiding force in the life of the individual and the collectivity was a later and higher phase, when the social ideals of India had been already defined and systematised, and the units of community life had acquired a more definite shape. These units, as already shown, were formed and sustained by the village democracies and were linked with the larger territorial units that existed at the time.

What really existed and was liberally encouraged was, says Sri Aurobindo, "a kind of complex communal freedom and self-determina-

tion. Each group unit of the community was a self-determined and self-governing communal body, having its own natural existence and administering its own proper life and business, but always joining with others in the discussion and regulation of matters of mutual or common interest in the general assemblies of the kingdom and empire." Many of these small states were of a republican character—another proof of their distinctive individuality—which gave them much of their strength and stability. The Buddha once said that if the republican character could be maintained in its purity and vigour, the state would remain ever invincible even against the attack of such a powerful emperor as Ajatasatru of Magadha. During the Buddha's time ten such republics existed in northern India, of which the Lichchavis of Vaisali were the most famous. There is evidence to show that the real strength of these republics lay not so much in their government as in the character of their people. Did not Plato say, "Like man, like state." "Governments vary as the characters of man vary." Mention may be made here that many republican states existed in northern and central India till the fifth century of the present era.

### III

It is normal to Indian nature to regard as inviolable the right of the individual as well as of the collectivity—the smaller the collectivity, we may repeat, the stronger and more progressive it is likely to be—to grow into the fullness of its being by following its own particular line of development. There can indeed be no higher conception of democracy. And its modern advocates have yet to realise that the democratic ideal enshrines, however inchoately, the truth of a higher perfection which man, both in his individual and collective life, is destined to attain. That is why there is so much insistence on the necessity of absolute freedom for man, so that he may be able to express all that is latent in him, and the best and highest that is latent in him is his eternal and immaculate divinity whose uncurbed manifestation is the goal towards which he is moving. Freedom and democracy are but its necessary aids.

It is a remarkable fact—singular and unique in the history of



the world—that the wide prevalence of popular freedom in ancient India hardly found itself in conflict with the system of monarchy that existed, the reason being that the latter served only to augment the collective well-being of the people. The king was the servant of the people, the upholder of the Dharma, and his power was so hedged in as to prevent the growth of any personal despotism or any tendency towards absolutism or autocracy. Manu prescribes and justifies dethronement and even capital punishment for a king if he defy the law and develop into a tyrant. The land, says the same authority, belongs to the people, to those who cultivate it, the king being only its custodian. Not any temporal power but the ideal rule of living, the Dharma, enunciated, fostered and enjoined upon the kings by the Rishis, was the real and greater sovereign. The king as a person, his ancestry, his family traditions, his personal and family prestige were matters of no moment from the point of view of this Dharma. His chief function was to see to the proper observance of the Dharma by the people, and to prevent crimes, serious disorders and breaches of the peace. He himself was bound to obey the Dharma as also the rigorous rules and restrictions it imposed on his personal life and conduct and on the province, powers and duties and even on the prerogatives of his regal authority and office. The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas—these and other yet unexplored sources of much historical information—abound in such examples of dutiful kings and equally dutiful subjects. Besides, the monarch almost always reflected the dignity of a stable civilisation and represented a free living people. He was the symbol of the country's greatness and glory even as the representative assembly of his kingdom or empire mirrored the mind and will of his people.

The theory of the divinity of the king does not seem to have found much favour in the Vedic age. Several *mantras*, however, composed during the period of the Smritis, speak of the entry of deities into the king's person at the time of his coronation. In certain sacrifices kings were compared with gods, and declared as the visible symbol of Prajapati, the Lord of creation. But, barring a very few of the law-makers, almost all of them were against placing the king above the Law. To them the majesty of the Law was higher than the majesty of the king. The view of Gregory the Great that even

bad kings are divine was not only foreign but repugnant to Indian thinking. We know Manu's dictum on this point. Shukracharya calls a vicious and oppressive king not divine (*Divya*) but demoniac (*Rakshomsa*). The king Vena who claimed exemption from punishment on the plea of his divinity was killed by the sages who did not care to examine the validity of his stand. The Mahabharata declares that if a king is unable to protect his subjects and administer his kingdom righteously, the subjects should kill him like a mad dog.

It is therefore clear that the idea of the divinity of the king was not accepted in India in its literal sense. It stood for virtues, great, noble and godly, which the king must possess that he might be fit to discharge the sacred and onerous duties of his high office. That is why so much stress was laid in ancient India on the training of the princes, for which the best teachers of the time were appointed. The Smritis assert that the king is the trustee of the peoples' interests, the State an instrument through which he is to guard those interests and provide scope for their full satisfaction, and that his supreme function lies in dealing out even-handed justice to all. *Arthasastra* says that 'the ruler is created by Brahma as servant of the people.' In order, therefore, to be equal to this delicate, difficult and sacred task, the king must have in him divine qualities. This is the true meaning of the divinity that was attached to royalty in ancient India.

#### IV

The State in ancient India, whether republican or monarchical, was not, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, a mere mechanical structure as the States in the world are today. It was a natural growth out of the extraordinarily complex social organisation of the people. And its real character can be understood when studied as a part of, or in relation to, the organic totality of the social existence of the people. The laws, the customs and the institutions of ancient India were a natural organic development, and the State embodied them as a coordinating centre which for its sustenance and growth depended on the vitality of the parts comprising it. These parts were the social orders elaborated by the makers of the

law. These law-makers or law-givers were the Rishis whose treatment of human nature was based on their knowledge of the inner laws and forces that operate in the life of man and guide his evolution stage by stage. Their clear perception of what man is in his nature enabled these unerring psychologists of ancient India to evolve a socio-religious system in which every individual nature would fulfil itself by following its own *swadharma*, and this fulfilment meant for every man his fitness for the next stage.

Thus the people's adherence to common ideals, their observance of common rules, and above all, their loyalty to Dharma, brought about a cohesive society consisting of diverse orders and institutions helping the people to feel at every stage and in every activity of their life the quickening and directing influences of a common social existence. This was how there developed a common social consciousness which became a most unifying factor in the community life of the people. It was this consciousness again which largely promoted the growth and expansion of the State representing the people's will to build and strengthen corporate organisations based on the sovereignty of the Dharma, the religious, ethical, social, political, juridic and customary law organically governing the life of the people.

The State was thus a natural and realistic expression of the social inclination of its human constituents freely and flexibly following, each according to his nature, the rules of a comprehensive scheme of life. It was never a rigid mechanical contrivance but a supple and spontaneous creation of the will of the people's social being, a marvellous creation indeed, which, if ever viewed in the right perspective, will furnish the most conclusive proof of the socio-political genius of the race. We wonder how the society, and for the matter of that, the State could weld into its body-politic so many diverse elements, giving scope to each one for contributing its share to the growth and expansion of the whole. Yet it was a fact borne out by a mass of indisputable evidence. A correct presentation of the early history of India must include this unique achievement of the race. It is because of this power of theirs to create unity out of apparent diversity that the ancient fathers of the race were able to build up a superb political system which lasted not for centuries but for millenniums. And this they were able to do because of their

intuitive perception of the inner springs of the actions and interests of man as a social being.

The western approach to polity is too superficial to be of any real and lasting benefit to the collective well-being of man. It creates problems but does not—because it cannot—offer any solution to them. It is tied to the blundering ways of the mind and constructs precarious external patterns in which the deeper urges of life find no scope for self-fulfilment. Sri Aurobindo points out its basic defect when he says: “The sophisticating, labouring, constructing, efficient, mechanising reason looses hold of the simple principles of a people’s vitality; it cuts it away from the secret roots of life. The result is an exaggerated dependence on system and institution, on legislation and administration and the deadly tendency to develop in place of a living people, a mechanical state.”

## V

In spite, however, of its being founded on the intrinsic truths of human nature, the socio-political system of India succumbed to the shock of the Mohammedan onslaught. Even a cursory view of the social and political conditions of the time would show how she was taken at a disadvantage and hit upon the most vulnerable point of her socio-political structure. The cultural and spiritual unity remained almost intact, no doubt, but the country had little political integrity worth the name, mainly because the society—always in ancient India the basis of her political structure—had ceased to be a cohesive force in the communal consciousness of the people. The conservative mind of India took the continued irruptions of the barbarians during the earlier centuries of the present era as a threat to the life and culture of the country. Although most of these foreigners were gradually incorporated or assimilated with the collective being of the people, the custodians of the ancient traditions did their utmost to preserve their sanctity. They thought that the best way of doing that would be to reinterpret the social laws to meet the exigencies of the time. Unfortunately, however, in their efforts to do so, they followed the letter and forgot the spirit, placing restrictions upon the application of the laws, erecting new caste-barriers

and curtailing the social rights of the non-Brahmin communities, so much so that the society became more and more rigid in its organic movements and showed signs of decadence and disintegration. This was of course a long and protracted process but it took a worse form during the Muslim invasion. The effect of this on the already enfeebled national consciousness surviving in the states and kingdoms was a progressive decay and an eventual incapacity to coalesce with the various political units and present a solid and united front against a foreign aggression.

A unification of the whole country under one central authority, forming an impregnable bulwark of defence, could not be fully achieved in ancient India, owing, among other causes, to insufficient communications and the lack in the powers that be of any will to crush out of existence the smaller states and principalities. Many of these states whose compactness and individuality were largely responsible for much of their social and cultural progress, tended almost for the same reason to be more and more exclusive and self-centred and therefore unwilling to stand any imperial authority at the centre, with the result that an integration of the whole country which in historic times was possible on several occasions through the impact of such an authority, could not grow into a cohesive force in the political life of ancient India. Moreover, the indifference of these states to the larger interests of the country and the lack of an effective solidarity among them exposed India to foreign aggressions. Nevertheless, the attempt was always there to synthetise these states as well as peoples and nations by bringing about their unity while maintaining their respective autonomies in a larger free-and-living organism. The institutions of the royal sacrifices, such as *Rajasuya*<sup>1</sup> and *Aswamedha*<sup>2</sup>, the ideal of universal kingship, such as *Sarvabhauma* (*dominus omnium*), *Chaturanta*, *Chakravarti*, point to the constant efforts

<sup>1</sup> The consecration of an emperor symbolising his conquests in all directions.

<sup>2</sup> The royal horse-sacrifice in which a king would let loose a white horse, duly consecrated and protected by an army, to move about at its free will as a challenge to other kings. It would be brought back after a year when the king would be consecrated as an emperor of the regions in which the horse moved unchallenged.

of the kings and emperors of ancient India to extend the territorial boundaries of their empires to the utmost limits, and to consolidate their integrity under one imperial authority. The Epics and the Puranas give vivid descriptions of the vastness and splendour of these early *maharajyas* of India.

The royal sacrifices, however, had a deep political significance in that they fostered the growth of a kind of federation of the various states and kingdoms in early India. And this federation, like everything Indian, had a spiritual basis too. For, though the emperor was there to whom due allegiance was professed by all the attending kings and potentates from different parts of India, the inner consecration of the heart was always made to the Lord of the Sacrifice, the King of kings, the Supreme. To these rulers as to every Indian Bharata-varsha was the *Devabhumi*, the holy land of God, and it was God alone whom they worshipped as the real Dispenser of their country's destiny. And was it not this spontaneous adoration by which they were united into a fellowship of service to their common motherland whose welfare, greatness and glory they regarded as their sole concern and which they knew they could best promote by furthering the cause of progress in their own autonomous kingdoms? A remarkable endeavour, indeed, of that heroic age of India! It may be noted that the kings who participated in these sacrifices did so not as vassals or subordinates but as free comrades pledged to the common ideals of the race, dedication to which they used to reaffirm in these royal functions. The *Satapatha Brahmana* and the *Aitereya Brahmana* contain references to a number of such gigantic royal ceremonials. Of great historical importance however is the *Rajasuya* Sacrifice described in the Mahabharata. It was responsible for the creation of a federation, a Federal Union, so to say, comprising most of the states and kingdoms of the India of the time following the Kurukshetra War. The institution, especially of *Aswamedha* has for centuries been celebrated by the monarchs of India not only as a symbol of their prowess and victory but as a sign of their effort to strengthen the integrity of the whole country under the sovereignty of an *Ekrat*, the Lord-Paramount, the highest of whose duties it was to uphold the Dharma and to see to its proper observance by the people, on which, they believed, depended the progress of the race. But in later times,—and it con-

tinued to be performed almost throughout the whole period of Hindu kingship in ancient India,—the institution lost much of its pristine grandeur, owing, among other reasons, to the largeness of vision which had inspired it in the early days having begun to diminish in the consciousness of the monarchs concerned. But these Unions were more or less of a loose nature and could not grow into compact ones, lasting, as they did, only for a time. Nevertheless they are proof of how India tried to build political unity in those dim days of her past.

In historical times the largest All-India Empire was that of the Mauryas, but it also had within it a number of independent kingdoms which were left to develop on their autonomous lines. The empire of the Satavahanas of Andhra had in it a number of self-governing feudatories. The famous Gupta Emperor Samudragupta allowed certain states in Gujarat, which he had conquered, to continue their own rule under his hegemony. The Palas of Bengal showed similar magnanimity to some smaller states within their big empire which extended far to the North and the South. But these are only a few among many instances of the far-sighted and large-hearted statesmanship of the emperors of ancient India, who knew well enough that the vitality of a people flourishes better in the freedom of small autonomous groups and communities than under a dead-level uniformity of a too complex centralised government. When therefore these emperors found any group strongly individualistic in its self-expression, far from viewing with disfavour or attempting to suppress, they used often to respect and recognise their liberty.

## VI

That India, till the Mohammedan conquest, never showed her incapacity to absorb many foreign peoples and their cultures was largely due to the free play of her life-force conserved in the various units of her collective life as a result of the freedom of growth and development either voluntarily granted by the central power or wrested out of its unwilling hands. Even during her days of decline when conditions were not at all favourable to such a phenomenon, India witnessed an outburst of militant patriotism among the Marathas and the Sikhs who proved that the race was yet capable of giving

a good account of itself by summoning up whatever vitality it still had in it when a right leader, a heroic and selfless soul, came forth to carry out the will of the Mother as her chosen instrument.

The coming of the British to India is an event of outstanding importance in her modern history. It was responsible for many things that were good but also a lot that proved positively disastrous for her. British imperialism destroyed, among other things, the natural divisions of the country and erected artificial boundaries to suit their administrative convenience. A unity came into being, no doubt, but it was not the perfectly natural and flawless unity of a living organism, every part of which could freely function and contribute to the well-being of the parent body. It was a mechanical superimposition, a levelling but fettering regimentation, devised to serve the interests not of the people but of their alien rulers. And yet, as things went, it did bring about a sort of political unification of the country. The time has now come for these artificial divisions to give place to the natural that alone can guarantee ample scope for the free development of its regional peoples. There must, therefore, be a State which would recognise the need and importance of diversity playing its part in the building up of that larger, livelier, richer unity to which the genius and destiny of the race are insistently pointing. If India is to be one and great,—and in the Divine Dispensation that is what she is going to be—she must before long be so spiritually, culturally, politically and geographically at one and the same time. There must therefore be an integration of all her powers and potentialities into the wholeness of a composite national life, founded on and fortified by the full deployment of her inherent spiritual power.

How can this consummation be achieved? It will be, says Sri Aurobindo, “when man in the collectivity begins to live more deeply and to govern his collective life neither primarily by the needs, instincts, intuitions welling up out of the vital self, nor secondarily by the constructions of the reasoning mind, but first, foremost and always by the power of unity, sympathy, spontaneous liberty, supple and living order of his discovered greater self and spirit in which the individual and the communal existences have their law of freedom, perfection and oneness.”



The hour is propitious today for India to prepare herself for this great fulfilment of her collective existence; and this achieved, she will be able to set an example to mankind and lead it to the self-same goal, the new World-Order of the future. She must therefore awake to the truth of her soul, and enlighten and enlarge herself with a more comprehensive experience from within and without, a more certain knowledge that shall effect a reconciliation between life and the Spirit, and be that way able “to found the status and action of the collective being of man on the realisation of the deeper spiritual truth, the yet unrealised spiritual potentialities of our existence and so ensoul the life of her people as to make it the Lila of the greater Self in humanity, a conscious communal soul and body of Virat, the universal spirit.”

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

## *The Psychology of Indian Nationalism*

“**B**Y following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organization of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether her richly massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light.”

*(Sri Aurobindo's Message to the Andhra University, Dec. 11, 1948)*

### I. SCOPE OF THE ENQUIRY: INTEGRAL VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO

This does not purport to be an account of the recent struggle for freedom, or the appraisal of any party ideologies or the part played by individuals in the contest at various stages; nor does it propose to sketch the vivid and concentrated phase of Sri Aurobindo's own activity on the political scene during 1902 to 1910.\*

\* This aspect is dealt with in “Sri Aurobindo and Indian Freedom” by Sisir-kumar Mitra.

These aspects have at best a historical or personal appeal or significance, India having come into her own. On the other hand, a consideration of the psychology of Indian nationalism, its primary inspiration, its essential development, and the temporary phases of reaction it suffered will help us to count our real gains and advance steadily to the goal which has been persisting in the Indian consciousness “through centuries of calamity and defeat”<sup>1</sup>. What we have achieved so far is only the beginning or the starting point.

There are among us partisans of the past, partisans of the present and partisans of the future. Partisans of the past if they endorse the present, endorse only so much of it as “still cherishes the principles of the high, perfect, faultless adorable past, that golden age of the race or the community”<sup>2</sup>, or they condemn it outright. Partisans of the present are so much in love with the existing order that they would admit no change or experiment. The partisans of the future “call themselves the party of progress, the children of light and denounce the past as ignorant, evil, a mass of errors and abuses.”<sup>3</sup> “The true thinker can dispense with the eclat which attaches to the leader of partisans. He will strive to see this great divine movement as a whole, to know in its large lines the divine intention and goal in it without seeking to fix arbitrarily its details; he will strive to understand the greatness and profound meaning of the past without attaching himself to its forms, for he knows that forms must change and only the formless endures and that the past can never be repeated, but only its essence preserved, its power, its soul of good and its massed impulse towards a greater self-fulfilment; he will accept the actual realizations of the present as a stage and nothing more, keenly appreciating its defects, self-satisfied errors, presumptuous pretensions because these are the chief enemies of progress, but not ignoring the truth and good that it has gained; and he will sound the future to understand what the Divine in it is seeking to realise, not only at the present moment, nor only in the next generation, but beyond.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo: “Speeches”, page 299 (1922 Edition).

<sup>2</sup> “Ideal and Progress”, Sri Aurobindo, page 38.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, page 37.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, page 39.

The seer builds upon a sure basis of prevision, not surmise or speculation. He sees the lines of the divine architecture and shapes in accordance with the plan of the Divine Artificer. The present is the field of our endeavour. But the present cannot be dealt with alone. A pragmatic approach fails because it fixes its eye on the shifting present ignoring the past which has entered into it and the future which emerges out of it. It requires the seer-vision and the seer-will to take in the whole process and help forward rhythmic progression. Sri Aurobindo in laying emphasis on the future as he does, reveals the mode of Truth-consciousness that sees and builds, that goes beyond the hour and relates it to the entire time-series and the timeless, the whole process of becoming that is predetermined by the initial impetus of a primal realisation.

