

EVOLUTION  
AND  
THE EARTHLY  
DESTINY



NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

*Evolution  
and  
the Earthly  
Destiny*

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# *Preface*

This selection of essays, drawn from the manifold writings of Nolini Kanta Gupta, is dedicated to the youth of India, to those among her children who cherish in some part of their being an aspiration, a living flame of light that yearns towards an ever-growing perfection, a truth of being and becoming as yet vaguely surmised or only partially revealed.

Throughout the many and varied domains of the human adventure, seen here in the light of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future, there emerges the one eternal question and dominant theme of our seeking: man past and present, man individual and collective, but always and above all, the ultimate flowering of his life upon earth.

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*Part I*

MAN AND THE EVOLUTION

# *Sri Aurobindo*

## I

From a certain standpoint Sri Aurobindo's message is very simple, almost self-evident. The sum and substance of all he says is that man is growing and has to grow in consciousness till he reaches the complete and perfect consciousness, not only in his individual but in his collective, that is to say, social life. In fact, the growth of consciousness is the supreme secret of life, the master key to earthly evolution.

Sri Aurobindo believes in evolution. Creation, according to him, has a purpose and man moves to a goal. That is nothing else than the unfolding of consciousness. Originally all was Matter, only dead Matter. At a certain stage out of Matter came Life: what was or appeared to be dead became alive. Thus the plant world was born—the first primeval stirring of consciousness, a consciousness vague, blind, practically unconscious, yet moved by a newly acquired or awakened pulsation. There was again a period of gestation and incubation bringing out at the end a rudimentary Mind, a first conscious consciousness: so the animal was born. Consciousness is clearer and freer here, emerging into formulation: it is now instinct or sensibility and in its higher grades infused with a streak of spontaneous thinking. Sensuous mentality gave birth to Mind proper, that is thought, reflection and man appeared. A fully awakened consciousness, consciousness that can turn round upon itself is the characteristic marking out human consciousness.

Such then are the stages in the progression of consciousness; they are clearly observable and admitted practically on all hands. Only Sri Aurobindo points out two crucial characters of this movement. First:

Matter, Life, Mind-Intelligence—these are not distinct or separate entities, one coming after another, the succeeding one simply adding itself to the preceding, coming we do now know from where. Not so, for something cannot come out of nothing. If life came out of Matter, it is because life was there hidden in Matter Matter was secretly housing, was instinct with life. That only can evolve which was involved. So, again, if Mind came out of life, it is because Mind was involved in life and therefore also in Matter although at a farther remove. Yet again, vital mind developed into Intelligence and consciousness proper, and it could be only because that too was its secret nature and hence the secret nature of Life and even brute Matter. Thus the whole chain of gradation is linked together indissolubly and the binding reality that runs through all is consciousness, overt or covert. It is indeed consciousness that lies at the root of existence—the basic substance, Matter is nothing but consciousness become unconscious; and the whole scheme or process of the cosmos is the increasing manifestation and expression of that consciousness. Secondly, the other character is that at each cross-over, there is not only a rise in consciousness but also a reversal of consciousness, that is to say, the level attained turns back upon the preceding levels, influencing and moulding them as far as possible in its own mode and law of existence. When life appeared in Matter, wherever there was material life, the matter thus taken up by life behaved differently from dead matter: an organic body does not follow the strict mechanical laws of inanimate bodies. Likewise a life endowed with mind has a different functioning than mere life. And a body which houses a life and mind, which has, as it were, flowered into life and mind moves and acts in another way than an inert body or even a vitalised body. Man's intelligence and reason have reoriented or tend to reorient his vital instincts and reactions, even his bodily functions and forms. A conscious regulation, even refashioning of his life and body is the very essence of human consciousness, the urge of his nature, instead of a spontaneous laissez-faire movement of pure vitality or the mechanical go-round of the material base. These three major provinces or layers of consciousness—Matter, Life and Mind —man has taken up into himself and in the light of his consciousness —his Intelligence—has studied and classified them arranging them serially as the well-known sciences of Physics, Biology and Psychology.