To present nationalism as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo is to enter the whole region of his thought as it shapes itself in massive sequences like *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Psychology of Social Development*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *A Defence of Indian Culture*, etc.,—not so much separate sequences as the simultaneous advance from many points of serried shining hosts to the city of the Victory of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has almost invented a technique of exposition of his own in which phrase and idea (*Vak* and *Artha*) in “linked sweetness long drawn out” constitute a new diapason. In Emerson’s phrase, “The soul is wholly embodied and the body is wholly ensouled”. It suffers in the paraphrase, assumes a false rudimentary simplicity losing all the luminous living appeal of the original. His characteristic method is a copious, cumulative, affirmative, authentic statement, “large utterance of the early gods”, each time enlarging the circle till all Reality is comprehended. All that can be done is to indicate tentatively the broad lines of the subject. For the rest, the reader must go, seek the rich ores in their native depths laid bare by a veritable “God’s Labour”.

## 2. IDEA OF THE MISSION AND THE RACE

Very early in his *Uttarapara Speech* Sri Aurobindo said: “I spoke once before with this force in me and I said then that this

movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say it is the Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatana Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatana Dharma declines, then the nation declines and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma it would perish. The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism.”\* Nationalism, at first a creed, a religion, a faith as it may well have been with many another nation in its struggle for freedom, becomes in this context something much wider, higher. The truths of the Hindu religion came to be realized by Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore jail with a new and abiding certitude and conviction. There is a reorientation of nationalism in the light of this realisation whereby nationalism, instead of being an end in itself, becomes auxiliary to Sanatana Dharma which now gives it its whole meaning. Indian nationalism must be as inclusive, as many-sided, as much rooted in God and Humanity, at once as disciplined and liberal, as much one in spirit but myriad in expression as Sanatana Dharma. What then is Sanatana Dharma?

“What is this religion which we call Sanatana, eternal? It is the Hindu religion only because the Hindu nation has kept it, because in this Peninsula it grew up in the seclusion of the sea and the Himalayas, because in this sacred and ancient land it was given as a charge to the Aryan race to preserve through the ages. But it is not circumscribed by the confines of a single country, it does not belong peculiarly and for ever to a bounded part of the world. That which we call the Hindu religion is really the eternal religion, because it is the universal religion which embraces all others. . . . This is the one religion which can triumph over materialism by including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy. It is the one religion which impresses on mankind the closeness of God to us and embraces in its compass all the possible means by which man can approach God. It is the one religion which insists every moment on the truth which all

\* “Speeches”, p. 108.

religions acknowledge, that He is in all men and in all things and that in Him we move and have our being. It is the one religion which enables us not only to understand and believe this truth but to realise it with every part of our being. It is the one religion which shows the world what the world is, that it is the *Lila* of Vasudeva. It is the one religion which shows us how we can best play our part in that *Lila*, its subtlest laws and its noblest rules. It is the one religion which does not separate life in any smallest details from religion, which knows what immortality is and has utterly removed from us the reality of death.”\*

Sanatana Dharma is universal; it is not the religion of a people, it is the truth of spirit, what governs all this Becoming; it is the secret of all evolution, the one multitudinously manifested. Nationalism for the Indian is but an approach to God, a collective adoration of the Highest. “It is for the Sanatana Dharma that they arise.” Their awakening, emancipation has no meaning unless it feeds this central God-appointed aim. The rise of India means the rise of Sanatana Dharma of which she is the custodian, the ancient repository. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself only when Sanatana Dharma is perfectly exemplified in the nation, that is, when she accepts all the obligations of this Dharma which is not limited to a country or to a people, when, by the force of this Dharma, we exceed ourselves and find just relationship with other nations, when Humanity is recognised as greater than all nations and when that discovers its meaning in God who is the Transcendent, the Universal and the Individual.

The phrase, “a charge given to the Aryan race to preserve through the ages” in the above quotation touches a dubious chord in the world-mind shaken by German notions which used similar phraseology. The term “Aryan race” is not a variant or synonym of the race theory of the Nordic balefully shouted across the Europe by the Germans. First propounded by the Frenchman Gobineau in the 1850’s and popularised by Houston Chamberlain about the turn of the century and philosophically formulated in Alfred Rosenberg’s “*Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*” (1930), the race theory

\* “Speeches”, pp.106-107.

became a justification for German aggression, anti-semitism and “all the diabolical values or human values exaggerated in the wrong way, until they become diabolical (e.g., the virtues of the *Herrenvolk*, the master-race)”\* for which Hitler stood. “Aryan” as Sri Aurobindo uses it, is not an ethnological or anthropological expression; it is a strictly cultural designation.

“In the Veda the Aryan peoples are those who had accepted a particular type of self-culture, of inward and outward practice, of ideality, of aspiration. The Aryan Gods were the supraphysical powers who assisted the mortal in his struggle towards the nature of the Godhead. All the highest aspirations of the early human race, its noblest religious temper, its most idealistic velleities of thought are summed up in this single vocable.

“In later times, the word Arya expressed a particular ethical and social ideal, an ideal of well-governed life, candour, courtesy, nobility, straight dealing, courage, gentleness, purity, humanity, compassion, protection of the weak, liberality, observance of social duty, eagerness for knowledge, respect for the wise and learned, the social accomplishments. It was the combined ideal of the Brahmana and the Kshatriya. Everything that departed from this ideal, everything that tended towards the ignoble, mean, obscure, rude, cruel or false, was termed un-Aryan. There is no word in human speech that has a nobler history.”

After glancing at the philological and racial implications of the term, Sri Aurobindo proceeds:

“Whoever makes that choice, whoever seeks to climb from level to level up the hill of the Divine, fearing nothing, deterred by no retardation or defeat, shrinking from no vastness because it is too vast for his intelligence, no height because it is too high for his spirit, no greatness because it is too great for his force and courage, he is the Aryan, the divine fighter and victor, the nobleman, *aristos*, best, the *sreshtha* of the Gita.

“Intrinsically, in its most fundamental sense, Arya means an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The Aryan is he who strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed

\* Sri Aurobindo: “On the War”.

to the human advance. Self-conquest is the first law of his nature. He overcomes earth and the body and does not consent like ordinary men to their dullness, inertia, dead routine and tamasic limitations. He overcomes life and its energies and refuses to be dominated by their hungers and cravings or enslaved by their rajasic passions. He overcomes the mind and its habits, he does not live in a shell of ignorance, inherited prejudices, customary ideas, pleasant opinions, but knows how to seek and choose, to be large and flexible in intelligence, even as he is firm and strong in his will. For in everything he seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom.

“Self-Perfection is the aim of his self-conquest. Therefore what he conquers he does not destroy, but ennobles and fulfils. He knows that the body, life and mind are given him in order to attain to something higher than they; therefore they must be transcended and overcome, their limitations denied, the absorption of their gratifications rejected. But he knows also that the Highest is something which is no nullity in the world, but increasingly expresses itself here,—a divine Will, Consciousness, Love, Beatitude, which pours itself out, when found, through the terms of the lower life on the finder and on all his environment that is capable of receiving it. Of that he is the servant, lover, and seeker. When it is attained he pours it forth in work, love, joy and knowledge upon mankind. For always the Aryan is a worker and warrior. He spares himself no labour of mind or body whether to seek the Highest or to serve it. He avoids no difficulty, no cessation from fatigue. Always he fights for the coming of that Kingdom within himself and in the world.

“The Aryan perfected is the Arhat. There is a transcendent consciousness which surpasses the universe and of which all these worlds are only a side-issue and a by-play. To that consciousness he aspires and attains. There is a consciousness which, being transcendent, is yet the universe and all that the universe contains. Into that consciousness he enlarges his limited ego; he becomes one with all beings and all inanimate objects in a single self-awareness, love, delight, all-embracing energy. There is a consciousness which, being both transcendental and universal, yet accepts the apparent limitations of individuality for work, for various standpoints of know-



ledge, for the play of the Lord with His creations; for the ego is there that it may finally convert itself into a free centre of the divine work and the divine play. That consciousness too he has sufficient love, joy and knowledge to accept; he is puissant enough to effect that conversion. To embrace individuality after transcending it is the last and divine sacrifice. The perfect Arhat is he who is able to live simultaneously in all these three apparent states of existence, elevate the lower into the higher, receive the higher into the lower, so that he may represent perfectly in the symbols of the world that with which he is identified in all parts of his being,—the triple and triune Brahman.”<sup>1</sup>

No apology need be made for the length of the quotation as the term is loaded with sinister meaning today and has to be restored to its highest proper significance. Race as generally employed by Sri Aurobindo includes the whole human kind.

Sri Aurobindo firmly believes in the mission of India. “She is the hoary guardian of the Asiatic tradition.”<sup>2</sup> “There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge, and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplary and missionary.”<sup>3</sup>

“God always keeps for himself a chosen country in which the higher knowledge is through all chances and dangers, by the few or the many, continually preserved and for the present, in this century at least, that country is India.”<sup>4</sup>

Every people on earth regards itself as a chosen people. The ancient Israelites, ‘the chosen nation’, the English in Milton’s vision, the Germans with their ‘pure race’, the Italians inspired at one time with Mazzini’s idealism of the mission of nations and later with Fascist militarism have all claimed racial distinction and an apostolic function. It may seem as if the mission of India is just another such national vanity or portentous assumption.

India’s mission does not connote anything imperial or political

<sup>1</sup> Views and Reviews, pp. 6-12.

<sup>2</sup> Ideal and Progress.

<sup>3</sup> The Ideal of the Karmayogin.

<sup>4</sup> ‘The Yoga and its Objects.

or narrowly religious, an unctuous variation of the "white man's burden". It does not intend a cultural subjugation either, in the sense of India's culture being imposed on the rest of humanity very much like the British attempt in India, however benevolently conceived. India's culture is the most thorough-going application of the principle of freedom and self-determination for the benefit of the smallest cultural units signified by the basic concepts of Swabhava and Swadharma. The governing rule of unity in difference is a guarantee of the preservation of all patterns evolved by the Spirit.

India's mission among the nations would be to foster all true identities, to uphold the religion of the Spirit, to affirm that matter, life and mind are not the last term of evolution, that there is a Beyond, that this Beyond is but the other pole of our being here on earth, that the cycle of evolution will be completed only by the entire scale, all the planes of consciousness being apprehended in Truth-consciousness,—to seek to raise all relativities to their absolutes, to help each people so far as they may be helped to discover their true selves, to point to each collectivity its own highest potential, to vindicate spiritual values, to strive for the sovereignty of Dharma, in short, help to establish the Kingdom of God on earth not in any narrow theocratic sense of sectarian rigidity but a reign of the Spirit in its plastic, spontaneous infinity of expression.

### 3. NATIONALISM IN THE WEST

If by nationalism we mean the force behind all life and expression, the sense of solidarity of a people, Indian nationalism is as old as Indian history, in a sense, anterior to it. The historical process is but an unfolding of the Spirit the Truth of which was realized by the Fathers of the Race, the Rishis, in the Vedic Age. All progress is an expansion of consciousness. We have arrived at the level of the mind which is an intermediary phase of consciousness. Just as there are levels below the conscious mind, there are levels above and not till consciousness in its entirety is grasped, not till Truth-consciousness is developed in its inclusive aspects of integral awareness, integral force, and integral delight together constituting fullness of being in the individual, the universal and the tran-

scendent, will the arc be complete. Once the Truth in its totality is experienced, it carries with it the power to effectuate itself in life as well. That is the cardinal fact regarding all evolution and that is how the Rishis began in the dim past determining the lines of India's destiny.

The process of nation-making has been different in the West.<sup>1</sup> While not being able to ignore the subjective factor of will and consciousness, they have tended to put emphasis on objective criteria of language, race, territory, religion and civilisation, citizenship in a state, etc. The ancient world of Greece and Rome did not achieve nationalism. Greece is identified with the city-state, while Rome hastened to expand into an empire without pausing to perfect the nation-unit so that, owing to weakness within, she fell an easy victim to the barbarian. The medieval world witnessed the long strife between the Church and the Empire during which men's loyalties were extra-territorial and extra-national. It was only at the time of the Renaissance that strong monarchies were established on the ruins of the feudal system and nations like England, France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland emerged. The Reformation immensely added to the prestige of the Kings by reducing the Church to a subordinate position. Thenceforward it became a strife of classes within the nation; while externally it stood differentiated from other nation entities. The middle classes align themselves with the King and help to supplant the barons whose power had been dwindling with the decay of the feudal order. After that English history is merely the record of a struggle for rights, at first and for long of the upper and the middle classes and then by slow degrees, of the workers and the artisans, the power of Labour. "The transformation of the monarchical sovereignty into the sovereignty of the people, or more accurately, the shifting of the organic control from the throne to the aristocracy, thence to the bourgeoisie, and again to the whole people—the latter two steps comprising the rapid evolution of the last eighty years,—was only a question of time."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The three stages of the European cycle of nation-building have been traced with great insight by Sri Aurobindo in Chapters XII and XIII of *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Chapter XX.

It is a social and political evolution. In the course of the struggle the limitations of political democracy were realized; economic motives were added. Notions of liberty and equality in the West still suffer from imperfect grasp and imperfect statement arising from external, experimental attitudes. It is this same external mechanical tendency that accounts for the highly organized states today. The nation-state is the culmination of the tendency to centralization, political organization, the logical development of objective unity.

Sri Aurobindo wrote long ago: "The near future of the human group would seem to be the nation, self-governing, politically free, but aiming at perfect social and economic organization, and for that purpose giving up all individual liberty into the hands of the organized national State. As France was in the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century the great propagandist and experimental workshop of political liberty and equality, so Germany has been in the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century the great propagandist and experimental workshop of the idea of the organized State."\*

This external evolution, this belief in organization, faith in institutions and ingenious machinery of administration to the neglect of the inner life of the peoples is responsible for the confusion in regard to the relation between the State and the individual, the failure to arrive at a just equation between the two poles of life. The external view helps us to understand neither the individual nor the nation. Lacking profound subjectivism which alone helps us to get at the core of the individual or society, and impelled by vital urges, vital life, and vital mind, the European rushes from experiment to experiment and calls this progress, but the central questions abide, gather force and issue in upheavals and cataclysms. "The whole process of Nature depends upon a balancing and a constant tendency to harmony between two poles of life; the individual whom the aggregate or whole nourishes and the aggregate which the individual helps to constitute. Human life forms no exception to the rule. Therefore the perfection of human life must involve in itself the

\* The Ideal of Human Unity, Chapter X.

unaccomplished harmony between these two poles of our existence; the individual and the social aggregate.<sup>1</sup>

The Nazi and the Fascist orientation of nationalism with their contempt for and hostility to other nations and the annihilation of individual rights within the State have mechanised society and made nationalism itself an execrable doctrine. Nationalism, rightly understood, need not necessarily lead to the same conclusions or the same policies. Nor need we be deprecated nor is it possible to desist because of the errors, lapses and enormities of some one nation. We have all to tread the road that Germany trod, but not with the same motives nor to similar issues. "The misuse of great powers is no argument against their right use. And going back is impossible; we have all to do the same thing which Germany attempted, but to take care not to do it likewise."<sup>2</sup>

Nationalism has yet to find itself among the peoples of the earth. The nation has a soul like the individual. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "As the individual has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist, so too has the nation or society. In fact, like the individual, it essentially is rather than has a soul; it is a group-soul that having attained to distinctness must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its life and its corporate action and mentality."<sup>3</sup> If an individual takes long to find his soul, nations will take yet longer because of the complex elements they contain. "The group-soul is much more complex because it has a great number of self-conscious individuals for the constituents of its physical being and not an association of merely vital sub-conscious cells."<sup>4</sup>

The Nation-state which is a type most familiarly developed in the West is but a power phenomenon, not a spiritual entity. A less objective view, however, of societies and institutions has come to prevail since the beginning of the individualistic phase of thinking.

<sup>1</sup> The Ideal of Human Unity, Chapter II.

<sup>2</sup> Arya, Vol. III, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> Arya, Vol. III, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 227.

Subjectivism is the right road but “a perilous adventure.” Spirituality is the single consummation, the goal of all subjectivism, of nations or individuals. But it means the piercing of many veils before one gets to the centre. The subjective opens up the whole realm of the inner vital, the mental, the moral, and the aesthetic, and one has to penetrate to the inmost and then follow an ascending curve. In the Master’s words: “First, there must be a conversion inwards, a going within to find the inmost psychic being and bring it out to the front, disclosing at the same time the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical parts of the nature. Next, there must be an ascension, a series of conversions upwards and a turning down to convert the lower parts.”<sup>1</sup>

But it is possible that nations and individuals in their subjective search for the self may get stuck in the ‘Valley of the False Glimmer’. The glaring example of a nation deflected in its great subjective endeavour is Germany. “That has befallen her which sometimes befalls the seeker on the path of Yoga, the art of conscious self-finding, —a path exposed to far profounder perils than beset ordinarily the average man,—when he follows a false light to his spiritual ruin. She has mistaken her vital ego for her self; she has sought for her soul and found only her force. For she has said like the Asura, ‘I am my body, my life, my mind and temperament’, and become attached with a Titanic force to these; especially she has said, ‘I am my life and body’ and than that there can be no greater mistake for man or nation.”<sup>2</sup> Nationalism expresses a vital truth of Nature. It is a distinct flowering of humanity. Nationalism is identified with national honour and prestige to secure which a powerful State machine becomes necessary. Economic, social and cultural ambitions reinforce the sentiment of national pride and egoism. A real cult of power develops and nationalism becomes a sort of religion with prestige and power as its supreme gods. That has been the course of German nationalism and all these irrational applications and insane dogmas have to be avoided. We could do so only by taking a spiritual view of man and spiritual view of society which will provide

<sup>1</sup> The Riddle of This World, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Arya, Vol. III, p. 234.

the right basis of relationship between the two poles of life. This harmony between the individual and society, *vyashti* and *samashti*, on the one hand assigning the highest value to the individual and on the other assuring social stability—the two conditions of progress in life, the two indispensable factors of the manifestation of the Divine on earth, was conceived and worked out in detail in the India of long ago by the Rishis.

#### 4. THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

The Rishi has been at the head of social, religious and political guidance of the people here. With him the fire, the ardour, the vision, the secret force of all evolution. The Rishi is not the author of a creed or a dogma. He is the seer of Truth. He seizes consciousness in its totality. Realization of the Transcendent is one thing. It is instantaneous in its incidence. Its embodiment in earthly forms, in appropriate conventions and institutions, creating counterparts here on earth, working on recalcitrant stuff, on a subconscious mass of humanity is quite another and takes long. Where the vision is limited, there can be rapid materialisation thereof. Where the aspiration is transcendent, where the human collectivity is diverse and numerically large, and where, in addition, the territory is a subcontinent, it takes stupendously long to evolve. Such have been the factors of Indian evolution.

The Rishis again being mystics and being bound to secrecy according to the tradition of mystics everywhere, invented double meanings, exoteric and esoteric, the first meant for the less evolved, the physical man and the second for the duly initiated, the spiritually awakened. "The Rishis speak of themselves as hearers of the Truth, *Satyasrutah*, and the knowledge received by this hearing as *Sruti*."<sup>1</sup>

"In images of physical Nature, the Vedic poets sing the hymn of our spiritual ascension; that ascension has already been effected by the Ancients, the human forefathers, and the spirit of these great Ancestors still assist their offspring; for the new dawns ripe at the old and lean forward in light to join the dawns of the future."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hymns to the Mystic Fire, XXVIII.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, XLVI.

What then was the secret knowledge of the Rishis?

“The thought around which all this centred is the seeking after Truth, Light, Immortality. There is a Truth deeper and higher than the truth of outward existence, a light greater and higher than the light of human understanding which comes by revelation and inspiration, an immortality towards which the soul has to rise. We have to find our way to that, to get into touch with this Truth and Immortality, *Sapanta ritamamritam*, to be born into the Truth, to grow in it, to ascend in spirit into the world of Truth and to live in it. To do so is to unite ourselves with the Godhead and to pass from mortality to immortality. This is the first and the central teaching of the Vedic mystics.... There is the inferior truth here of this world mixed as it is with much falsehood and error, *anritasya bhureh*, and there is a world or home of Truth, *Sadanam ritasya*, the Truth, the Right, the Vast, *Satyam ritam brihat*, where all is Truth-conscious, *ritachit*. There are many worlds between up to the triple heavens and their lights but this is the world of the highest Light—the world of the Sun of Truth, Swar, or the Great Heaven. We have to find the path to this Great Heaven, the path of Truth, *ritasya pantha* or as it is sometimes called the way of the Gods. This is the second mystic doctrine. The third is that our life is a battle between the powers of Light and Truth, the Gods who are the Immortals and the powers of Darkness.... We have to invoke the Gods by the inner sacrifice and by the word call them into us—that is the specific power of the Mantra,—to offer to them the gifts of the sacrifice and by that giving secure their gifts, so that by this process we may build the way of our ascent to the goal. The elements of the outer sacrifice in the Veda are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and self-offering; we give them what we are and what we have in order that the riches of the divine Truth and Light may descend into our life and become the elements of our inner birth into the Truth,—a right thinking, a right understanding, a right action must develop in us which is the thinking, impulsion, and action of that higher Truth, *ritasya presa*, *ritasya dhiti*, and by this we must build up ourselves in that Truth. Finally, as the summit of the teaching of the Vedic mystics comes the secret of the one Reality, *ekam sat* or *tad ekam* which became the central world of the



Upanishads. The Gods, the powers of Light and Truth are powers and names of the One, each God is himself all the Gods or carries them in him: there is the one Truth, *tat satyam*, and one bliss to which we must rise.”<sup>1</sup>

The whole problem of the Rishi was how to find the transmitting medium, how to secure an outward basis in life that would reflect the light of the Spirit. The Rishis stand out as the builders of a polity. They achieved dispassion but did not renounce society; they stood above it, able to observe its trends and direct it along the destined lines of evolution by their force and vision. “The business of the ancient Rishis was not only to know God, but to know the world and life and reduce it by knowledge to a thing well understood and mastered with which the reason and will of man could deal on assured lines and on a safe basis of wise method and order. The ripe result of this effort was the Shastra.”<sup>2</sup>

The three main ideas which worked themselves into the warp and woof of institutions and helped man and society to realise their highest possibilities were first to discover and enter into unity with the One Existence to which sages gave various names, next that the Spirit is manifested in all inner and outer Nature and can be approached in infinite ways determined by Swabhava, the principle of *adhikara* and lastly that each individual being and all corporate being are forms of the divine Narayana. It is this Transcendent, Universal and individual realisation of the Divine that helped the Rishis to conceive a social and religious order reconciling all conflict between the individual and society or nation by submitting both to a higher, the highest Truth. The foundations are above. The nourishment is from the super regions.

Though the external tended to obscure the truth behind, a true spiritual sense was constantly kept alive by the shining examples of Saints and Seers. Though the utmost freedom, an almost “devastating catholicity” was permitted, at the same time spiritual order was ensured, firstly by the recognition of an enlarging number of authorised scriptures, secondly by the power of family and

<sup>1</sup> Hymns to the Mystic Fire, pp. XXIX to XXXII.

<sup>2</sup> Arya, Vol. VI, p. 167.

communal tradition, *kuladharmā*, thirdly by the religious authority of Brahmins and finally by a succession, *parampara* of gurus or spiritual teachers.

It would exceed all length to try to give an account of details of the polity devised by the Rishis in their effort to embody their intuitions. In sum, they founded a religio-philosophic culture directed to the realization of the Highest and based on the subtlest understanding of individual and social psychology. The motives of life were not ignored nor their complexity underrated or lost sight of, but boldly envisaged and integrally woven into a scheme of graduated perfection. The sovereignty of the Dharma, a combination of freedom and order in the constitution of the four orders, a recognition, coordination and transcendence of the motives, the urges of life, signified by Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, at once a concession to human nature and an ascending sublimation of the material, vital, mental, ethical, aesthetic and religious necessities of man, the regulation of the life of the individual by the four Ashramas gradually aiming at a super-social status, a life of spiritual freedom,—the four *varnas* mainly social in their incidence, the four Ashramas mainly individual in their scheme, the four values of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha at once individual and social in their scope and all the three institutions and valuations subtly interpenetrating and showing a profound appreciation of the organic unity of all human activity lend to the Indian polity a spirit and physiognomy all its own<sup>1</sup>. While admitting economic, political,

<sup>1</sup> Refer to Chapter I, Psychology of Social Development; Chapter LXIII, the Synthesis of Yoga; Chapter XX, Essays on the Gita; and A Defence of Indian Culture, Arya, Vol.V, for the various aspects of the subject,—how *Chaturvarna* has social, economic, cultural and spiritual implications,—how it has its counterparts in the cosmic in “the Wisdom that conceives the order and principle of things, the Power that sanctions, upholds and enforces it, the Harmony that creates the arrangement of its parts, the Work that carries out what the rest directs,”—how very life may be figured in the symbolism of the *varnas* “as at once an inquiry after truth and knowledge, a struggle and battle of our will with ourselves and surrounding forces, a constant production, adaptation, application of skill to the material of life, and a sacrifice and service”,—Varna as an institutional expression of Swabhava and Swadharma, the interdependence of the Varnas, Varna and the

social, ethical needs and utilities, it at the same time instituted a hierarchy of values. Liberation was the highest aim it pointed at. But it provided a preparatory discipline, a gradation, a preliminary satisfaction of the average human desires, interests and lesser play of life by putting Artha and Kama before Moksha. Artha and Kama are, however, not a law unto themselves; they are governed by Dharma. The determination of functions was psychological, strictly in accordance with Swabhava and Swadharma. A single way of life, a single method does not bind all, the principle of adhikara being an application, an extension of Swabhava. Evolution was by stages, by ascending tiers rather than by an impossible saltus. Everywhere we notice the same depth of insight, the same union of order and freedom, practical adequacy combined with transcendence.

This complex synthesis escapes rigid definition. When we think we have a positive statement, comes a negation and then a reconciliation. The forms of this faith are infinite because spirit is the essence of it and can create forms without limit, weave unpredictable patterns. The fluid capabilities of this faith which bewilder the positive mind are well brought out in the following paragraph:

“Indian religion founds itself on the conception of the timeless Supreme who is beyond name or form, but it does not deny or abolish all intermediary forms, names, powers, personality of this Divinity. Accordingly it does not begin and end with a colourless monism or a transcendental theism. The Godhead is worshipped as the All, the Universal Being; but Indian religion is not therefore pantheism, since beyond the universality it recognises the supracosmic eternity of the Divine Being. Indian polytheism is not polytheism; for the worshipper of many gods knows that all Gods are forms, names, personalities, powers of the one Being and all Goddesses are powers of the One Divine Energy. Those ways of Indian cult which most resemble a popular form of Theism, are still something more, because they do not exclude, but admit the many aspects of God and rest on and go upward to the philosophic truth of the one Deity. The later religious forms which most felt the

modes of nature, Varna in its purity and highest possibility and in its gross perversion, etc.

mpress of the Islamic idea or of Western religious formulas, Nanak's worship of the timeless One, Akala or the reforming creeds of today draw away from the anthropomorphic limitations of Western monotheism; irresistibly they turn towards the truth of Vedanta. The personality of God and his human relations with man are strongly stressed by Vaishnavism and Shaivism, but they are not the whole of these religions. Indian religion cannot be described by any of these western definitions. In its totality it became a synthesis of all spiritual worship and experience, observed the one Truth from all its many sides, gave itself no specific name or limiting distinction, but only designations for its constituting cults and divisions. In its essential character, though strikingly distinguished from other creeds by its traditional scriptures, cults and symbols, it is not a credal religion, but a vast, universal, many-sided and unifying system of spiritual culture."\*

Hinduism is a vast House of the Spirit, not merely "a sounding labour house vast of being" but a House of the Spirit with a thousand doors of entry, and humming with the voices of the votaries of many faiths who join in adoration of the Mother, some lighting up the lamp of knowledge, a few offering the incense of devotion and still others engaged in a ministry of service and sacrifice and all entitled to equal and impartial grace.

The age of the Upanishads took up the Vedic truth into its highest and most simple expression of intuition and experience but yet in a form which could lend itself to intellectual and philosophical statement and appreciation. Later the Puranas and Tantras widened the basis of Indian culture and made a catholic attempt to darw towards the spiritual truth minds of all classes and qualities. "The outward basis of the early religion appealed to the physical outward mind and took that as its starting-point; the new evolution appealed to a more inner psychic mind and made it its aim to lead that towards the higher spiritual truth. It provided indeed for the outward physical sense and aesthetic turn by its system of temple worship and numerous ceremonies and physical images, but it gave them also a physical sense and direction which was open

\* Arya, Vol. VI, p. 35.

to the ordinary man and not reserved for the elect, the initiates; the initiation now became instead a condition for the introduction from the psycho-religious to the deepest spiritual truth and experience.”<sup>1</sup>

## 5. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION<sup>2</sup>

Starting from these foundations, the socio-political evolution of Indian civilisation passed through four historical stages, first the simple Aryan community, then in a long period of transition in which the national life was proceeding through a considerable variety of experimental formations in political structure and synthesis, thirdly the definite formation of the monarchical state coordinating all the complex elements of the communal life of the people into regional and imperial unities and last the era of decline in which there was an internal arrest and stagnation and an imposition of new systems and cultures from Western Asia and Europe.

(1) It is not a rationally constructed social order but a living intuitive adaptation to *complex* social needs. “The tendency of the reason when it pretends to deal with the materials of Life as its absolute governor is to look too far away from the reality of the society as a living growth and to treat it as a mechanism which can be manipulated at will and constructed like so much dead wood or iron according to the arbitrary dictates of the intelligence. The sophisticating, labouring, constructing, efficient, mechanising, reason loses hold of the simple principles of a people’s vitality; it cuts it away from the secret roots of its life. The result is an exaggerated dependence on system and institution, on legislation and administration and the deadly tendency to develop in place of a living people a mechanical state.”

(2) Secondly, the process is *slow* just because it is a maturing, a materialising of the spirit, the tendency to create whatever it had

<sup>1</sup> Arya, Vol. VI, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Material for this section is freely drawn from Sri Aurobindo’s “The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity.”

to create first on the inner plane and afterwards in its other aspects; the tendency to create from within outwards is the very essence of her way and stretches the development over long tracts of time.

(3) Dharma was the cement of the whole fabric. It was a greater sovereign than the King. Dharma was interpreted by the Rishi, executed by the King who was but the guardian of the social and political order, and this Dharma permeated the common consciousness.

(4) The polity was at basis communal, not individualistic or competitive like society in the West. The complex communal polity here saw no clash of interest or incompatibility of aim between the individual and society because both were firmly held to be manifestations of the one Spirit that has assumed many forms. Everything else was regarded as an arrangement, a cooperative organization for the supreme ends of life about which there was no difference. The individual, however, leads because he is the luminous point of the social formation. In him society unfolding by slow subconscious workings becomes conscious, sees its own highest possibilities and is led by him to perfection. "The collectivity is a mass, a field of formation; the individual is the diviner of truth, the form-maker, the creator." "The growth of the individual is the indispensable means for the inner growth as distinguished from the outer force and expansion of the collective being. This indeed is the dual importance of the individual that it is through him that the cosmic spirit organises its collective units and makes them self-expressive and progressive and through him that it raises Nature from the Inconscience to the super-conscience and exalts it to meet the Transcendent. In the mass the collective consciousness is near to the Inconscient; it has a sub-conscious, an obscure and mute movement which needs the individual to express it, to bring it to light, to organise it and make it effective. The mass consciousness by itself moves by a vague, half-formed or unformed subliminal and commonly subconscious impulse rising to the surface; it is prone to a blind or half-seeing unanimity which suppresses the individual in the common movement; if it thinks, it is by the motto, the slogan, the watch-word, the common crude or formed idea, the traditional, the accepted customary notion; it acts, when not by instinct or on

impulse, then by the rule of the pack, the herd mentality, the type law. . . . The suppression or entire subordination of the individual in the mass consciousness can give a great practical efficiency to a nation or a community if the subliminal collective being can build a binding tradition or find a group, a class, a head to embody its spirit and direction; the strength of powerful military states, of communities with a tense and austere culture rigidly imposed on its individuals, the success of the great world-conquerors, had behind it this secret of Nature. But this is an efficiency of the outer life, and that life is not the highest or the last term of our being. There is a mind in us, there is a soul and spirit, and our life has no true value if it has not in it a growing consciousness, a developing mind, and if life and mind are not an expression, an instrument, a means of liberation and fulfilment for the soul, the indwelling spirit. But the progress of the mind, the growth of the soul, even of the mind and soul of the collectivity, depends on the individual, on his sufficient freedom and independence, on his separate power to express and bring into being what is still unexpressed in the mass, still undeveloped from the subconsciousness or not yet brought out from within or brought down from the superconsciousness.”\* The individualistic phase in the West started as a revolt of the individual reason against social institutions, the Church, traditional religion, state dominance, in a general dissatisfaction with the existing standards and values of life and with the object of finding new forms. It has found that norm in science and materialistic and rationalistic endeavour. The movement in the West did not have behind it the implicit philosophy of identity of interest between the individual and the group but much rather exaggerated the individual ego pitting him against society so that in the end society itself becomes a pit of strife between the warring wills of individuals. Individualism became a necessity in the West under historical conditions. It arose from the radical failure of its institutions to satisfy human aspirations; in the event it has grown into a quest of values, a scrutiny of the ends of life, of the meaning of progress. The experiment still goes on and will go on till individualism, true to its own impetus, will open up the last layers of

\* The Life Divine, Vol. II, p. 488.

the subjective, the subjective deepens into the psychic and the psychic fulfils itself in the spiritual. That is the inevitable curve of human progress. Truth has first to be discovered,—Truth of spirit. And then it has to be effectuated in life.

The Individualistic expression in modern India was forced by its contact with the West and is not an urge from within. It is an excrescence. "It is in Europe that the age of individualism has taken birth and exercised its full sway; the East has entered into it only by contact and influence, not from an original impulse. . . . It is due not to any original falsehood in the ideals on which life was founded but to the loss of the living sense of the Truth at once held and its long contented slumber in the cramping bonds of a mechanical conventionalism that the East has found itself helpless in the hour of its awakening, a giant empty of strength, inert masses of men who had forgotten how to deal with facts and forces because they had learned only how to live in a world of stereotyped habitudes of thought and customs of action."\*

In India it did not mean the proof of the unsoundness of its old beliefs, the inadequacy of inherited values. Here there was no confusion regarding the fundamental varieties, no blank sceptical questioning of the very *raison d'être* of existence, the race long before having been impregnated with the deepest subjective intuitions. What had happened at the impact of the West was a decline in vigour, a failure of energy, not a stark obfuscation of the ideal of life itself. This ideal being implicit, deeply embedded in the people's consciousness, it did not take long to outgrow the individualistic pressure of the West, to wake up from torpor and rediscover its ancient self. But we are anticipating...

Now for the communal pattern India developed in the past. The village community which first came into existence under agricultural and pastoral conditions remained throughout the stable unit. As society expanded and as the simple agricultural life widened into commercial, industrial, military and political and religious activities, the villages began to group themselves in tens and hundreds each under its head and needing its administrative organization. As

\* Arya, Vol. III, p. 93.



the clans grew into a large people by conquest or coalition with others, they became constituents of a Kingdom or a confederated republican nation and then again the circles, *mandala*, of larger Kingdoms and finally of one or more great empires. The test of the Indian genius for socio-political evolution lay in the successful application of the principle of a communal self-determined freedom and order to suit the growing development and new order of circumstances. The King at the head assisted by a council, the metropolitan assembly and the general assembly, each containing representatives of the four orders and exercising specific functions, and all obeying Dharma, "a greater sovereign than the King", constituted the framework of administration. The King was only a political sovereign. "Indian monarchy previous to the Mahomedan invasion was not in any sense a personal despotism or an absolutist autocracy; it had no resemblance to the ancient Persian monarchy or the monarchies of western and central Asia or the Roman imperial government or later European autocracies; it was of an altogether different type from the system of the Pathan or Moghul emperors." At no time did he or could he arrogate to himself the right of framing the social order or the political structure,—that was the work of the Rishi. The people represented in the council and the assemblies shared in the sovereignty of the King. The social hierarchy was not at the same time a political hierarchy. This saved class domination and class strife that are such a marked feature of history in the West. "A priestly theocracy, like that of Tibet, or the rule of a landed and military aristocracy, that prevailed for centuries in France and England and other European countries or a mercantile oligarchy as in Carthage and Venice, were forms of government foreign to the Indian spirit." The principle of the Indian society was the active participation of the whole body of the people in the assemblies, metropolitan and general. "We do not find in India that struggle between the patrician and plebeian elements of the community; the oligarchic and the democratic idea ending in the establishment of an absolute monarchical rule, which characterised the troubled history of Greece and Rome or that cycle of successive forms, evolving by a strife of classes,—first a ruling aristocracy, then replacing it by encroachment or revolution the dominance of the moneyed and professional classes, the regime of the bourgeois

industrialising the society and governing and exploiting it in the name of the commons or masses and finally the present turn towards a rule of the proletariat of Labour,—which we can see in later Europe.”

Political bodies like the Kula with its Dharma and Sangha, the Jati with its Dharma and Sangha, non-political institutions like the joint family, religious communities like the Buddhistic or monastic order, a dharma sangha and its later counterparts like the ones organized by Shankaracharya were all rich organic growths that held the Indian society together even while they satisfied the need for diversity. In its curious mingling of complex strands, in the subtle intertwining of the principles of order and freedom, political and sociological Hinduism, like higher philosophic Hinduism escapes definition. “It is the same synthetic turn as that which in all parts of the Indian socio-political system tended to fuse together in different ways the theocratic, the monarchic and aristocratic, the plutocratic and democratic tendencies in a whole which bore the characteristics of none of them nor was yet an accommodation of them or amalgamation whether by a system of checks and balances or by an intellectually constructed synthesis but rather a natural outward form of the inborn tendencies and character of the complex social mind and temperament.”

The Vedic Rishis and their successors made it their chief work to found a spiritual basis of Indian life and to effect the spiritual and cultural unity of the many races and peoples of the peninsula. But they were not blind to the necessity of a political unification. Observing the constant tendency of the clan life of the Aryan peoples to consolidate under confederacies and hegemonies of varying proportions, *Vairajya*, *Samrajya*, they saw that to follow this line to its full conclusion was the right way and evolved therefore the ideal of the *Chakravarti*, a uniting imperial rule, uniting without destroying the autonomy of India’s many kingdoms and peoples from sea to sea. This ideal they supported like everything else in Indian life with a spiritual and religious sanction, set up as its outward symbol the *Aswamedha* and *Rajasuya* sacrifices and made it the dharma of a powerful king, his royal and religious duty, to attempt the fulfilment of the ideal.