Now, Sri Aurobindo says, evolution marches onward and will rise beyond mind to another status of consciousness which he calls Supermind. In the earthly scheme there will thus manifest a new type, a

higher functioning of consciousness and a new race or species will appear on earth with this new consciousness as the ruling principle. Out of the rock and mineral came the plant, out of the plant the animal, out of the mere animal man has come and out of man the Superman will come inevitably.

Standing on the mental plane, immured within the dimensions of Reason and mental intelligence, it is not easy to contemplate the type of consciousness that will be; even as it was difficult for the ape to envisage the advent of his successor, man. But certain characteristic signs, rudimentary or fragmentary movements of the higher status are visible in the mental consciousness even as it is: the ape likewise was not without a glimmer of Reason and logic, even the faculty of ratiocination that seems to be the exclusive property of man. There is, for example, a movement we call Intuition, so different from Reason to which even Scientists and Mathematicians acknowledge their debt of gratitude for so many of their discoveries and inventions. There is also the other analogous movement called Inspiration that rules the poet and the artist disclosing to them a world of beauty and reality that is not available to the normal human consciousness. Again, there is yet another group of human beings at the top of the ladder of evolution—mystics and sages—who see the truth, possess the truth direct through a luminous immediacy of perception, called Revelation. Now, all these functionings of consciousness that happen frequently enough within the domain of normal humanity are still expressions of a higher mode of consciousness : they are not the product or play of Reason or logical intelligence which marks the character, the differentia of human consciousness.

But, as at present, these are mere glimmers and glimpses from elsewhere and man has no command or control over them. They are beyond the habitual conscious will, they come and go as they like, happy visitations from another world, they do not abide our question and are not at our beck and call. The Supermind, on the contrary, is in full possession of that consciousness of which these are faint beginnings and distant echoes. The Superman will be born when man has risen above his mind and emerged into the supramental consciousness.

One thing needs to be pointed out here: it is that man is expected to consciously transcend himself and deliver this supermanhood, for it is to be a conscious process, a labour of the wakeful will. That is the great difference which the new transition has brought in. So long

evolution was a spontaneous and apparently unconscious process, moving slowly and inadvertently as things in nature normally move. Man rose out of the animal: he simply found himself man one day, there was no conscious effort, no previous knowledge of the change on the part of the animal undergoing the change. Likewise the animal came out of its plant origin spontaneously and unwittingly: the plant too evolved out of the inert and inanimate matter through a natural process of slow mutation. But now at the stage of manhood consciousness has become fully conscious, self-conscious, and therefore its further ascension cannot but be conscious, ever more conscious, the result of deliberate energising. This is a process of self-transformation. It has a method, a technique, a whole system of its own. The growth of consciousness, its culture and transformation is the end and purpose of all true education: its highest consummation, its supreme perfection is what is intended by Yoga, the mystic's system of inner discipline.

We say, then, supramentalisation of consciousness is the goal Nature is aiming at and man striving for: it is the next step that earth and man are taking in their evolutionary urge. Man, however, represents a very crucial stage—he is the dividing line between two hemispheres—two modes of consciousness, two types of creation. As I have said, up to man it is a natural spontaneous unreflecting unconscious evolution: with man it is conscious, deliberate, wilful evolution. What was being done behind the veil in ignorance will now be done openly in full knowledge. The very first result will be the shortening of the time factor. The conscious process increases the tempo, telescopes into decades or years a process or development would take centuries or more otherwise; in man a growth is achieved in one life that would normally need several lives. The other characteristic result is that when the Supermind establishes itself, there is no more ignorance, it is all light and knowledge. Till the mental range, even at its highest heights, it is a mixture of light and darkness, of knowledge and ignorance: there is always an element of doubt, uncertainty or partial perception: there is a groping, a trial and one moves at best from greater darkness to lesser shade. With the Supermind all that changes: the Superman lives always in the full daylight, in the zenith consciousness, in the plenitude of knowledge. He moves from light to light, knowledge to knowledge, no longer bound to the division and duality inherent in the present human consciousness. It may be that man may not at a bound reach the peak of the Supermind: for there are lower ranges, voluntary limitations of the Light, less absolute formulations