We find in the Mahabharata a record of the attempt to set up such an empire and in the Ramayana an idealised picture of such a Dharmarajya, a settled universal empire.

Historical circumstances made it necessary to establish an administrative empire departing from the instinct and traditional development of the race. The north-western passes were ever a vulnerable point. As long as the trans-Indus Kingdoms of Gandhara and Vahlka remained part of India, the danger did not present itself. Once they fell before the attack of the Persians, they opened the gate to the invader. Alexander's invasion sharply brought home the consequences of a want of cohesion and gave rise to the founding of the first empire in India under Chandragupta Maurya. The Sunga, Kanva, Andhra and Gupta dynasties followed the cue. Centralisation became an accepted need of the situation. The democratic institutions which of old had served to link the sovereign and the subjects in close partnership became effete. Dharma gave way to a Machiavellian statecraft. This principle of centralization first resorted to under a crisis became almost riveted in the Pathan and Moghul empires. These latter powers made India their home and there were signs of a slow fusion of cultures when a new power appeared on the scene,—the British. No previous power had been impersonal and impervious enough to destroy the diverse manifestations of culture in the regional units. "The Maurya, Gupta, Andhra, Moghul empires, huge and powerful and well-organised as they were, never succeeded in passing a steam-roller over the too strongly independent life of the subordinate unities from the village community to the regional or linguistic area. It has needed the pressure of a rule neither indigenous in origin nor locally centred, the dominance of a foreign nation entirely alien in culture and morally armoured against the sympathies and attractions of the cultural atmosphere to do in a century this work which two thousand years of a looser imperialism had failed to accomplish."<sup>1</sup>

The crucial point in one sense is the invasion of Alexander since which date the need was felt to evolve a centralised monarchy, a close-knit administrative empire to repel the invader; the construc-

<sup>1</sup> The Ideal of Human Unity, Chapter XII.

tion of the polity from within outward which had preceded this era gave place to external methods of unification, increasing centralization involving the neglect and later the extinction of local autonomies. Each time when the tendency reached its height, it failed because there was a dull resistance, an impermeable mass weight below. "The guardians of India's destiny wisely compelled it to fail that her inner spirit might not perish and her soul barter for an engine of temporary security the deep sources of its life."

The revival of the Mahrattas under the inspiration of Shivaji, himself inspired by Ramdas, and the inauguration of the Sikh Khalsa combining in a way the principles of Vedanta and Islam, the first harking back to the past, the second anticipating the future, while they attest to India's spirit and the essential indestructibility of her regional peoples, both failed. With the consolidation of the British, political India, lost to her creative intuitions in the field and singularly bereft at the moment of living exemplars of the genius of the race and dazzled by the achievement of the British, chose to shape its destiny, if it could, in alien moulds.\*

( *To be Concluded* )

A. V. SASTRI

\* The phenomenon of a handful supplanting a whole nation and the implications of the disaster have been treated with profound insight in "Gathamunu Goorchina Prasna" in Sri Aurobindo's Vyasavali in Telugu. The Kannada translation also may be consulted.

## *The Being and the Medium*

(REGARDING CERTAIN RECENT BIOLOGICAL  
DISCOVERIES)

**T**WO agronomists have made a series of remarkable discoveries, which have enriched our knowledge of one of the most entrancing problems of biology—that of heredity. One can understand the savants getting impassioned over it.

These discoveries can bring about a striking improvement in the proportionate yield of wheat, and help us to raise luxuriant orchards where there are, at present, only large barren stretches of sand or ice. We can easily imagine that all those who are interested in the price of articles of food (and they are numerous), should get excited over these discoveries and ask for further information.

But that these discoveries allow the colour of one's political convictions to be determined is not so easy to understand. It is however so, and it is well worth our while to give the matter a closer attention. For that it will be necessary to go back a little way in order to realise its importance.

\* \* \*

Ever since it was well established that the animal species did not at first appear in their present-day forms but that they have evolved these forms through immense periods, one has sought to find out what the mechanism of this evolution is. Three great ideas have dominated this research—those of adaptation, selection and mutation.

Lamarck, struck by seeing how much an organ could be developed by exercise and, on the contrary, how much it was atrophied

by inaction, thought that the necessities imposed by the medium in which the being lived made him develop by exercise certain parts of its body more than others and that these organic changes by which the body adapted itself to the medium were transmitted to its descendants, wholly or in part.

A little later, Darwin having described the avidity with which tropical vegetation invaded the tiniest bit of vacant land, based on this struggle for life the cause of evolution; evolution eliminates pitilessly the least fit and allows only the fittest to survive; the medium is no longer responsible when the smallest variations are conserved and transmitted if they are advantageous to the species, and disappear when they are not—and this constitutes natural selection.

Each one of these two savants had his own partisans and even his fanatical followers. For the Lamarckians the medium was everything: for the Darwinians it was something, but much less, and the vital functions of the individual were entitled to the first place. The fire of the dispute has, however, not been able to conceal the serious weakness of both theories; each admitted that the characteristics acquired were transmitted hereditarily. But nature did not appear to hold the same opinion as the savants; for, the young ones of trained dogs require a training as long as that of their parents, and the son of the blacksmith with brawny biceps will be just what his father was in his childhood.

During a century, more or less, we have stopped there to the great joy of those who have no faith in evolution; but this did not prevent the evolution from being more firmly established than ever.

It was then that Naudin, and above all De Vries, discovered that sometimes, in a plantation consisting of a large number of individual plants, one noticed that there appeared suddenly a variety whose characteristics were at the outset all hereditary. And such characteristics as larger flowers or smaller flowers, etc. did not seem to have any adaptative value. A new religion appeared and the votaries of evolution per mutation declared that the medium was of no importance, the sudden modification of the being was everything. Soon after, the very good work done by Morgan showed that forms and colours of beings were closely connected with the number

and form of corpuscles enclosed in the nucleus of their cells, especially of their reproductive cells. The mechanism was carefully analysed and one thing, at least, was realised—that the characteristics acquired during life not generally modifying the germinal cells, it was quite normal that they should not be hereditary.

Scientists tried soon to act on the reproductive elements and were successful therein either by physical means (X-ray) or by means of poison (colchicine). Since then many dozen varieties of plants or insects have been constructed. And as the attention of research workers was fixed on these phenomena, it was discovered also that sometimes certain kinds of cross-breeding of plants gave birth to hybrids which were not only variations but even, new species.

The asperity, the polemic style, of learned discussions which have brought face to face the defenders of these theories, would be difficult to understand if it was not averred that religion got mixed up with this discussion.

To be a Lamarckian, to give the decisive role to the medium, was to deny divine influence and its creative power. To be a Lamarckian was to display a “progressive spirit”, it was a warrant for materialism, even for atheism. To be a mutationist was to believe in revelations, to be retrograde or good-thinking. Between the two camps, but nearer to the first, the Darwinians have enjoyed a middle position, displaying the courage of good taste, and they would have preserved this position if they did not have the annoying idea of making man out to be the descendant of a monkey—which is truly an intolerable idea!

Believers and non-believers in the existence of God ranged themselves under the flag of one scientific camp or the other. It required, indeed, a great deal of sentimentality not to recognise that there were rights and wrongs on both sides, for, natural mutations have natural causes too, such as are brought about by the medium, and of all the mutations produced, many are not visible; there is then selection, one even before birth, the other during life, the latter corresponding to the adaptation of the individual.

It is this old quarrel, which one would have thought to be extinct, that has been born again, this time in a political, and not a religious, garb.

Two names are, henceforth, bound up with this affair—those of Mitchourine and Lysenko. Mitchourine is a specialist in grafting and hybridisation, who has succeeded in creating remarkable fruit trees which are capable of thriving in soil absolutely unknown to them before. It is truly very fine and can have considerable practical results, but it is not a principle newly introduced into science. Still it seems that the feat of Lysenko is a new discovery. He, too, wanted to solve a practical problem; he wished to make wheat grow in difficult climatic conditions and, for that, it was necessary to force the wheat to adapt itself in such a manner that it could fructify in one season of the year as well as in another—even in a season which it has always rejected.

Since the adult growth refused to accept any compromise, Lysenko tried to act on the grain itself. In doing that, the irony of fate decreed that he should show himself to be a good disciple of Morgan and his school! In fact, for these mutationists, does not the difficulty of obtaining a mutation come from the manifold protective coverings that surround the genital cell? What, after all, is a grain, if not a fertile reproduction cell isolated, delivered all naked for our experiments?

Very long before this, Stanfuss had already shown in refrigerating the chrysalis of a Swiss butterfly or in making the butterfly of Lapland emerge that the chrysalis was not an egg, but the impression was there. Lysenko probably knew nothing about it. He got the idea, and that is where his discovery came in, of acting on these grains not by means of artificial agencies, such as X-ray or poison, but by the simple means that nature employs—cold and heat, dryness and humidity. He discovered thus that by placing grains in germination for a determined period and at a determined moment under given conditions of temperature and humidity, new varieties of that grain were produced. And these new varieties were found to be adapted to these conditions equally new. One had only to choose; it has been found possible to ripen winter wheat by sowing it in spring, and it has been found possible to adapt potatoes to such hot climates as usually bring about rapid degeneration. Excellent results, which are of a kind that will alter profoundly the economy of the world. Indeed, one knows, but conceals out of shame, the fact that



the total quantity of food actually yielded by the earth is insufficient to nourish in a normal way the totality of its inhabitants. All methods of extending the area under cultivation, or of increasing the output per acre, are conquests of great value. The discoveries of Mitchourine and Lysenko are of the number, and amongst the most brilliant.

But apart from the point of view of the Agronomist, the point of view technical, there is that of the savant. If the labours of Lysenko had the result only of lowering the price of bread, it would not be enough to make it a scientific discovery. But they do amount to a discovery, because they permit us, for the first time, to understand how by simple variations of climate during geological ages new species could have been formed. Many cool summers may appear after many hot summers, usually nothing will happen; but if the variation is large enough, if it occurs at a fixed moment of germination, if it repeats itself with a certain given periodicity, then new varieties will possibly be created.

I say varieties, and not species, because it is here that the discussion starts—the grains of winter wheat, obliged to become spring wheat, reproduce winter wheat and a new treatment is necessary in order to “fix” in them the possibility of yielding spring wheat. And even when this is done, one does not tell us that the result is permanent, or that it transmits itself by heredity as happens in natural spring wheat.

There are other savants in the world besides those with whom we are concerned here, who have studied, who probably study still, the astonishing result of vernalisation, or the rational cooling of grains. In India, Boshi Sen followed in 1942, in his Laboratory and on his experimental fields at Almora, lines of research very like those of Lysenko. Possibly he is not the only one of his kind, and it would be desirable to know the results attained by all these research workers before passing a comprehensive judgement. We are not told if Lysenko observed the Chromosomes of his grains; I think this simple idea would horrify him, since whosoever mentions Chromosomes thinks of Morgan, of mutations, of heresy.

For, there we are! The Soviet journals have seized upon the discoveries of Mitchourine and Lysenko in order to proclaim the failure of Morgan’s empiricism; and as Morgan is an American,

there is a mix-up of the Marshall Plan with the reproduction of wheat. I am not exaggerating. The journals of the whole world, whether for or against the Soviet regime, have vied with one another in ignorance and sentimental frenzy in connection with these pieces of agricultural research work. And the Soviet Government has approved of this attitude in organising a "purge" of biological media, by which savants who were guilty of not believing in the mechanism of heredity advocated by Lysenko were degraded or recalled.

This invasion by politics indicates clearly a tendency very widespread according to which social matters obviously occupy in our life today the place held in the Middle Ages by religious questions. Whether it is a matter of obtaining a place, or of finding an editor, or of interesting critics, everything depends on politics today. And in some countries, rightly called totalitarian, a political conformity is demanded which is as narrow as the religious conformity exacted in contemporary Arabia or in medieval Europe, where political excommunication brings about precisely the same results as were obtained by the Holy Inquisition in Spain and elsewhere.

This is not an accidental thing, but an indication of a psychological evolution of our race. For, it is ourselves that give to such and such social function a particular value. During each epoch (and that is precisely what defines a psychological "epoch") one of the categories, one of the aspects, of our consciousness, assumes a particular value and acquires a sacred character; there is a ban on the discussion of that which belongs to it and which forms an absolute, the result of a revelation which stands in no need of justification by anything outside itself.

One sees thus, in Europe, the predominance of action, of the gesture of a Knight, then of sentiment (mystical in the Middle Ages), then of Cartesian reason and, lastly, of social and political sense. The scientific dispute which came up in Russia, the extraordinary interest that it has roused in the great public mind, even if one takes into account the efforts at publicity which have accompanied it, are so many proofs of the religious position occupied today by politics. This position leads naturally to the conception of everything from the point of view of power. Lysenko has very clearly expressed his general standpoint (one can almost say his philosophy) with regard

to this subject in declaring that “a science which does not give to practice a clear perspective, a force of orientation and confidence about obtaining practical results, is not worthy of bearing the name of science.” Here is something that is quite clear; nothing is scientific that has not a practical value, it is the technique that counts, knowledge is admissible only where it serves technique.

One sometimes sums up the ends of science in a very few words: to know and to be able to; and then one distinguishes pure science, disinterested seeking of knowledge and of its technical application extended towards practical ends. For Lysenko, what matters is knowing in order to have the power, and nothing else. It is by no means certain that he is right. A country like the United States, so enamoured of efficiency and technique, tried the following experiment:—it placed at the disposal of some eminent savants unlimited credit for the purpose of carrying on research work without setting before them any fixed programme. And it is some big industrial firms who have made the experiment; it has had perfect success. Freedom pays. It is one of the most potent stimulants of research, and when research is active, it never happens that amongst the discoveries which it leads to there are not any with practical possibilities. One can ask oneself if the barren character of some researches in Soviet Russia—precisely those that have brought retirement to their authors—is not due to the absolute compulsion of making all research work converge to a practical end.

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We have said just now that the discoveries of Lysenko probably gave us the key to the mystery of certain kinds of development by showing us that a simple modification of the rhythm of seasons was capable of producing fresh varieties and, perhaps, new species. This is a very important point, but, in spite of everything, secondary in the great problem of evolution, which consists in determining the goal of this universal movement and, if one is a philosopher, its significance.

It has been held that it had no significance. It has been shown that certain developments have a very doubtful utility, that there

are some which are so injurious that they bring on the disappearance of the entire species. And it is a fact that if one studies a given line of evolution (that which leads to the actual horse, for example) it does not correspond to any decipherable goal. And if one tries, by lifting oneself higher, to embrace in one single glance the general evolution of the earth, the problem becomes more distinct, but is still not solved. One sees very well, appearing one after another in the history of our globe, matter, life and, then, deliberate consciousness, and these three degrees determine, what we call, evolution. But we are thereby no nearer to a solution, because that which we seek when we are speaking with the idea of specifying an evolution, is a logically fixed sequence of successive stages. The idea that an evolution cannot be logical, in the mental sense of the word, gives us an indescribable shock.

Nevertheless, that is what nature shows to us. Our knowledge of the physical world, in spite of its depth, does not furnish us with any reason for thinking that a world like ours could have, in the past, given birth to living things. To invoke chance, here, is only to avow our ignorance. Likewise, there is nothing that justifies us in deducing logically from our knowledge of living beings that deliberate consciousness had to appear one day. And this irrationality of the whole is found even in certain detailed phenomena; for instance, in the unexpected appearance of animals at a constant temperature. It is an irrational characteristic which disarms all scientific research.

But irrational does not mean either arbitrary or indeterminate. It implies only that there is no logical bond between the two categories of phenomena. We have then to know what connection can there be between them; we shall revert to it later. Savants are engrossed in observing from closer quarters the nature of this situation and, so to say, in figuring up the difficulties. They have calculated the degree of probability of the appearance of a molecule of protein, that is to say, of a group of substances characteristic of living matter. The number found is exceedingly small and amounts to showing only that this appearance is not impossible (evidently. . .), but that it can occur hardly once in the earth's life-time, which practically comes to our not seeing it occur at all. Now it has been produced and

not in the form of one single molecule as a very rare occurrence, but during a certain period with a certain abundance.

We touch here the core of the question. It is understood that an event of very great improbability—such, for example, as can appear once in a thousand million years—can occur five minutes after the commencement of our observation. When one says that the appearance of life is due to chance, it is a fact of this kind that one relies on. Logically one has, undoubtedly, the right to do so, but the problem has not been solved, even at this price. In fact, all that we have gained thus is the formation of proteins, but even kilograms of protein do not make a living cell; in addition to the special stock of matter indispensable, there is necessary another thing yet, a certain structure; and even that is not all, for an egg living and the same egg dead may not present any appreciable difference; it is only by leaving it to be hatched that one would know if it is alive or not alive. In order to have the simplest of beings, there is still lacking in our protein that something which we call life.

And there, we are at the foot of the wall. We cannot evaluate the probability of the appearance of life, because we cannot define it. No biological work has done it, and nothing in our study of living beings has brought us nearer a definition. Life is not a concept which can be utilised rationally. On the other hand, it is hardly possible to say that it does not exist, exists only in a manner of speaking, a play of words. . . .

Without imagining anything about our future capacity of defining this word, the fact remains that for the present that is where we stand. The position is precisely the same with regard to consciousness, a fact of which we know the existence by evidence and which it is impossible to define, impossible to include in any process of reasoning, except as a basic fact, such as excludes all attempt at explanation.

Since the problem, then, cannot be tackled along this line, scientific and logical, one can ask oneself if there does not exist another way which we can follow in order to solve it.

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If we exclude knowledge by identity, which exists in us only as the knowledge that we have of our own consciousness, two modes of knowing are available to us, according to quantity and according to quality. The first leads to science, the second to philosophy; the first leads to power by knowing, the second to happiness by wisdom. The two modes are neither exclusive nor opposed to each other, but, being complementary, are interdependent.

In Sri Aurobindo's writings evolution holds a place of great importance and his study of it has been undertaken precisely from the point of view of quality. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is necessarily finalist, because finality plays in the domain of that philosophy, as we have just defined it, the part that necessity plays in the domain of science. The one, like the other, is such as determines phenomena as they are. But when necessity is a codification of stated facts and demands nothing beyond the evidence of the senses, finality presupposes a consciousness and a will combined.

The central fact, for the philosopher, is the manifestation in matter of this consciousness and of this will. This manifestation is a fact, and it is also a fact that it does not occur directly; everywhere that consciousness appears, it is in living beings. Life is the necessary medium for the manifestation of consciousness in matter. If, therefore, we agree to give a sense and a value to evolution taken as a whole, it can only be that of a movement which has this manifestation for its aim and life for its means.

One has often laid stress on the special role of life, on its own particular tendencies. Houssay has brought it to our notice that in the totality of physical phenomena energy deteriorates when vital activity leads to the synthesis that elevate the quality of energy. This does not mean that in their totality (in taking into account, for example, the heat generated) the vital phenomena do not follow the physical laws. They do follow them in the whole as well as in the details of their operations, but—and that is the important point—they utilise them in order to realise the synthesis of which the probability in the physical world is practically nil, and of which the general direction, of synthesis and of differentiation pushed farther and farther, is opposed to the tendency towards uniformity of the physical evolution. Life steers against the wind.