of the perfect being through which man will have to pass for a greater enrichment of his nature and for the establishment of other orders of luminous existence upon earth. Sri Aurobindo has, in this connection, spoken of the Overmind and the Mind of Light. But these too lie beyond the border of mental twilight and are domains of Light, own delegates of Supermind.

It may not be out of place here just to mention a few characters proper to this supramental over-border consciousness. First of all, it is the seat and organon of complete knowledge: knowledge here is not the result of the deductive and inductive process of reason, it does not balance pros and cons and out of uncertain possibilities strike out an average probability: it is direct, straight, immediate, certain and absolute. Knowledge here comes by identity—the knower and the known are one and what is known is therefore self-knowledge. Secondly, the will too is not an effort or striving and struggling, but the spontaneous expression of the self-power of the consciousness; willing means achieving, one wills the inevitable truth for, knowledge and will too are one. Thirdly, it is the status of perfect delight, for one has passed beyond the vale of tears and entered the peace that passeth understanding, one has found that Joy is the source of creation and the truth of existence is held in Ecstasy.

It is in other words at bottom the Vedantic status of Sat-chit ananda (perfect Being, Consciousness-energy and Beatitude), but individualised serving as the basic reality of the world-life and existence: it is this that seeks to manifest and embody itself in its own dharma—supreme law—in and through the physical forms and modes of that life and existence. Beyond this it is not possible here to enter into the further mysteries of the Arcanum.

Lastly, another point and we have done. It is that all human efforts in the past in any realm or domain towards a higher life has been contributory to this supreme consummation that Sri Aurobindo envisages as coming or sure to come. It is very often asserted that human nature is irremediable and although we may try at a little amelioration of his instinctive life, especially as a social being, there can be no permanent or radical cure of the original sin of Ignorance and Inconscience with which his earthly nature is branded. Reformers, idealists, even saints and sages have seen and sought to counter the evil —some tried to get rid of it, others round it: but it is still there, as rampant as ever, apparently with no effect upon it. For one thing, evil was sought to be cured by its opposite, the good, but the good that belongs to the level

of consciousness to which evil too belongs. In other words, we tried to deal with the world and treat it with the force of the Mind, even though in some cases, the mind was a high or even the highest spiritual mind. To touch the roots of the malady that extend into our deepest fibres, our most material being, dead inconscience, one must rise to the very source of consciousness, the creative truth-consciousness: the Supermind alone can transform the earth, transfigure the earthly life. In the second place, the past attempts did not all go in vain: they were preparations, the first ground-work, on various levels and in various domains of human life and consciousness where the light infiltrated, to whatever extent it may be and things, and forces were shaken and reshuffled to admit of other forces and inspirations; if nothing else, at least the possibility was created.

Sri Aurobindo's aim, we have said, is not an individual fulfilment, however glorious and successful it might be, and not merely the fulfilment of one limb only of the individual however deep and high. Sri Aurobindo embraced the whole man and the whole society. A fulfilled life in society upon earth—the highest and completest life possible, not only possible but inevitable to the human being—that is the work for which he laboured. Man's mind and intelligence, his life-energy, his body-form are all taken up, purified of the lower formulation, remoulded into the mode and pattern of the supramental truth-consciousness: he becomes a complete, integral perfect being expressing and embodying in all his limbs and movements the supreme reality made of utter truth and knowledge and power and delight. This being his individual life, his collective or social life too would figure the same pattern. A new society in which men have found their soul and soul function is a harmonious, a unitary body, composed of individuals who by living each one in his self live in all and living in all each one lives in his self. Likewise, an aggregate of such societies—a society of nations, as it is already called somewhat in a prophetic vein,—will also be an inherently harmonious and unified, even a unitary body too, since all these larger units will express through their corporate life each in its own special way the glory and greatness of the Divine Consciousness.