The imagery can be helpful to us. The probability of a boat sailing close to the wind and going against its direction by a stroke of chance is not nil, but the chance is so feeble that no one seeing it occur will doubt that there is a pilot on board—determination and finality. It is life which governs matter, and it is conscious individuality which governs life.

There are, then, three planes of existence which are mixed up, but which are, nevertheless, subordinate. And even though the physical world has got its determinism, the vital and the mental worlds have likewise got theirs. All contemporary psychology indicates this. There exists a hierarchy of determinism, largely independent but not quite, and these interactions, these phenomena of direction of which the *demon* of Maxwell is the best-known but a primitive symbol, are precisely what we call finality. The word should rather be put in the plural, because matter, life and mind have each their own, and one knows but too well how divergent their tendencies are.

It is clear even for our experience that neither life nor mind can determine evolution such as it is. In fact (this was where we started) the stages of this evolution are not in logical dependence. As they cannot be the result of material hazards, they must be the result of a determinism superior, supramental. It is that which is, in a strong sense of the term, the creative spirit. In its creation it manifests itself under two aspects—of the cosmos with its innumerable and infinitely varied elements, and the individual, conscious unity: the multiplicity and the unity. And if one admits, with Sri Aurobindo, that the goal of this manifestation is a perfect expression of the possibilities of the spirit which unites in itself the one and the many, then the goal of evolution is to arrive at this synthesis by putting the conscious individual to work in the cosmos. Man, as he is, is far from fulfilling the necessary conditions, his evolution has not yet reached its culmination. It is human only in part and will not become that wholly except by his surpassing himself.

It is here, then, that the individual possesses an immense value, but if it be true that he possesses his inner determinisms, it is none the less true that he is at every instant created by the medium, that is to say, by the cosmos. Man alone appears capable of a

completely conscious individuality, but it is not with him that it commences. In the physical world, even if one neglects the atomic world where all the corpuscles of one single species are supposed to be identical, one sees appearing the notion of an individual by the infinite variation which brings about that two pebbles are never identically the same. In the living world, the double law of the uniformity of the plane and the diversity of the individual becomes clear and is in full bloom in man.

In this continuous ascent, which need not stop at any actual point, there are many landings and turnings, much pushing ahead and much back-sliding. But there exists everywhere the inner pressure of the concealed determinisms and the outer possibilities of the determinisms of the medium. The former assume the aspect of an independent step, the latter that of an unavoidable necessity; the two are aspects, separate appearances of a global unity of which the goal is the same, the paths diverse. And the motor power of this immense movement, is the bliss which the spirit experiences when, after having been lost, it finds itself again in plenitude.

GABRIEL MONOD-HERZEN

*(Translated from the original French by C. C. Dutt.)*



## *Rasa: Its Meaning and Scope*

### I. RASA: THE SEMANTIC APPROACH

**R**ASA is one of those quintessential words in Sanskrit which sum up a whole philosophy or even a civilization. An attempt is made in this article to assess the value of its various aesthetic meanings for a comprehensive theory of *rasaswada* or aesthetic experience.

The two consonantal elements in the word *Rasa*, *R* and *S*, have a meaning of their own in the language of the gods. In A.E.'s intuitive perception of the meanings of consonants, "R" stands for "motion" and "S" for "impregnation, in-breathing, or insouling at the stage when the one life breaks into myriads of lives." Thus one can imagine a jet of water springing from the heart of a rock. It is the movement that is perceptible first. The jet then bursts forth into many-coloured spray.

Speaking in terms of philology, the origin of the word *Rasa* has not been recorded by Monier-Williams in his great Dictionary. The verb रस् (to taste) is mentioned by him as a derivation from the noun. He gives another verb रस् which means: "to roar; yell; cry; sound; reverberate." (Meanings found in the *Shatapatha Brahmana*.) This is referred for its etymology to another verb *Ras* (रास्) which also means: "to cry aloud; to howl." It is found in the *Mahabharata*. It is therefore a later form. Both are referred to another root रा meaning: "to grant; give; yield; surrender," found in the *Rigveda*. It may be noted that "R" here conveys the suggestion of movement, for giving or surrendering is a kind of movement. But this account of the origin of रस् leaves the second consonantal element "S" unexplained.

There is another noun in the *Rigveda*, रसा, a feminine noun, meaning: "moisture; humidity; a mythical stream supposed to

flow round the earth.” This also has been given without any account of its origin.

There is another verb *सृ* in the *Rigveda* which means: “to run; flow; speed; glide; move; go; spring up.” We do not know whether the substantives *रस* and *रसा*, with their meanings of “water; liquid” and “humidity; and moisture” are connected in some way with this root.

Coming to *रस* itself we are inclined to believe that the first current meaning of the word was: “water; a liquid.” It gradually came to connote the sap of plants, the juice of fruit, and consequently the best part of anything or its essence. All these meanings are found in the *Rigveda*. In *Rigveda* II.26.5 we have *धान्यं रसं*. During the Upanishadic period this meaning “essence” is retained: *प्राणो हि वा अंगानां रसः* Brah. Up. I.3.19.

The progeny of meanings in this line is numerous. In the *Ramayana*, *रस* comes to mean any mixture, elixir or potion. In the *Mahabharata* it is used for liquor, drink, melted butter, milk.

In the sense of “taste” or “flavour” as the principal quality of fluids, of which there are six original kinds (*Madhura*, sweet; *Amla*, sour; *Lavana*, salt; *Katuka*, pungent; *Tikta*, bitter; and *Kashaya*, astringent), the word is found in the *Shatapatha Brahmana*. It will be seen that this is a natural extension of meaning from the essence of an object to its essential flavour.

The word has this meaning “savour”, “taste” in Brah. Up. III. 2.4 *जिह्वया हि रसान् विजानाति*. It also develops into a verb *न जिघत्ते न रसयते* *Prasnopanishad* IV.2.

From *जिह्वया हि रसान् विजानाति*, Brah.Up.III. 2-4, it is possible to imagine that the word came generally to be applied to the various flavours of food, the *षड्रसाः* (*shadrasas*) as in the *Shatapatha Brahmana*. It is possible that, by the time of Bharata, this meaning of *rasa* was widely current. The next step was a legitimate extension of meaning from the flavours to be tasted with the tongue to the flavours to be tasted by the mental palate:—

यथा बहुद्रव्ययुतैः व्यञ्जनेर्बहुभिर्युतैः ।

आस्वादयन्ति भुञ्जानाः भक्तं भक्तविदो जनाः ॥

भावाभिनय संबद्धान् स्थायिभावांस्तथा बुधाः ।  
आस्वादयन्ति मनसा तस्मान्नादधरसाः स्मृताः ॥

Natya Shastra IV. 33-34

A development of the subjective meanings of the word along with the objective is seen in the *Mahabharata* where *rasa* means “love; desire; pleasure; delight.” In the *Natya Shastra* it has another aesthetic connotation,—“the taste or character of a work of art or the sentiment prevailing in it.”

But already in the Upanishads the word had been elevated to a transcendental significance which could unite into itself the subjective as well as the objective meanings of the word. There is the famous utterance रसो वै सः रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वानन्दी भवति । (Taittiriya Up.II.7.i.) where the two meanings of *rasa*: “essence” and “taste” coexist. *Rasa* here means the highest essence, the Supreme Reality. It also means the most ennobled taste or experience of delight. The Supreme Reality manifests itself in the subject as well as the object, in the seer and the seen. It also transcends them both and lives in its own luminousness. Because it permeates both the subject and the object, it is possible for the subject to apprehend the object. The आवरणभंग or disenvironing or unveiling of the object is nothing other than the elimination of the accidental aspects or inessentialities of the object, and the apprehension of the reality in its core. The disenvironing process or आवरणभंग is, in a sense, primarily applicable to the subject; for the right vision can be attained only when the anti-self is replaced by the real self, the divided and limited consciousness by the integral and unlimited awareness. The Supreme Reality is none other than the true self of the individual and the reality in the core of the object. It permeates and transcends them both. “The Spirit (Atman),” says A. Coomarswamy, “is at once the flavour of all existence and the essence (Sat), truth (Satyam) and beatitude (Ananda) on which all life depends; itself the taster (*Rasavetri*), it tastes only of itself, whether as immanent or transcendent, and the flavour is one and the same and indeterminable no matter what the source or vessel that may have seemed to characterize it.” (*Dictionary of World Literature*, p. 320.) It is in the same

sense that Buddhist rhetoric speaks of Truth as the sweetest of flavours (S. N. 182). *Rasa*, therefore, is *Sat* or supreme existence, *Chit* or supreme awareness, and *Ananda* or supreme delight. The many-coloured game of subject and object, of which this universe is the theatre, is possible only because of the radiance of the Supreme Reality. An inward impulsion or inscrutable purpose makes objects melt at our gaze and yield their meaning to us, because the Reality that permeates both us and them is one and the same.

The evolution of the subjective and objective meanings of *Rasa* as “essence” and “taste” and their re-integration into the Supreme Reality (रसो वै सः) has a deep significance for the theories of *rasa* that followed. The word came to be applied to all the stages in the process of contemplative and creative activity from its emergence in the poet to its consummation in the reader. The following table gives an analysis of all the processes connected with *rasa* and gives the subjective meanings with their corresponding objective equivalences.

### RASA: THE TRANSCENDENTAL AND IMMANENT REALITY

Subjective	Objective
1) Taste; the artist's seership or vision.	(1) Essence; the potentiality in the object.
2) The various attitudes projected by the seer towards the object: Rati, Hasa, etc.	(2) The specific potentiality in the object arousing a particular attitude ( <i>Vastu akarata</i> ).
3) The fugitive emotions of the artist.	(3) The secondary potentialities of the object.
4) The contemplative and creative delight of the artist.	(4) The theme chosen by the artist for an expression of his essential attitude and delight.
5) The artist's reconstruction of narrative or dramatic action contained in the theme so as to convey his attitude fittingly,	(5) The form of the work of art, the entire action, the “consequents” or deeds of the character or characters

- by employing his system of tastes and abilities.
- 6) The reconstruction of the theme so as to accommodate his secondary modes of consciousness.
- 7) The emotions aroused in the artist in the process of creation.
- 8) The producer's, reciter's or actor's apprehension of the significance of a work of art.
- 9) The Rasika's interior act of tasting flavour unparticularised.
- 10) The Rasika's aesthetic delight arising from an apprehension of art.
- and the characters themselves.
- (6) The expression of these modes in outstanding scenes, episodes, descriptions, character-types and particular beauties of utterance.
- (7) The technical triumphs surmounting the difficulties in the theme.
- (8) The interpretative role of one or all of them.
- (9) Ideal beauty or flavour contained in any element in poetry contributing to our experience of *chamatkara*.
- 10) The embodiment of that delight in the enriched and heightened culture of the life of humanity.

There is a passage in Abhinavagupta's work, *Lochana*, summing up the theories of *rasa* prevalent in his time and it shows how several meanings of the word recorded above were current then. "अपरे तु पुनः × × × तन्नाट्यमेव रसाः।" "अन्ये तु शुद्धं विभावम्, अपरे तु शुद्धमनुभावम्, केचित्तु स्थायिमात्रम्, इतरे व्यभिचारिणम्, अन्ये तत्संयोगम्, एके अनुकार्यं, केचन सकलमेव समुदायं रसमाहुरित्यलं बहुना ॥"

It has thus been maintained:—(1) that histrionics alone is *rasa*; (2) that the *vibhavas* or objects alone are *rasa*; (3) that the *anubhavas* or consequents alone are *rasa*; (4) that the sentiments or permanent moods alone are *rasa*; (5) that the fugitive emotions alone are *rasa*; (6) that the integration of permanent moods, fugitive emotions, objects and consequents is *rasa*; (7) that the characters are *rasa*; and (8) that the synthesis of all the foregoing is *rasa*.

Bhoja also maintains that *rasa* resides in the poet as well as his plot; in the work of art as well as in the spectator and actor. The seat of *rasa* has thus been a bone of contention in Sanskrit literary criticism.

It is our endeavour in this paper to show that *rasa* is a many-throned power and that its imperial sway extends from the consciousness of poet to that of the *rasika* or reader; and to relate the various meanings of the word *rasa* to the entire process of aesthetic experience and fit them into their relative positions. The main aim is, of course, to present a fresh statement of the meaning and scope of *rasa*. This will incidentally serve to show how the various meanings of the word are justified in their context.

## II. RASA: THE SEERSHIP OF THE ARTIST

It has been shown that *Rasa* connotes the Supreme Reality. In what manner or measure does it reside in the artist, the seeing eye? There are significant statements made on this subject in Sanskrit which, to the casual reader, sound partial, dogmatic and contradictory. But a golden thread of meaning runs through them and it yields itself to intimate scrutiny and inquiry.

Bhavabhuti in his *Uttara Rama Charita* Act III. 47 speaks of *Karuna* (pity or sympathy) as the only *rasa*:

एको रसः करुण एव निमित्तभेदाद्  
भिन्नः पृथक् पृथगिव श्रयते विवर्तान् ।  
आवर्तबुद्बुदतरंगमयान्विकारा-  
नम्भो यथा सलिलमेव हि तत्समस्तम् ॥

What Bhavabhuti wished to indicate was that pity or sympathy is the basic sentiment. He caught a glimpse of the soul through this particular attribute or manifestation. In other words, sympathy seemed to him to be the inherent and perennial condition of the soul and other emotional states only fleeting or transitory. That the soul in its fullest blossoming manifests universal sympathy is clear. But it has other and equally glorious attributes. These Bhavabhuti did not stop to consider. Again, *Chitta-vidruti* or the melting of consciousness is not the only kind of aesthetic experience possible to man.

Another poet, on the other hand, maintains that *Shanta* is the only *rasa*, and the source of all other *rasas*. (Quoted by Dr. Sankaran: *Some Aspects of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit* p. 116.)

स्वं स्वं निमित्तमासाद्य शान्ताद् भावः प्रवर्तते ।  
पुनर्निमित्तापाये तु शान्त एव प्रलीयते ॥

“All the emotional states obtain their respective determinants and proceed from *Shanta*. They merge again in *Shanta* as soon as the determinants are withdrawn.” Abhinavagupta also believes that contemplative delight, the essence of which consists in disinterested and supersensuous perception, is itself of the nature of *Shanti* or Calm—“calm of mind, all passion spent” as Milton would have it. This view obviously starts from a glimpse of another attribute of the soul,—the depth and not the tumult of the soul; or its ineffable peace. All other modes of experience are, for Abhinavagupta, relative avenues of approach. The Absolute is realised only in peace. That is why he regards *Shanta* as the basic *Rasa* or the primary attitude of the soul.

Bhoja, on the other hand, remarks that *Shringara* is the only *rasa*: एते रत्यादयो भावाः शृंगारव्यक्तिहेतवः Chap. xiv. *Sringara Prakasha*. This *Shringara* is not to be confused with erotic sentiment. It is, as Dr. Raghavan explains, the inner *Tattva* of Ego or man’s love for his own Self. *Ahamkara* is Ego or awareness. This awareness is called *Abhimana* when it is projected on an object and gets attached to it, deriving pleasure even out of a painful spectacle. These various projections culminate again, each in its own right, in *Preman* or love. This exalted awareness—consciousness projecting itself into an object and then transforming itself into love—is *Shringara*. All *bhavas* or moods are, according to Bhoja, of the form of love. The valiant man fights because he loves to fight; the clown jokes because he loves to laugh. It is this universality of love that, according to Bhoja, is the distinctive attribute through which the soul manifests itself. All other emotional states are derivatory. Aesthetic experience, after passing through manifold forms, attains again the status of *Preman*, of love or delight.

Dharmadatta throws open another casement of the soul.

रसे सारस्वमत्कारः सर्वत्राप्यनुभूयते ।  
तच्चमत्कारसारत्वे सर्वत्राप्यद्भुतो रसः ॥  
तस्माद्द्भुतमेवाह कृती नारायणो रसम् ।

(Sahitya Darpana, Parichheda III)

All other *rasas* are said to be but varying manifestations of the one *Adbhuta* (the marvellous). Viswanatha, who presents this view, prizes *chittavistara* or the heightening of consciousness, not *vidruti*, the melting of consciousness. An object which is a guest of the marvellous hour of inspiration reveals its innermost reality to the seeing eye and this reality dazzles the eye with its marvellous effulgence. Aesthetic experience culminates in *Chamatkara*, in the light that never was on sea or land. The soul makes the natural supernatural by flooding the natural with its own light. This is done through आवरणभंग or the disenvironing of the Inner Effulgence. This effulgence or *prakasha* is one of the attributes of the soul. But Viswanatha claims that it is the distinctive attribute and that all the others derive from it.

Universal sympathy, ineffable peace, universal love, marvellous effulgence,—these, then, are the attributes of the soul, each one of which has been claimed as its primary manifestation. But the soul (Psyche) itself is a complex or many-faceted manifestation of the Jivatman,—the Individual Divine. It has many names and aspects and each seer prizes the name and aspect through which the soul has manifested itself to him. It will be seen, when the evolving psychic entity in the individual reaches its full flowering that the name and aspect which were primary to him are but part of a shining multitude,—an effulgent host of names and aspects; or, rather, that other primaries lurk behind the one primary that the individual has experienced. What is primary is the soul, not its attribute or attributes.

It is clear that, in the foregoing discussion, the *Adbhuta* and other *rasas* are interpreted as manifestations of the soul, not traditionally as delineations of wonder, pity, etc., with their sensuous and mundane associations. It is obvious that this is the only tenable sense if they are to be spoken of as 'primaries'.

The seer has, in him, *the sattwic buddhi or ahamkara*,—the sublimated and purified consciousness. His limited and divided consciousness has, to a certain extent, been made whole by the emergence of the psyche,—a partial suffusion of the egoistic consciousness by the light of the psyche. In other words, the seer possesses soul-knowledge and world-knowledge, the two processes to which every



individual is subjected in this “vale of soul-making”. It is said that the period of apprenticeship may cover part of a life or a whole series of lives. Seership is a rare gift.

When this awareness projects itself on an object, it is seen in its dynamic aspect which Bhoja calls *abhimana*. This is the seminal act, the act which makes any activity possible at all. We are concerned with aesthetic experience, the field of the artist’s gaze. As we have said, the ego of the artist is not mere raw *ahamkara*. It has been purified and sublimated to a considerable extent. The seminal act of perception begets, in the field of affectivity, a whole progeny of emotional moods or *bhavas*. If it is the vision of the seer, these moods gradually evolve into states of ideal sensibility and, finally, of delight. Self-knowledge and world-knowledge, the two processes at work in each one of these moods, finally disappear in delight, after depositing one more drop at least of *amruta*, of soul-knowledge, into the *sattwic buddhi* or the psychic entity evolving in the seer. The seer is thankful for what he has received and is in a state of repose or of the joy of creative activity till his vision issues forth again in another seminal act. Every act of perception, projected on an object in the field of affectivity, is pregnant with possibilities of ideal sensibility, delight and creative activity. With the greatest or all-seer, these possibilities turn into certainties.

Bhoja calls this state of ideal sensibility and delight, *Preman* or love. Like Coleridge, he thinks that we receive but what we give and “In our life alone doth Nature live”. Even when the seer is attached for the time being to outward objects or absorbed in them, it is his *Atmarati*,—the love of his own soul, that manifests itself as the love of external objects.

As the Brihadarnyaka declares, आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति. When this love of the soul is directed towards outward objects, it is reborn into myriad *bhavas* or emotions, which are again experienced by this very soul, the psychic entity. The love or *abhimana* for various objects is etherealised into love absolute, or what we have called ideal sensibility and delight. Bharata also remarks that *kama* or absolute love is the root *bhava* or emotion from which all other *bhavas* arise.

Bhoja even maintains that this seership is the only *rasa*, for it alone is the *sthayi* or permanent attitude. Further, it alone is what

is ultimately relished or experienced,—in its final phase of ideal sensibility and delight in which a seminal act of vision culminates, with itself as the taster. *Rati* (attraction; love) and other *bhavas*—regarded as permanent moods or sentiments by Bharata—are but fugitive flames that feed this central fire of seership, of the *sattwic consciousness*. This seership which embodies itself in a perfect work of art or a perfect life, makes all self-expression a process of fulfilment or self-evolution for the artist.

We need not commit ourselves to Bhoja's nomenclature in this regard. Seership extends from the higher mind through the illumined mind, intuition and overmind to Supermind.\* *Ahamkara*, *Abhimana* and *Shringara* are words with other associations and they need not be allowed to affect our exposition. It is the eye made quiet by the power of harmony and the deep power of joy, Carlyle's seeing eye, that matters. This exquisite and ideal sensibility has a transforming power. It bathes the world in a new light and makes all things marvellous. It diffuses universal sympathy, love and calm. It alone recognises Beauty, not loveliness which has its opposite. This is the *rasa*, the अमृत from which all *bhavas* proceed. It is this which prepares the artist for a self-identification with his appointed theme. It is this *Sadharanya* or ideal sympathy that enables the artist to respond adequately to the determinants,—the rigours of his theme. The *rasika*, *pramatru* or *sahridaya*, the man of ideal sympathy, is both the poet and the reader. He is that by virtue of his awareness, his seership. A man is but a barbarian without it. It is this awareness that enables the poet to see others as he sees himself, to have the necessary *chit samvada* or absorption in the contemplated object.

McDougall accepts the Nietzschean will to live as the basic urge and endeavours to establish the self-regarding sentiment as the crowning sentiment of all, governing all. This approximates to Bhoja's *Ahamkara*, the *buddhi* dominated by the *sattwic* principle. *Sattwa* is the principle of illumination, harmony and love. McDougall does not accept, of course, the Sankhya psychology and he scrupulously keeps the psychic entity out of his psychological speculations. But in the cultured and sensitive individual, it is the psyche that gradually

\* cf. *The Life Divine* : Sri Aurobindo

gains ascendancy over the entire system and the psyche is an evolving entity; for it has yet to be extricated from the grip of vital and mental obsessions. This entity is, then, the seeing eye.

The *Agnipurana* follows Advaitic and not Sankhya thought. It starts with Brahman. The blissful aspect of Brahman is called *rasa*. Bhoja argues on the basis of the reflection of the *Atman* (or the Individual Divine) in Prakriti or Nature and on *Ahamkara* as the first *Prakritivikara* or distortion in Nature. He considers *Ahamkara* as a *guna* or attribute of the *Atman*. The *Purana* holds that this *Ahamkara* is the first *Vikriti* or distortion of *Ananda* or *Rasa* which is the essential nature of the *Atman*. From *Ahamkara* is *Rati* (attraction; love) produced and from *Rati* all the other *bhavas* arise. Bhoja, however, had argued that *Rati* and all other *bhavas* proceeded directly from *Ahamkara*.

The knot of the ego is the nexus of the whole being. The surface self of our normal consciousness is usually a mixture of mental and vital awareness and of the lower *buddhi* or reason, memory and imagination. The normal consciousness is gradually sublimated,—i.e. made *sattwic* with visitations from the subliminal and superconscious states when the individual opens himself to these influences and bends his energy to the task of self-evolution. He is, even without being aware of it, open to one or both of these influences in some centre of his being. Life cannot be completely spiritualised until the psyche replaces the surface self and assumes lordship over the entire being of the individual. Normally, then, the artist is one in whom the *sattwic buddhi* or the capacity for ideal sensibility predominates. It is this capacity that enables him to carry every emotional mood to its furthest extremity, to the point of ideal sensibility where even pain reveals to him the transcendental repose or delight that lurks behind it. Art has to convey an impression of this supreme repose or delight through the manifold sentiments that chequer human life. The seership and genius of the artist consist in this very act of seminal perception and correspondent execution. It is in this sense that seership has been called *rasa* and the only *rasa*,—a primary attitude which *bhavas* like *rati* and *hasa* (laughter) serve only to colour and enrich. *Rasa*, as we have seen, has been made to connote the whole process of aesthetic experience and all the stages in the process, both

individually and collectively. To the extent to which an insistence on seership as the only *rasa* serves to bring out its significance and indispensability for the whole process, the statement is certainly justified.

### III

#### RASA: THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MODES OF AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Given the seership of the artist, what happens when it projects itself on the outer world? It splits itself into rainbow colours like a gleam of sunlight passing through a prism or sea-spray. Its white radiance (which is already less white than the whitest or purest) is *stained* for the time being by the dome of many-colored glass through which it passes.

It is said that the knowledge of an object presented to the senses consists in a co-ordination between the form assumed by the perceiving consciousness and the aspect presented by the object.\* This correspondence between ideas and things tends towards identity at higher levels of reference but attains this identity only in the Absolute, experienced “like a flash of lightning”, as *Sadharanya* and *sayujya* in the consummation (*samadhi*) of contemplation (*Dhyana*).

When the consciousness of an individual projects itself on the external world it is confronted with a number of objects attracting it and seeking to be animated by it.

The human consciousness operates in the world on the planes of cognition, affectivity and the executive force of the will. Human activity is a purposive activity. The Hindu seers saw it directed invariably towards one or more of the four goals or *Purusharthas*,—pleasure (*Kama*), wealth (*Artha*), right action (*Dharma*) and spiritual liberation (*Moksha*). They did not subscribe either to the ascetic denial of matter or the materialist denial of the spirit. They sought to integrate all human activity into a well-ordered scale of values, with *sayujya* and *samrajya*,—the empire of man over self and his empire over his cosmic environment, always in view.

\* A.K. Coomarswamy: *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 183.

In the presence of objects producing attraction or repulsion, amazement or anger, human consciousness takes the form given to it by the potentiality in the object,—the *vastu akarata*. The moon-stone melts in the presence of the moon, while the sun-stone blazes forth fiercely when the sun's rays fall on it. The *vastu akarata* is said to be called *bhava* or *vasana*, propensity or instinct.

But we cannot say that the awareness of man always shapes itself according to the objects or situations that confront it. If it were so, the responses of several human beings to a particular object would have to be one and the same. But, as Blake remarks, a fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees. There must then be varying levels of awareness depending on the inherent and acquired sensibility of each individual. The *ahamkara* or surface consciousness depends for its functioning on the system of sentiments that each individual evolves for himself. The greater the permeation and dominance of the psyche, the purer are the sentiments by which he lives. Abhinavagupta remarks that certain *vasanas* or instincts and *samskaras* or sentiments are implanted in the consciousness of every human being. Stimulants or objects conditioned in particular ways call forth the corresponding sentiments or what Kalidasa calls the भावस्थिराणि in the individual. This evocation is in the nature of an instinctive remembrance or an immediate intuitive perception.

In this connection, it would be useful to examine any system expounded by Western psychologists and see how far it helps us in our analysis of aesthetic experience. Western psychology is thorough in its own domain. But it starts with partial premises and leaves out elements that are vital to the composition of the whole. Behaviourist psychology believes in the primacy and even the monism of matter. Hormic psychology posits a psycho-physical energy. But it is concerned only with the empirical self and leaves the psychic entity ("psychic" in our sense) out of account. Here follows an account of human affectivity and personality from the point of view of McDougall's version of hormic psychology, frequently in his own words. What we believe are elements vital to the picture are set forth in their proper context.

McDougall postulates a mental energy which is purposive or psycho-physical energy. This energy strives for certain natural goals

such as food, shelter, etc. These needs and the tendencies to satisfy them are inborn in all human beings and are called propensities. When a propensity becomes active, it generates the specific tendency or energy directed to a special goal. Impulses or desires are active tendencies. Every propensity is geared to an innate ability which is both cognitive and executive. Knowing, striving and feeling are the three aspects of all mental activity. McDougall posits the following innate propensities: (1) the food propensity, (2) the gregarious propensity, (3) the collecting and hoarding propensity, (4) the construction propensity, (5) the rest or sleep propensity, (6) the propensity subserving bodily needs such as coughing, sneezing, etc. (7) the migratory propensity, (8) the comfort propensity consisting in removing oneself from whatever produces discomfort, (9) the laughter propensity, (10) the appeal or crying for assistance propensity, (11) the fear instinct, (12) repulsion, (13) curiosity, (14) pugnacity, (15) self-abasement and self-assertion, (16) tender emotion or the parental propensity, (17) the attraction or sex propensity.

McDougall does not mention the religious propensity which is posited by some psychologists. But the persistent experience of mystics all over the world demands the recognition of two propensities: (i) the urge for ineffable peace, (ii) the urge for pure *Ananda* or the bliss that transcends both pleasure and pain. These propensities function obscurely in all human beings. They are responsible for the eventual sublimation of all the other propensities and are seen at their clearest in highly cultured individuals or mystics. Humanity itself is in a state of evolution towards an ultimate divinisation and such individuals are in the van of civilization. Just as the propensities of human beings are more numerous than those of other animals, humanity in a certain stage of evolution reveals other and higher propensities which have to be recognised.

McDougall admits another general innate tendency which works in three directions. He calls it "sympathy". It exhibits itself in imitation of bodily movements, in suggestibility or the inducement of ideas of one individual in another and in affective sympathy which is the induction of the emotion of one individual in another. He also recognises the tendencies called playfulness and habit, the latter of which is a tendency to repeat whatever succeeds or is liked,

In human beings each propensity is geared to various abilities.

Propensities can be sublimated. In other words, the three qualities or principles which condition all human activity,—those of inertia (Tamas), movement (Rajas), and harmony (Sattwa) can be so viewed that the inert (Tamasic) or kinetic (Rajasic) nature gets elevated to the harmonious or the *sattwic* state. The parental propensity impels an individual to great self-sacrifice and achievements like the abolition of slavery. Pugnacity can be transformed into righteous indignation. Curiosity can develop into the urge to solve the great mystery. The attraction or sex propensity can be sublimated into Platonic love. In fact, Bhoja refuses to recognise *rati* or sex attraction as the only basis of love. He posits स्नेह (sneha) or spiritual attraction as the basis of a sentiment called *preyas* or spiritual love, as distinguished from *rati* which is the basis of *sringara* or eroticism. It is best to interpret *rati* as pure attraction between subject and object, ranging from the material to the spiritual plane. It would then include such types of experience as love of nature, which can now be accounted for neither under *rati* nor *sneha*. Laughter can be sublimated into humour.

Since every propensity has a triune aspect, it is clear that every action or thought is accompanied by a feeling, however faint, pleasant or unpleasant. One aspect of a propensity or the other may be prominent at a particular time. The affective aspect is not very prominent in the case of simpler propensities like the food propensity, the gregarious propensity, and the acquisitive propensity, and those of constructive and miscellaneous bodily movements. Other propensities like pugnacity, attraction, repulsion, fear, the tender emotion, etc. generate primary emotions like anger, love, disgust, fear, pity, etc. An emotion is therefore the affective aspect of a propensity. When the striving or the checking of a propensity is intense, the feeling is also intense. Passive experience is anoetic sentience or उदासीनता. When the impulse to action is baffled, the feeling is unpleasant and pleasant if it is successful. A feeling becomes an emotion when there is a rising intensity of general excitement. The evocation of each propensity liberates energy which flows into some system of action peculiar to its tendency. If this liberation of energy is copious, the mental state is one of excitement. This excitement may

result in fear, anger, lust, etc. according to the propensity involved. It should be remembered that man does not depend on purely sensational experience and that there is a conceptual side to his mental activity.

But the emotional state of man is not so simple as all this. An emotional state is usually constituted by the blending of two or three emotions. *Jealousy* is thus a complex emotional condition constituted by the joint operation of the feelings of self-assertion, anger and love. *Reproach* is the result of the conflict between the tender emotion and anger. Sympathy and the tender emotion are blended together in the emotion of *pity*. Fear, wonder and self-abasement together constitute *awe*. *Reverence* results when awe blends with the tender emotion. Sweet sorrow, cruel kindness,—all these are terms which denote highly complex states that can have no simple name. *Hate* is born of the blending of anger, fear and disgust. Wonder and self-abasement result in *admiration*. *Scorn* is the product of the blended emotions of anger and fear. Anger, fear and self-assertion are combined in *contempt*; self abasement and anger in *envy*; fear and disgust in *loathing*; and fear, disgust and wonder in *fascination*. Anger and wounded self-assertion result in *resentment*. *Bashfulness* is the product of the struggle between self-assertion and self-abasement.

These are only a few illustrations. The emotional state of man is too complex and vast to be adequately analysed.

But there is a higher step in the evolution of man's emotional life. Propensities get centred upon some one object exclusively and are extended to objects resembling the native objects of those propensities. They thus develop into acquired dispositions, i.e. dispositions built up through many emotional experiences and activities. These sentiments or भावस्थिराणि may and do endure throughout life. The centre of any sentiment is the cognitive ability which, through experience, gets functionally linked with one or more native propensities. Whenever the object is perceived or thought of, the propensity or propensities are also brought into action. This cognitive ability may also develop into a system of cognitive abilities. Use generally strengthens a sentiment. The more complex the sentiment, the wider is the range of the emotions and complex feelings that it engenders and the greater the complexity of the configuration of conscious



activity. A sentiment may thus be defined as an organized system of emotional tendencies centred about some object.

The blending or complexity of feelings analysed in a preceding paragraph is really due to the sentiments. Our judgements of value and of merit are also rooted in our sentiments. Thus the sentiment of love means tender emotion for the beloved, fear when she is in danger, sorrow when she is lost, joy at her success, etc. Again, there is the distinction between the love of a Romeo and an Antony, of an Othello and Hamlet.

Emotion is but a fleeting experience. Apart from fleeting emotions sporadically evoked by the events of the passing hour, sentiments once acquired also rouse those profounder affective stirrings which hold us steadily set towards remote goals. This is especially true of master sentiments. Sentiments are born partly of the experience of the individual, while propensities are wholly innate.

Again, the depth or shallowness of the emotional state of an individual varies according as it is related or unrelated to the sentiments. The savage mainly experiences primary emotions like the animal. It is the advanced individual who has complex emotions. The intensity and sublimity of emotions is increased, when they proceed from the sentiments. Christ's confession of universal sympathy when he said "forgive them, my Father, for they know not what they do", Valmiki's righteous indignation (at the huntsman who killed the mating bird) which culminated in the composition of one of the greatest epics of the world, Othello's jealousy, Hamlet's melancholy, —all these are examples of the intensity of emotions engendered by master sentiments.

The sentiments or *Sthayi bhavas* can be classified into five groups: (a) those seeking a union with the object: love; friendship. (b) Looking up to the object: respect; awe; reverence; admiration. (c) Looking down on the object: scorn; contempt. (d) Turning away from the object: repulsion; hate. (e) The preoccupation of the subject with itself: pride; self-love; ambition; vanity.

These are more or less sentiments or स्थायिभावः, recognised by Sanskrit aestheticians. But sentiments can be developed for collective objects like the family, the nation and the working class. Domesticity, nationalism, socialism,—these and their like are sentiments

which were not specially noted in Sanskrit. Again, after frequent association with objects manifesting a particular quality we develop a sentiment for the quality itself, as in the love of justice, of beauty or of truth.

Bharata's distinction between *Sthayi bhavas* and *rasas* has to be interpreted in an inclusive way. *Rati* we have interpreted as "attraction" and *Shringara* is the sentiment of love based upon only one type of attraction,—the sex propensity. But there can be other sentiments like *Bhakti*, *Preyas* and *Vatsalya* based on other kinds of attraction. *Utsaha* (enthusiasm) is said to be the *sthayi* of *veera rasa*. *Utsaha* can also enter as an element into other sentiments than heroism, as in love or sublimity. The *Roudra* or "the terrible" is an experience including anger and also other feelings like fear or fascination. In the pairs, *Hasa* (laughter) and *Hasya* (the comic), *Bhaya* (fear) and *Bhayanaka* (the fearful), *Vismaya* (wonder) and *Adbhuta* (the marvellous), *Jugupsa* (repulsion) and *Beebhatsa* (the repellent) and *Shama* (detachment) and *Shanti* (peace), there is seen a full equivalence between the sentiments as present in the poet's consciousness and *Rasas* as their embodiment in a work of art.

Sentiments are the mainsprings of all human activity. Character is nothing but an organisation of sentiments. Sentiments are a part of mental structure, emotions only of mental process. However large the cognitive dispositions, it is the emotional dispositions that are the root of the whole system. A character is formed by organising a system of sentiments under the dominance of a master sentiment, by the inhibition of impulses, and the sublimation of tendencies that are inconsistent with the dominant impulses and tendencies of the master sentiment itself.

According to McDougall, personality is formed by an integration of the following factors and its uniqueness is determined by the varying proportions in which they integrate. (A) *Disposition*: or the sum-total of the propensities strong in the individual: like self-assertion, tenderness, gluttony, etc. (B) *Temper*: Variations can be observed under this head. A man can be fickle or steadfast, hopeful or despondent and the like. These traits depend on tendencies working in the three scales of persistency, urgency and affectibility. (C) *Temperament*: connotes the qualities determined by the chemical in-

fluences of the bodily metabolism exerted upon the general working of the brain or nervous system: excitability, sluggishness, extroversion, apathy, etc. (D) *Intellect*: connotes certain abilities like acuteness, comprehensiveness, originality, specialisation, etc. A system of abilities can be developed each in the service of one sentiment. But the intellect can be developed into a universal instrument used by every tendency through education. The intellect can at the most reconcile conflicting tendencies. But it cannot determine the goal.

(E) *Character*: It is only the integration on a higher level of the organisation of sentiments and tastes that renders a man capable of volition in the fullest sense. Sentiments determine the major goals and tastes which are developed in the service of the sentiments and the choice of means in pursuing the goal. But the scale of values can be formed only with the evolution of abstract sentiments or the ideals of conduct and character.

(F) McDougall hints at a sixth factor—telepathic or clairvoyant capacities—but does not base any conclusions on them. A hierarchy of sentiments gradually comes into existence out of the experience of an individual, his self-knowledge and world-knowledge. But there are also the superconscient and subliminal stirrings and gleams which enrich personality by exerting a powerful influence on the formation of sentiments. This higher and deeper awareness cannot therefore be ignored. Temper and temperament are the bodily factors in the ultimate synthesis and disposition, character and the intellect are the mental factors. We have to admit a supramental factor also, for it is this which ultimately transforms the mental as well as the bodily factors and prepares them for the transformation of the human into the divine.

It should be clear that the whole question of *Rasas* in a work of art is inextricably bound up with the poet's system of sentiments or *bhava sthirani*,—that is, with the very stuff of his personality.

Can we, then, enumerate the sentiments? This is obviously a difficult task. We have already named some of the common sentiments. But their number, the variation in their organisation, the level of their intensity, subtlety and depth,—all these determine the uniqueness of a human personality. It would be more fruitful if we endeavoured to define the permanent modes of aesthetic conscious-

ness, rather than enumerate the sentiments which form the substance of these attitudes or modes and which even the individual concerned cannot adequately define and enumerate.