In this global reconstitution of the earth life, Sri Aurobindo gives India a great role—a mighty destiny and a heavy responsibility. For he considers India as the repository of the spiritual consciousness, the Guardian of Truth, as the Veda says, and in the new age of world unification her national being will act as the spearhead breaking into the old-world formations and signalling the shape of things to come.

## II

"The poet of patriotism, the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity" he was, in the famous words of his advocate and friend and follower who stood for him before the bar of History for his cause, and not merely before a British Court of Justice. Indeed he was all that, but today we have to add another epithet and complete the description. For he is now the builder of the Life Divine. This was indeed the secret Truth that worked in him from behind and gave to these earlier preoccupations the reality and the beauty they attained and the fullness of their significance. He worked for human evolution, that was his life mission. He thus formulates the stages of human evolution:

*"Family, nationality, humanity are Vishnu's three strides from an isolated to a collective unity. The first has been fulfilled, we yet strive for the perfection of the second, towards the third we are reaching out our hands and the pioneer work is already attempted".*

But the supreme secret lies in Vishnu's fourth stride, from humanity to divinity. That is the goal of the evolution and that furnishes also the key to the solution of the problem. Whether in the matter of the family or the nationality or humanity in general there has been a stalemate, a stagnation, even a frustration; an effort towards progress seemed to lead more towards conflict, disharmony, away from what is beautiful and good and happy. That is bound to be. Man must reach his very highest and deepest, his absolute itself before he can arrive at perfection in the lower and the relative. Man must exceed himself if he is to fulfil himself. A new connotation has to be found for family and nationality and even humanity. That connotation, Sri Aurobindo says, is divinity.

We must understand however that there is divinity and divinity. There is a divinity that suffers, supports and transcends all that is existent. For it is the all-reality, all-consciousness, the ever-present and- omnipresent Immutable behind the mutabilities of creation. That does not take part in the cosmic struggle, the universal urge of progress forward. Apart from the divinity that suffers, there is a divinity that shapes —and is shaped at the same time, shapes from behind and is shaped itself in front. This dynamic Divine Sri Aurobindo calls the supramental Divine or the incarnate Divine Mother.

In the inevitable course of evolution man is something that will be surpassed, not in the sense that he will be rejected and thrown out as an unnecessary element, like some of the prehistoric animals, no, he will still be at the head of earthly creation, but undergo a sea-change, as it were, and be transmuted into a divine creature.

As at present man is a mental being, that is to say, it is his mind—his reason and intellect—that governs him and it is through that faculty that he governs the world. But mind is not the highest or the most powerful faculty in him, nor the last term of his consciousness. Beyond the mind there rise other powers of consciousness, tier upon tier, and man can go there, live there or bring them down into his normal life and change it into their pattern. The highest of these Sri Aurobindo calls the plane of Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind. It is the supreme luminous Power—the Light of lights—towards which the creation moves and by which the creation is moved in secret. It is the heart-centre of fulfilled harmony.

Man has been striving through his lesser powers, through "the grace of the lower gods since his advent upon earth to arrive at a reconstruction of his life and surroundings. That is why he has never attained the full measure of success. Indeed a period of success or progress was always followed by a period of decline and retrogression, a so-called golden age by an age of iron. As a matter of fact today humanity finds itself terribly enclosed in a cage of iron as it were. The earth has become too small for his soaring capacities and multitudinous necessities—he is already thinking of a place in the moon! That is only the sign and symbol of an inner impasse to which he has arrived. The anguish of the human soul has reached its acme: the problems, social, political, educational, moral it is facing have proved themselves to be totally insoluble. Yes, he has run into a cul-de-sac, where he is caught as in a death-trap. No ordinary rational methods, half-way nostrums can deliver him any more. All the outer doors and issues are now closed for him; the only way is to turn inward, there lies the open road to freedom and fulfilment. That is the way to transcendence and surpassing. To attempt any other way is not only to try the impossible but to head straight towards doomsday.

The time then is now, for the time is ripe. It will not do to say that the way proposed is beyond the reach of the common man. He has neither the capacity nor the knowledge nor even the inclination or impulse to surpass himself, to do anything non-human. First of all, as I said, if man is to survive in any form, this is the only way and there is

no second. Next, what do we know of the capacity and impulsion even of the common man ? Even in a smaller scale and on the material level, have we not seen to what tremendous acts of heroism he can rise automatically, through what travails—tapasya—of concentrated effort he agreed to pass, simply because the occasion demanded it ? Man's secret soul is greater than all the limitation of his outward frame.

That does not mean that the entire human race will wholly change over to the new life. All, without exception, are not expected to come up to the highest level of fulfilment. But that is not required, for the beginning at least. It is always the few pioneers, a select group of forerunners that form the foundation of a new creation A first snowball perhaps, but it moves and gathers others on the way and builds up larger and larger collectivities. At all crises of evolutionary cycles such beings inevitably appear, they are thrown up-by Nature or they come down from above and incarnate; especially it is so when Nature proposes to take a leap and not merely trudge and crawl.

It is the fulfilment of Nature that has to happen and is happening, the fulfilment of the inferior Nature in and through the higher divine Nature. Here we come perhaps to the very heart of the mystery. For till now, till almost yesterday, we may say in a general way, the spiritual life, any kind of divine life was considered possible only through battling with Nature, through a struggle upstream against the current of Nature. Indeed Nature was despised, feared, rejected as an enemy of the Spirit. But today the wheel seems to have turned full circle. The Spirit recognises the body as its counterpart and visible form, welcomes the body as its earthly figure and expression. The old antinomy has become obsolete, because the body too on its side recognises that it has not the structure and character that millennial ignorance gave it. The material particles that constitute the physical body are found to be after all not inert masses but quantas of energy, of luminous energy. The spiritual Light above demands nothing better for its earthly home.

This is symbolical of the collaboration that Nature is now offering to the Spirit. A new substance, made of light-energy emanating from Consciousness-Force, is now slowly permeating the earth atmosphere, as the Mother declares and it is this that will serve as the basis of the new creation and give it its law and constitution. A new world built out of knowledge and vision and luminous power is destined to come, for man is no longer in love with his ignorance, but a divine afflatus is

possessing him.

The new world has to be based on new foundations. The old world was built from outside with superficial cheap elements that lower Nature offers easily and profusely. It is body's needs, vital hungers assembled and arranged according to a plan supplied by mind's ideas and notions under the directive and compulsion of the ego, the sense or consciousness of one's separate individual existence as against others. The new world will start from the soul, the luminous divine element in man which is one with all and grow from within outward. It is as if the foundations are laid not below, but above—the tree of existence would branch out not from below upwards, but from above downward, in the image given by the ancient Rishis of India. The individual will therefore be not primarily a body housing secondary—or as it is sometimes called epiphenomenal—movements such as those of the mind and the vital limited and largely conditioned by it. The individual will primarily be a consciousness, a focus of energy-consciousness existing and acting in union and communion with all other similar individual foci, for all form one single undivided entity. The body and life and mind are moulded in the substance and rhythm of that sovereign consciousness. The hard egoism or self-centredness, the gross animality that seem to be the very constitution of the human individual are dissolved into the soul's radiant urges.