But before we do this, it would be desirable to glance at the object which evokes one or the other of these modes. Every object has an individuality,—traits or marks which make it unique. It has a commonalty or generic aspect,—certain features which distinguish it as an object belonging to a class or group. It also possesses an essentiality or innermost substance which is fully grasped only through knowledge by identity. To cut across this classification and think in a cross division, an object can be apprehended in its sensuous, imaginative, archetypal or spiritual state. The lower *buddhi* aids the imaginative apprehension of the object,—the reconstruction of its mental image with the help of imagination, reason, memory and the subtle mind. The essence of an object is grasped by the higher *buddhi*,—‘reason in her most exalted mood’ as Wordsworth calls it. The spiritual apprehension is possible through superconscient perception, through the awareness that identifies the essence of one object with the essences of all other objects. The attitudes of a poet have a varying depth and intensity according to the grade of his perception on the following levels of vision: (i) Sensuous Beauty, (ii) Imaginative Beauty, (iii) Intellectual Beauty, (iv) Spiritual Beauty.\*

The attitude of the artist towards life, deriving substance and form from his system of sentiments and deepened according to the level of vision from which the sentiments proceed is, then, finally responsible for the substance and quality of a work of art. What Bharata called the *sanchari bhavas* or fugitive emotions are really complex emotions arising from the sentiments. Thus the sentiment of love may engender tender emotion for the beloved, fear when she is in danger, jealousy when she is subjected to a triangular situation and the like. McDougall holds that the following complex emotions depend on the sentiments for their evocation: (1) Jealousy, (2) Reproach, (3) Shame, (4) Mortification, (5) Anxiety, (6) Revenge,

\* Vide the article on “The Romanticist’s Conception of Beauty” in the Sri Aurobindo Patha Mandir Annual No. 7. Calcutta. 1948.

(7) Resentment, (8) Pity, (9) Remorse. He opines that the following are independent of the sentiments and can be directly evoked. (1) Admiration, (2) Gratitude, (3) Contempt, (4) Loathing, (5) Fascination, (6) Hate, (7) Envy, (8) Love. But there is nothing to prevent any one of these feelings from proceeding from a sentiment. For example, the fascination that a savage may have for the sea is certainly different from the fascination that Shelley had for it when he rested on his oars and said to himself: "Now is the time to solve the great mystery."

There is a third class of emotions which McDougall calls derived emotions. They always arise as phases of feeling in the course of the operation of some activity prompted by some other motive. Hope, for instance, is a derived emotion. We always hope for the attainment of some goal which is determined by some motive other than hope itself. The derived emotions also easily pass into one another. Thus *confidence* passes into *hope*, *hope* into *anxiety* and *anxiety* into *despondency*, as difficulties multiply. Joy and sorrow are but qualifications of the emotions they accompany. They are not emotional states that can be experienced independently. We feel pleasure when our striving towards a particular goal is successful. Unsuccessful striving results in pain. Joy is pleasure of complex origin arising from the harmonious operation of one or more sentiments. Sorrow is tender emotion mixed with anger. Surprise is merely a condition of general excitement which supervenes any totally unexpected mental impression. *Belief* is confidence on the intellectual plane and *doubt* is anxiety on the same plane.

If we apply this classification of McDougall to Bharata's analysis of sentiments (*sthayi bhavas*), fugitive emotion (*sanchari bhavas*) and consequents or *Anubhavas* and *Sattwic Bhavas*, we arrive at the following result:

(1) A sentiment is distinguished by the dominance of a central propensity. The more refined the sentiment, the greater the sublimation of the propensity or propensities organised into it. The more comprehensive the cognitive core of the sentiment, the closer is the reconciliation of reason, imagination and emotion achieved in it. The nine *Rasas* enumerated by Bharata (and his successors) can no doubt be classed as sentiments. Of the fugitive emotions men-

tioned by Bharata, the following can develop easily into sentiments. (1) Jealousy. (2) Pride. (3) Indolence. This is the sentiment of the "Lotus Eater" or of the Apologist for Idleness conceived by Stevenson. (4) *Ugrata* or righteous indignation over the deeds of the wicked. (5) Bashfulness. (6) *Vitarka* or thoughtfulness. Only the more significant have been mentioned above. But almost every fugitive emotion (and even a "consequent" as we shall later) can develop into a sentiment, being linked up with a propensity that gets centred upon some object exclusively. The only point to be considered is that if a work of art is to be worth while, complex sentiments have to be expressed in it. Emotions which have been regarded as being dependent on or independent of the sentiments and derived emotions can also be developed into sentiments. Thus the sentiment of optimism centres round the derived emotion, hope; pessimism round the derived emotion of despair; and scepticism round doubt. The emotional states of man are numerous like the leaves of a tree and even the forty-nine *bhavas* and consequents enumerated by Bharata cannot exhaust these and their consequents. If the forty-nine emotions and consequents are to be regarded as *rasas* or as capable of developing into *rasas*, as Bhoja thought they were, there is no reason why we should stop at forty-nine. There would be as many *rasas* as there are emotional states.

It has been noted by Sanskrit aestheticians that, when a certain emotion develops into a sentiment, other emotions with similar potentialities may proceed as fugitive emotions from that sentiment. When one *bhava* becomes *sthayin* and consequently *rasa*, the rest become its *vyabhicharins*. Lollata, Abhinavagupta and Bhoja held that any *bhava* could develop into a *sthayin* or sentiment. Bhoja speaks of *Ashru rasa* ("Tears"), and *Sthambha rasa* (stupor). He thus recognises even the elevation of *anubhavas* or consequents to the plane of sentiments. We shall examine the view in its proper context. Bhoja even mentions *rasas* like *paravasya* (ecstasy), *swatantrya* (freedom), etc. for which *bhavas* are not found in Bharata's list of forty-nine. Propensities beget emotional experience. The persistency of emotional experiences of a certain kind towards certain objects results in the formation of sentiments. Sentiments, again, when they are aroused, give rise to various emotions. Emotions as well as sentiments are

thus many in number, evoked as they are by different kinds of determinants and stimulants. We cannot count them whether as nine or thirty-three, though they tend to fall into broad *genres* or *types*.

Again, the emotional state is deep or shallow—according as it is related or unrelated to the sentiments. McDougall also states that, at the highest intensity, all emotions tend to be unpleasant; at the lowest intensity, all of them tend to be pleasant; and that, at moderate intensity, some are said to be pleasant and other unpleasant.

The range of sentiments extends from instinctive experience to emotional response dictated by conscience and even by super-conscience. The six factors noted before form the synthesis of the artists' personality and his vision concerns itself with objects in their four classes (individual; collective; generic; abstract) and four states of existence (gross; subtle; archetypal; spiritual). The march of time and of civilisation engenders new sentiments,—even as old wine is poured into new bottles. Sentiments like nationalism, socialism and internationalism are the products of modern civilization. New sentiments are born of new experiences and contacts with new objects, inventions and events. Self-knowledge and world-knowledge create a field of experience which favours the growth of new sentiments. Old *bhavas* are sublimated in accordance with the purity and depth of the new sentiments from which they proceed. There is a gradual disappearance of old sentiments, their modification keeping pace with the march of civilization and the emergence of new sentiments occasioned by a new movement in the life of humanity. Thus there is a continuous progression of sentiments along the lines of the evolution of humanity and it would be a difficult task to enumerate all the sentiments formed in the past (and the emotions which issued from them) or to forecast the developments in the future.

Human personality is thus infinitely plastic. How, then, can we determine the number of *rasas* in a work of art? There is a way out of this tangle. Every individual pursues the four *purusharthas* or values in life. These are the goals on which man steadily fixes his gaze in his pursuit of happiness. Sentiments are formed in the course of this pursuit. But certain types emerge when these sentiments are examined closely and these types seem to be determined by the

manner in which the individual reacts to the world around, within, beneath or above him. These modes of approach or attitudes can be clearly defined, and it would be useful to concentrate on them individually rather than on the sentiments which constitute their substance. An examination of the *rasas* mentioned by Bharata will amply support this view. There is, for instance, *Rati* or attraction resulting in a close identification with the object. In a union of this kind there is a perfect fusion between the subject and the object. Love, friendship, nature-worship,—these and other similar sentiments are distinguished by such an identification.

The exact opposite of this approach is Repulsion (*Jugupsa*). It is a turning away from the object, from its positive ugliness as opposed to its beauty in *Rati* or attraction. *Jugupsa* connotes a whole range of feelings from studied indifference through dislike, antipathy and disgust to repulsion and even hatred, which implies not merely repulsion but an urge to remove the object from the face of the earth.

Another pair of opposites is seen in *Bhaya* or fear and *Utsaha* or enthusiasm. Fear implies a shrinking of the subject because of the inexplicability or hostility of the object. *Bhaya* ranges from timidity at one end to sheer prostration at the other. Striving and enthusiasm, on the other hand, imply a dilation or an expansion of the subject. The object here is remote, almost beyond one's grasp; but the subject is determined to strive and not to yield. Hope, confidence and self-assertion turn even failure into success. Heroism and martyrdom which turns even defeat into success are two of the sentiments related to enthusiasm. Optimism is a sentiment based on enthusiasm in its emotional and intellectual aspects.

Anger is mentioned by Bharata as the sentiment resulting in the *rasa* of terror (*Roudra*). Bharata may have even given a wider signification to the word *Krodha* than obtains today. In any case, anger is a complex emotion dependent on one sentiment or the other for its emergence. It may even develop into a habit or sentiment as happens usually with a peevish or choleric person. But it cannot ordinarily be said to develop into an "attitude" unless probably when it is allied to an iconoclastic mood. Anger implies thwarted striving or the persistent existence of something that is undesirable. But the "terrible" suggests an object that is inexplicable and capable



of doing positive harm to the subject. Terror is thus composed of anger, fear and wonder, fear being the predominant constituent. Terror is nearer to fear than anger. Nor can terror be said to develop into a permanent "attitude" (though it can develop into a sentiment) unless an individual is perpetually at war with the universe and feels that he is constantly surrounded by hostile forces, like the Calvinist.

The comic attitude (*hasya*) consists in picking holes in the object. Here the subject is not congruous but incongruous with the object. The comic attitude, even at its gentlest as in humour, turns a tearful and tolerant eye on the object but never forgets its shortcomings. Nor is the attitude one of rejection or repulsion for, even in the sardonic mood, the subject assumes a stern and terrible aspect towards the object but does not turn away from it. Between humour and the sardonic mood, the comic attitude assumes various positions like irony, satire, wit, scorn, contempt and invective.

Bharata refers to *Shoka* or sorrow as the sentiment resulting in *karuna*(pity). Now, sorrow is the retrospective emotion of desire. The object here is either lost or in danger and the cry is one of helplessness or of a tearful desire for its restoration or extrication from danger. Or else it is the stricken soul or subject itself that wails. A divine discontent or melancholy is a kindred emotion, such as is seen in Shelley's poetry. It is the desire of the moth for the star. Pity is said to be the tender emotion complicated by sympathetic pain. It can also develop into a sentiment as in the sage's vast pity for suffering humanity. Sorrow, melancholy and pity thus present three different emotional states belonging to the same type. In the projection of the sentiment of pity, too, there is no real fusion of the subject and the object. The subject here stands on an eminence and drenches the object with its tears or its love. The subject is the giver and the object the recipient. There is a tenderness between the two, but it is active only on one side and receptive or passive on the other. In *Vatsalya* or the love of the older for the younger, there is a mutual attraction or love, but not between equals which is a condition pre-requisite for a perfect fusion or identity.

Bharata posits wonder (*Vismaya*) as the sentiment which leads to a delineation of *Adbhuta* or the marvellous. The sublime is some-

thing more profound than *Adbhuta* as it is generally understood in Sanskrit. If the marvellous excites wonder, sublimity inspires awe or reverence. The “marvellous” is thus sublimity in its lower or inferior aspects. The subject experiences his own insignificance in the presence of the sublime. Man looks and feels like an ant in the presence of the Himalayas, or of a personality like that of Buddha or Jesus Christ. The subject is deeply impressed by the size, the stature or the surpassing grandeur of the object. Bradley remarks that, if attraction or love results in an experience of the immanence of Beauty, sublimity is the experience of its transcendence. Terror, awe, fascination, reverence,—all these are emotional states expressing the sublime in varying degrees. A genuine love of God is suggestive of the beautiful as well as the sublime, of immanence as well as transcendence. The object experienced may be either material or spiritual,—material as in the Himalayas, or spiritual as in the heroism of the mother-sparrow dying fighting against a dog in order to protect its young ones.

Bharata’s authority was overwhelming in the field of criticism. Bharata gave an inductive study of the models with which he was acquainted and stated the conclusions emerging from such a study. These were frequently accepted without scrutiny, making all further enquiry futile. Nevertheless, a few ventured to suggest that *Shanti* or ineffable peace might be regarded as another *rasa*. From our point of view it has to be stated that *Shama*, *Dhriti* or *Mati*,—serenity, equanimity or thoughtful quiet,—is an integral attitude distinguished from attraction which results in identity, thoughtful laughter which results in incongruity, repulsion which results in rejection, or wonder which results in adoration. Equanimity implies a serene contemplation of the object unaffected by the emergence of any thoughts or feelings evoked by the object. Such an attitude can be cultivated equally well by the man in the forest as well as the householder,—the *sanyasi* as well as the *grihastha*. It can be delineated artistically like any other attitude. It consists in striking a perfect balance between the subject and the object—a balance of likes, not of dislikes. It has been argued that *shama* or equanimity is nothing but love of the soul—आत्मरति, and that it is the source of all the other emotional moods,—of *hasya* or laughter at the world as a

tangle of incongruities, of pity for the world and its misery, of resentment at its imperfections, of a turning away from its deceptions and of a feeling of awe at the infinitude of one's own soul. Abhinavagupta says that *Tatvajnana* or consummate philosophic awareness is the sentiment which develops into this attitude of ineffable peace. But we have already seen that ineffable peace is only one of the attributes of the soul. According to Sri Aurobindo, it issues from an experience of the *Akshara Purusha* or immobile or static *Self*. *Shama* is neither attraction nor repulsion; neither contraction nor expansion; it is dispassionate awareness. It is, in itself, a distinctive attitude.

Bharata's theory of *Rasa* was subjected to close scrutiny by Lollata, Abhinavagupta, Rudrata and others. Some of these writers held that any one of the forty-nine *bhavas* and *anubhavas* could develop into a *sthayin* or a sentiment and consequently *rasa*. Bhoja goes even further and adds new *bhavas* to the list, like *paravasya*, *swatantrya*, etc. In the *ABHINAVABHARATI*, *Bhakti*(devotion), *shraddha*(faith) and *loulya* are found mentioned as *rasas* with new *bhavas* that are not included in Bharata's list of forty-nine. There is nothing to prevent a *bhava* or feeling from developing into a sentiment or *sthayin*, whether it is a consequent or *Anubhava* or fugitive emotion or *sanchari bhava*. Nor can Bharata's list exhaust the complexity of the emotional life. Emotional states there are, for which a name has yet to be found. But every emotion has to satisfy a supreme condition before it can develop into a sentiment. The central part of every sentiment is its conceptual core. The more complex the core, the greater the sentiment. A sentiment which is developed in this way gets absorbed into one of the primary modes of consciousness which we shall mention presently. Thus every transient emotion which is developed into a *sthayin* or sentiment tends to fall under one of these broad and basic attitudes. If it cannot have the conceptual core and the consequent affiliation to one of the attitudes, it cannot be anything more than a transient mood. *Glani* or fatigue, for instance, is a transient emotion mentioned by Bharata. At its highest, it can develop into a mood of despair as in Claire's "I am; yet what I am who cares or knows." If it is a persistent mood, it develops into a sentiment of despair and eventually into the attitude of sorrow (crying for the object) or repulsion (turning away

from the object). *Ashru* or tearfulness is an *Anubhava*. The emotion it expresses is one of sorrow or regret. This transient emotion can develop into a sentiment of sorrow if it gets linked to the corresponding conceptual core and finds its place, eventually, in the basic attitude of sorrow. We shall point out later how an expression of 'consequents' and fugitive emotions can be called *rasa*, even as they stand. But this is not the meaning which we are examining at present.

The system of sentiments grows more comprehensive with the march of civilization and new sentiments arise. The love of democracy or of the divine average is, for instance, a new sentiment,—new on its conceptual, if not on its emotional, side. It is possible that the coming generations will cherish sentiments of which we have no knowledge excepting in so far as we may happen to possess already their emotional appeal.

It was in this way that new sentiments came to be proposed by Rudrata and others down to the time of Bhoja. The *Udatta Rasa* mentioned by Bhoja is one of these. It stands for idealism and मति or thoughtfulness is its conceptual core. It is seen in the work of poets like Gray, Watson and others,—presented through noble themes. *Preyas* or love with *Sneha* or *Priti* as its central emotion is a *rasa* different from *Shringara*. It stands for Platonic love or love in which the psychological and spiritual affiliations preponderate, rather than sex. *Uddhata Rasa*, mentioned also by Bhoja, with *Gārva* or pride as its propensity is a result of the preoccupation of the subject with himself, which, as we shall see, is a basic attitude. Egoism is not certainly a high sentiment or a representative illustration of the attitude of self-preoccupation or subjectivism. A refined egoism is seen in poetry like that of Byron, the poetry of self-display, of the pageant of the bleeding heart. On the other hand, *Bhakti*, or heavenward devotion, is a blend of love and of a feeling for the sublime,—as seen in the Anglican poetry of George Herbert, for instance. *Shraddha* or faith is again an essential attitude like doubt or scepticism and we can have the poetry of doubt as in Clough and Arnold or the poetry of faith as in Tennyson and Browning. *Vatsalya* or love for the younger one is as much an essential attitude as pity or sympathy and we have it expressed in numberless epitaphs and elegies

and in essays like Lamb's *Dream Children*. Friendship as in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Nature-worship as in Wordsworth, sympathy for the underdog as in Masfield, a feeling for helpless birds and animals as in the poetry of Stephens and Hodgson,—all these are new sentiments formed against the background of permanent and essential attitudes. The attitudes represent the permanent and unchanging affective as well as cognitive bedrock of human consciousness, and the emergence of new sentiments in their framework signifies the expansion and sublimation of the consciousness according to the dictates of civilization and the evolution of humanity. Sentiments cannot be numbered and fixed, for they have a natural tendency to multiply.

A word may be said here about the derivation of *Rasas* from *Bhavas*, *Bhavas* from *Rasas* and *Rasas* from *Rasas*. Bharata holds that there are four primary or प्रकृति *Rasas* and four derived or विकृति *Rasas*, *Shringara*, *Roudra*, *Veera*, and *Beebhatsa* are said to beget *Hasya*, *Karuna*, *Adbhuta* and *Bhayanaka* respectively. This is called the scheme of *Janya Janaka Rasas*. But, as Bhoja points out, the imitation of *Shringara* is not the only determinant of *Hasya*. The comic attitude can spring from other sources as well. Similarly, *Roudra* or the terrible is not the only determinant of pity. Further, the derivative *rasa* of *Vira* can beget the primary *rasa* of *Shringara* or love, as with Othello and Desdemona: "She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them". If Desdemona's love for Othello was the result of her admiration for his valour, Othello's love for Desdemona was inspired by her pity or sympathy for him. In this latter case, again, we see that the derivative *rasa* of pity determines the primary *rasa* of *Shringara*. Any endeavour to trace the inter-relations of sentiments and classify their origins or *vibhavas* will thus end in mere dialectical subtlety. Man's emotional life is one vast sea and complex emotions are its waves. A person endeavouring to catch the waves can only collect their foam.