The individual can be and is to be fulfilled in and through his soul—the presiding consciousness that has at its disposal the mind, the vital and the body as its instruments and means of expression, but which till now, because of an evolutionary necessity of growth and development, acted more as an obstruction or a veil than as an aid or a channel. When in the new consciousness the individual attains its soul-status, in other words, its divinity, then a reshaping and recasting of the lower limbs becomes possible and even inevitable. The soul-status means freedom, harmony, purity, knowledge, power, delight and immortality, absolute and inalienable.

As individuals grow in this line, the social structure too is altered and transmuted. The harmony and fullness that individuals present are automatically represented in the collective grouping. Instead of a battling competitive society we have not merely a cooperative but a unitive community striving in a common aspiration towards a single unique achievement. For all individuals know and feel that they are but various limbs of the same organism, luminously and unfailingly functioning each in its and for its own appointment—

expressing differently the one Light 'supreme.

And nations that are finding so difficult, almost impossible, to form a comity, that are in their disparate tendencies driving towards a catastrophe, perhaps annihilation, shall undergo a sea-change. The nation, the national being is also a reality, a divine reality that has to come to its own"—that is to say, its own soul. For there is a collective soul, as well as an individual soul. It is the presiding deity, the norm of consciousness and being that works out the growth and evolution of a collectivity that has found a common life. This collectivity is also enlarging itself in wider and wider commonalty. As we see actually today the nation is tending towards and growing into the supranation or Commonwealth or Federation as it is termed politically.

The conception of the United- States of the world is taking possession of the human mind; it is being applied and larger and more integrated collective groupings than the nation are developing; they may ere long become familiar realities. Such . formations moving towards and effectuating the one indivisible humanity open out the possibility towards a superhumanity which will have to base itself on a new principle of organisation ; for that must be a new mode of consciousness.

Even the family, the first unit of collective formation in humanity that has attained a fulfilled status, is yet capable of a remodelling, a transmutation in the higher supramental consciousness. The family instead of being built upon blood-relationship may surely have a different foundation in soul- kinship, in affinity of consciousness, comradeship in life-work. It means a total revolution, a reversal of nature, the roots being above instead of being below, as already referred to.

Such far-reaching changes may well be called for and inevitable if mankind is to be radically cured of all the illnesses of which it is till now a natural prey The full health of a divine body in its individual as well as its collective and global functioning is assured only when the human being is lifted out of its mental sheath and established in the supramental status.

It is an adventure for the heroic soul, for the vanguards of humanity; but its fruition will spread abroad a benefit that even the common level shall share, even those that denied shall offer their accession and adhesion.

# *Nature's Own Yoga*

## I

SRI Aurobindo's Yoga is in the direct line of Nature's own Yoga. Nature has a Yoga which she follows unfailingly and inevitably—for it is her innermost law of being. Yoga means, in essence, a change or transformation of consciousness, a heightening and broadening of consciousness which is effected . by communion or union or identification with" a higher and vaster consciousness.

This process of a developing consciousness in Nature is precisely what is known as Evolution. It is the bringing out and fixing of a higher and higher principle of consciousness, hitherto involved and concealed behind the veil, in the earth consciousness as a dynamic factor in Nature's manifest working. Thus, the first stage of evolution is the status of inconscient Matter, of the lifeless physical elements; the second stage is that of the semi-conscious life in the plant, the third that of the conscious life in the animal, and finally the fourth stage, where we stand at present, is that of the embodied self-conscious life in man.

The course of evolution has not come to a stop with man and the next stage, Sri Aurobindo says, which Nature envisages and is labouring to bring out and establish is the life now superconscious to us, embodied in a still higher type of created being, that of the superman or god-man. The principle of consciousness which will determine the nature and build of this new being is a spiritual principle beyond the mental principle which man now incarnates: it may be called the Supermind or Gnosis.