It is the individual's experience born of the operation of his innate propensities that helps to develop sentiments. We thus accept the conclusion भावेभ्यो रसाः. But we have to accept the other thesis रसाद् भावाः, the response of the subject to the object is conditioned

by his sentiments. It is from the habitual attitude of the individual that his emotional life takes shape. The emotions proceeding from sentiments are usually chastened, sublimated and far more refined than they otherwise would be. For instance, the cry of a child by the doorway, or the creak of a lumbering cart, usually annoys one or grates on one's ears. But with W.B. Yeats they wrong "the image that blossoms, a rose in the deeps of my heart." Emotions proceeding in this way from well-ordered attitudes are subtle and intense. They may not have the primitive vitality of the savage. But they have the grace and beauty of eternity.

We arrive then at the conclusion that the theory of *Nava rasas* or of twelve or more is imperfect. There are more *rasas* or sentiments in the heart of humanity than there may be leaves to a tree. We can hope to base an enduring classification only on the relations that are possible between the subject and the object. This is the only rock on which our aesthetic conclusions can stand. According to the first of the four levels of vision, our response to an object can be merely sensuous. This is the stage of simple sentiments, one might almost say of pure propensities. The response grows deeper and more colourful when we grow attached to the image and not so much to the material aspect of the object. This is the stage of more complex sentiments. On the third or archetypal level of vision, there is intuitive perception, intellectual ecstasy without accompaniment of ideation,—*Ananda Chinmayah*. The sentiments on this level include an apprehension of the essence of the object,—its abstract archetype without losing hold of the concrete. Lastly, in the spiritual state of vision, the psyche will have replaced the surface self. At this stage, character which is a hierarchical system of sentiments dissolves itself. Personality is depersonalised. The one Supreme Reality shines through both the subject and the object and holds them together in perfect identity. There are, consequently, the following states of aesthetic experience. (1) A predominantly simple or sensuous response to life. (2) The response conditioned by the active operation of imagination, reason and memory, with gleams and flashes from the operation of higher faculties. (3) The essential response—that of ideal sensibility, disinterested and impersonal contemplation or *sadharanya*. The attitudes which are experienced obscurely in the

second stage emerge here in all their fullness and effulgence. The subject moves here not merely in a world of pleasant and unpleasant objects, or of indefinable colour, light and sound which is the world of images, but of essences. (4) The spiritual response: this is the state of ineffable peace, of pure delight. The subject here realises that the world of essences is but one essence.

It will be seen that art is concerned pre-eminently with the second and the third stages. Even the sensuous response has to be brought forward to the second or the third stage if it is to be expressed adequately and fully in art. Similarly, so long as art has to find expression in terms of a reconstruction of human life and human life is in its present evolutionary stage, the spiritual consciousness has to rely on the world of images and of essences, to communicate its ineffable peace, its pure delight. Spiritual consciousness, however, can work directly too for the human sublimation and transformation. The variety of aesthetic attitudes and the multiplicity of human sentiments are therefore, predominantly the product of the second and third stages of consciousness.

The eight *rasas* (or their *sthayi bhavas*) set forth by Bharata are indicative of eight attitudes. The great mistake of Bharata's successors was to interpret these *attitudes* or modes as mere *sentiments*. It must be acknowledged that Bharata's own presentation does not quite clarify the attitudinal aspect and otherwise contains much that encourages the fallacious assumption that the eight *rasas* are merely eight sentiments. Discerning critics who laboured under this assumption were, therefore, dissatisfied with the theory. Without openly challenging Bharata's authority, which was supreme, they endeavoured to win a place in the theory for new sentiments like *preyas*, *shanti*, *bhakti*, etc. They even ventured to suggest that any of the forty-nine *bhavas* could attain the status of a *rasa*. Bhoja, more revolutionary than the others, evolved a comprehensive theory of his own, posited new *bhavas* absent from Bharata's list and further maintained that any *rasukti* (emotive utterance) could, by itself, be considered a *rasa*. The theory of *rasa* was thus left oscillating between two poles,—those of a varying pluralism on the one hand and a monism on the other. There was the numerical definiteness of nine, even an innumerable and bewildering multiplicity; or else, the

entire aesthetic experience was assimilated into a one and only *rasa*, *sattwic buddhi* or the seership of the artist.

The foregoing analysis makes clear that the emotional state of man is too vast and complex to be emptied by a formula; that the sentiments emerging from it are numerous; that they are of various levels of excellence or profundity; that new sentiments are always emerging according to the stress of the age and the environment; and that the only safe way in which we can theorise about aesthetic experience is to define the primary modes of aesthetic consciousness or the basic attitudes of the subject towards the object. These attitudes are themselves composed of sentiments. They are, in fact, an organisation of sentiments. An acceptance of these as the basis of our theory releases us both from inadequate monism and imperfectly motivated and grounded pluralism (definite as with nine or forty-nine or indefinite) with regard to *rasa* and sets us on the path of free and open but reasoned and comprehensive enquiry.

From the stage of only one *rasa*, that of the seership of the artist, we have now arrived at the *Vyavaharika*, practical or middle stage in which it expresses itself in the form of various attitudes or of responses and reactions to the universe around it. Thirteen attitudes can be distinguished from the point of view from which the subject endeavours to establish relations with the object. Each attitude will include in its domain sentiments that help to formulate it, sentiments that are in fact its flesh and blood. It is the supre-conscience which gives the artist his inspiration. The Higher Mind or "Reason in her most exalted mood" enables him to apprehend the essence of an object. Imagination helps him to decorate his design. Sensibility gives colour to his expression. His sense of fact gives him a grounding in objective reality and good sense helps him to maintain propriety of expression. It is the nature and quality of these faculties which he possesses that determine the nature of his attitude as well as the quality of his achievement.

It will be seen from what follows that the distinction between the "literature of knowledge" and the "literature of power" is a valid one, for the cognitive activity dominates certain attitudes. The attitudes range from anoetic quiescence to the pure delight of the spirit. A quiescent mind is a blank, whereas the spirit of



delight is a mirror held up to eternal and universal Beauty. Anoetic quiescence is an uncreative state of consciousness distinct from either pain, pleasure or the pure delight of the spirit. This blank state is neutral,—void of any responses or reactions. It has not, therefore, been given a place in the active attitudes. In the ensuing classification, each attitude is defined. The sentiments that approximate to it and are prominently presented in literature, ancient or modern, are then mentioned under it.

### I. THE COGNITIVE APPROACH TO THE OBJECT

The exquisite satisfaction of the artist under this approach is the result of successful apprehension.

(a) *Realism* : The realism seen in social plays and novels. The desire to know the object as it really is, is at the core of such writing. The success of such writing depends on a proper concentration on typical and essential features as distinguished from insignificant particulars or accidentals. The Sanskrit aestheticians recognised it under two figures of speech,—*Swabhavokti* and *Jati*. But realism is not merely a figure of speech. It is an enduring attitude,—a desire to know life in its commonest and most representative aspects, stripped of all illusions. It is this very tendency that is prominent in departments of literature like biography and history.

(b) The apprehension of the object in its traditional aspect, depending on the enduring significance which is to be found in tradition. This is the essence of the conservative attitude, and is found in writings like those of Chesterton and Belloc.

(c) The apprehension of an object in its modern and potential aspect, implying thereby a revolt against tradition. Shaw tries to approach even medieval problems from a modern angle in plays like *St. Joan*.

(d) An eclectic apprehension of the object, making the mind as it were a sensitive and unclouded plate for recording essential impressions of the object. This is seen in impressionist painting and imagist poetry.

(e) The apprehension of the eternal significance of the object. Leaving aside the traditional, the modern and the eclectic approach,

the artist endeavours, as it were, to grasp cognitively the very core of reality. This is the attitude seen in a lyric like Hardy's *At The Time of the Breaking of Nations*. If pursued further with the aid of chastened emotions and the higher mind, this attitude can develop into one of ineffable peace and serenity.

(f) The endeavour to make plain what is a tangled web of circumstance. This is seen in detective novels.

## II. THE APPREHENSION OF THE INTELLECTUAL CONTENT OR SUBSTANCE OF THE OBJECT

The origin of philosophic speculation and argument lies here, as also of neo-classical poetry like Dryden's *Religio Laici* and Pope's *Essay on Man*. Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* shows another tendency at work,—the combined and harmonious operation of a sense of fact and fantasy.

(a) The poetry of faith, doubt or any other argument.

(b) The apprehension of the object from the point of view of wit resulting in an artificial reconstruction of life. It gives to life a refinement and urbanity which are the result of a carefully assumed attitude. It is seen in the comedy of wit or the comedy of manners, of writers like Congreve and Oscar Wilde.

## III. SUBJECTIVISM OR THE PREOCCUPATION OF THE OBSERVING CONSCIOUSNESS WITH ITSELF OR ITS CONSTITUENTS RATHER THAN WITH THE OBSERVED OBJECT

(a) Egoism: or a preoccupation with one's own views and sentiments. This is seen mainly in Byron. In Keats and Shelley, it assumes the form of illumined self-knowledge.

(b) Substituting for the real object a mental reconstruction of it shaped under the stress of personal emotion, prejudice or preference. This happens frequently in expressionist art.

(c) A preoccupation with the subconscious or subliminal reactions evoked in one by the object: This is frequently seen in surrealist poetry.

(d) The endeavour to maintain the mind in an attitude of

prayer and pure contemplation after it has been aroused by the object, resolving all the consequent responses and reactions into an ordered balance and harmony. An endeavour to express this in poetry makes poetry approximate to incantation, to music expressing the subtle voice of the soul. The actual meaning of poetry is then relegated to a secondary place. This is frequently seen in symbolist poetry. Pressed further, this will develop into an attitude of serenity or ineffable peace.

(e) The apprehension of the supernatural implications of the natural,—i.e. of the object, seeing it in a “light that never was on sea or land”, since it emanates from the artist’s own soul. This is seen in Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*. It is seen in its aspect of mystery in Poe’s *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. The sense of mystery in such contexts is the artist’s own capacity for wonder. One might remember in this connection a lyric of Tagore beginning “I run as a musk-deer runs, mad with the mist of its own perfume.” The delight of making the common uncommon is known to all artists. Pressed to its extreme, this attitude leads to the great urge to solve the mystery of life, such as dominated Shelley’s approach.

(f) An apprehension of the romance of the past,—seeing it through a luminous or golden mist engendered by the artist’s own predilection for it. This is seen in the retrospective essays of Charles Lamb and the historical romances of Scott.

(g) The apprehension of the object in a revolutionary light—the light thrown by the future or by a love of perfectibility, as in Shelley’s *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*.

(h) The perception of an object from an unusual angle, making the object topsyturvy as it were. The beginnings of this attitude are seen in allegory or *Anyokti* viewed as a figure of speech. At its best it is seen in works of fantasy like *Alice in Wonderland*.

#### IV. A CRITICAL APPREHENSION OF THE ANGULARITIES OR THE DEFICIENCIES OF THE OBJECT

(a) The attitude of the cosmic spirit or of thoughtful laughter as defined by Meredith.

(b) The satirical spirit,—the coolness and good humour seen in a satirist like Dryden.

(c) The spirit of burlesque and parody which sports with the object in gentle malice or for innocent fun.

(d) Cynicism or the sovereignty and acidity of the intellectual attitude refusing to realise the value of matters of high import and turning a deaf ear to emotion.

V. THE APPREHENSION OF THE FATEFUL, HARMFUL OR INTRACTABLE POWER OF THE OBJECT AND THE CONSEQUENT INSIGNIFICANCE, OR HELPLESSNESS OF SUBJECT

(a) Fear—its expression in art is the *Bhayanaka* as seen in melodrama.

(b) An apprehension of the terrible, of the object as a source of terror.

(c) An attitude of settled despair, a steady refusal to be comforted or to detect any glimpse of hope or meaning in the object,—as with misanthropy, misogyny, pessimism, etc.

VI. THE APPREHENSION OF THE SUDDEN OR IRREPARABLE LOSS OR REMOTENESS OF THE OBJECT AND THE CONSEQUENT MISERY OR DISSATISFACTION PRODUCED IN THE SUBJECT

(a) *Shoka* or lamentation: the heart-rending cry of helplessness; hysterical grief.

(b) Melancholy or discontent born of unfulfilled aspiration, such as is found in Shelley's poetry.

VII. THE PROJECTION AND CONTINUATION OF AN ATTITUDE OF RIVALRY, HOSTILITY, OR SCORN TOWARDS THE OBJECT

(a) Resentment as in the Letters of Junius.

(b) Scorn or contempt resulting in vituperation.

(c) The sardonic frame of mind resulting in unrestrained invective.

(d) Repulsion or a complete turning away from the object.

VIII. AN APPREHENSION OF THE SUBLIMITY OR TRANSCENDENCE OF  
THE OBJECT WITH THE CONSEQUENT DIMINUTION OR  
INSIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBJECT

This is seen in *Bhakti* or devotion and all types of feeling for the sublime seen in any objects,—material or immaterial.

IX. THE REALISATION OF THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OR MAGNANI-  
MITY OF THE SUBJECT WITH THE CONSEQUENT DIMINUTION OR  
SUBORDINATION OF THE OBJECT

(a) Enthusiasm or *Utsaha*. The adventurous spirit looks forward to breaking down all barriers, and frontiers seem to melt before its gaze. This can be described as optimism on the philosophic side.

(b) The attitude of pity for the fallen and wounded or the unfortunate. Christian socialism has its origin in this sentiment. Righteous indignation and analytical reasoning dominate Marxism.

(c) *Vatsalya* or love for the younger one in age or in the scale of creation. This is seen in child-elegies and epitaphs and in the tenderness of Stephens and Hodgson for birds and beasts.

(d) A vast and universal sympathy, the love of a Buddha or Christ for the whole of creation.

X. A PERFECT FUSION OR IDENTITY OF THE SUBJECT  
WITH THE OBJECT

(a) Love, (b) Platonic Love, (c) Friendship, (d) Nature-worship, (e) Epicureanism or Aestheticism such as is delineated by Pater in *Marius the Epicurean*, (f) An intensive apprehension of the essence of the object as revealed in moments of vision and identification with it. This is seen in some of the trends of the philosophy of Kirkegaard,—existentialism.

XI. THE ATTITUDE OF SETTLED AND INEFFABLE PEACE OR THE  
PURE AND DETACHED CONTEMPLATION OF THE OBJECT BY THE  
SUBJECT

This is seen in the crusading spirit in which it is nourished and

projected against despair. The stoicism of Marcus Aurelius is an outstanding example. The *nirvana* of Buddha is very much in the same line.

It may be noted that the final consummation of each aesthetic attitude lies in its being resolved into a peace of this kind or into the pure delight of the spirit mentioned under mysticism, the next head.

XII. THE SUPERCONSCIENT PERCEPTION OF THE OBJECT BY  
THE SUBJECT

All great art has to delineate the world of essences or Essence itself. Every great artist is, therefore, a mystic to some extent. He thus has his share of the mystic's delight,—the pure delight of the spirit that transcends both pleasure and pain.

XIII. A BALANCED AND COMPREHENSIVE APPREHENSION OF THE  
OBJECT BY THE SUBJECT

This is the attitude of Classicism, called *samyaktwa* in certain Indian philosophies.

The superconscient approach results in mysticism. The artist's sense of fact begets realism. The dialectical approach gives birth to neoclassical poetry. A predominantly subjective frame of mind generates various romantic tendencies. The cult of detachment,—that of "the depth and not the tumult of the soul",—results in stoic calm. All the faculties of the artist are at work in each one of these attitudes. But to know the object as it really is through our sense of fact, to define it to ourselves intellectually and to apprehend its relations with other objects imaginatively; to experience it in the tumultuous setting of all human passions and at the same time to disengage it from its setting and view it from a poise of serenity with the lidless eyes of the gods; to grasp its essence with the aid of the higher mind and to penetrate at the same time to the supreme reality which it veils, through our superconscience; and to hold this manifold experience in a balanced synthesis of the human and divine, of beauty and sublimity, immanence and transcendence and *saguna* and *nirguna*

in an intellectual ecstasy (*chinmaya ananda*) of pure serenity and delight: that is classicism. The works of Valmiki and Vyasa and Shakespeare (his best) are some of the supreme illustrations of this all-inclusiveness of art.

A word may be said about the artist's secondary modes of aesthetic consciousness. *Samchhari bhavas* and *anuvhavas* have also been called *rasas*. We are not concerned with the artist's *anubhavas* or consequents. As far as the artist is concerned, his work of art is his *anubhava*. But his fugitive emotions are *rasas* in the subjective sense for they lead to the creation of scenes and situations, episodic descriptions and expressions which contain sudden flashes of insight or startling felicities of phrase,—minor objective *rasas* contained in the *vibhava* or object and re-objectified when they are projected into a work of art.

The *samchhari bhavas* of the artist are of three kinds. There are, first, the fugitive emotions which accompany the awakening of the central attitude,—the feeling of satisfaction at the surrounding landscape, the pleasure at the associations of the nightingale with emperor, clown and the magic casements, for instance, in Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*. In narrative and dramatic poetry, such fugitive feelings find expression in the creation of secondary characters,—Lady Macbeth, Banquo and Duncan, for instance, in *Macbeth*. Secondly, there are certain potentialities in the material which call forth other feelings of the artist,—such as he has experienced before but not particularly at this moment of creative experience. He retains only those potentialities which, while expressing these feelings, feed the central attitude. The conversation between Lady Macduff and little Macduff, the murder of little Macduff,—these come later and are an expression of feelings of this type. Thirdly, there are the sudden flashes of insight which solve technical problems or add unexpectedly to the wealth of primary expressions,—like the one embodied in the Porter's scene in *Macbeth*.

Some have held the view that *samchhari bhavas* are the only *rasa*. This view derives its logic from the fact that primary expression can exist only in terms of secondary expression. Without the acts which go to make it, there would be no drama. Without the scenes, there would be no Act. But just as both the subject and the object, *Purusha*

and *Prakriti*, are essential for the emergence of aesthetic experience, *sthayi bhavas* and *samchari bhavas* are together essential for aesthetic creation. The central attitude gives unity and the transitory emotions variety to a work of art.

We should like to fix the connotation of *vyabhichari bhavas* in this connection. *Vyabhichari* has the current sense: inconstant; disloyal. There are certain transitory emotions which are inconsistent with the artist's central attitude and which he has to inhibit or reject in order to maintain the cohesion or integration of his personality. *Samchari bhavas* are said to be to the *sthayi* what disciples are to the master,—having their own individuality but functioning as loyal, responsive and receptive units in his school of thought or philosophy. *Vyabhichari bhavas* are disciples that desert their master. They are to the *sthayi* what Judas was to Christ. These have to be kept out of a work of art as well, even as they have to be ejected from the artist's personality. Thus in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, planned on a definite cosmogony of hell, earth and heaven, Milton introduces the subjective notion of hell and heaven in the lines,

“The mind's in its own place, yet it can make  
A hell of heaven and a heaven of hell.”

and also in one or two other contexts while delineating Satan. This goes against the very primary conception of the theme and would have blown *Paradise Lost* to pieces if it had been pressed further.

(To be concluded)

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