For, till now Mind has been the last term of the evolutionary

consciousness—Mind as developed in man is the highest instrument built up and organised by Nature through which the self-conscious being can express itself. That is why the Buddha said: Mind is the first of all principles, Mind is the highest of all principles: indeed Mind is the constituent of all principles—*mano puvvangaṃ dhamma*<sup>1</sup> The consciousness beyond mind has not yet been made a patent and dynamic element in the life upon earth; it has been glimpsed or entered into in varying degrees and modes by saints and seers; it has cast its derivative illuminations in the creative activities of poets and artists, in the finer and nobler urges of heroes and great men of action. But the utmost that has been achieved, the summit reached in that direction, as exemplified in spiritual disciplines, involves a withdrawal from the evolutionary cycle, a merging and an absorption into the static status that is altogether beyond it, that lies, as it were, at the other extreme—the Spirit in itself, Atman, Brahman, Sachchidananda, Nirvana, the One without a second, the Zero without a first.

The first contact that one has with this static supra-reality is through the higher ranges of the mind: a direct and closer communion is established through a plane which is just above the mind—the Overmind, as Sri Aurobindo calls it. The Overmind dissolves or transcends the ego-consciousness which limits the being to its individualised formation bounded by an outward and narrow frame or sheath of mind, life and body; it reveals the universal Self and Spirit, the cosmic godhead and its myriad forces throwing up myriad forms; the world-existence there appears as a play of ever-shifting veils upon the face of one ineffable reality, as a mysterious cycle of perpetual creation and destruction—it is the overwhelming vision given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the Gita. At the same time, the initial and most intense experience which this cosmic consciousness brings is the extreme relativity, contingency and transitoriness of the whole flux, and a necessity seems logically and psychologically imperative to escape into the abiding substratum, the ineffable Absoluteness.

This has been the highest consummation, the supreme goal which the purest spiritual experience and the deepest aspiration of the human consciousness generally sought to attain.

But in this view, the world or creation or Nature came in the end to be looked upon as fundamentally a product of Ignorance: ignorance and suffering and incapacity and death were declared to be the very

<sup>1</sup> *The Dhammapada, I. 1*

hallmark of things terrestrial. The Light that dwells above and beyond can be made to shed for a while some kind of lustre upon the mortal darkness but never altogether to remove or change it—to live in the full light, to be in and of the Light means to pass beyond. Not that there have not been other strands and types of spiritual experiences and aspirations, but the one we are considering has always struck the major chord and dominated and drowned all the rest.

But the initial illusory consciousness of the Overmind need not at all lead to the static Brahmic consciousness or Sunyam alone. As a matter of fact, there is in this particular process of consciousness a hiatus between the two, between Maya and Brahman, as though one has to leap from the one into the other somehow. This hiatus is filled up in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga by the principle of Supermind, not synthetic-analytic<sup>2</sup> in knowledge like Overmind and the highest mental intelligence, but inescapably unitarian even in the utmost diversity. Supermind is the Truth-consciousness at once static and dynamic, self-existent and creative: in Supermind the Brahmic Consciousness—Sachchidananda—is ever self-aware and ever manifested and embodied in fundamental truth-powers and truth-forms for the play of creation; it is the plane where the One breaks out into the Many and the Many still remain one, being and knowing themselves to be but various self-expressions of the One; it develops the spiritual archetypes, the divine names and forms of all individualisations of an evolving existence.

The Upanishads speak of a solar and a lunar Path in the Spiritual consciousness. Perhaps they have some reference to these two lines—one through the Mayic consciousness of the Overmind enters into the static Bliss, ecstatic Nihil, and the other mounts still farther to the solar status which is a mass, a sea, an infinity of that light and ecstasy but which can at the same time express and embody itself as the creative Truth-consciousness (*surya savitri*).

In the Supermind things exist in their perfect spiritual reality; each is consciously the divine reality in its transcendent essence, its cosmic extension, its spiritual individuality; the diversity of a man-

<sup>2</sup> *The Supermind is not merely synthetic. "The Supermind is synthetic only on the lowest spaces of itself, where it has to prepare the principles of Overmind, —synthesis is necessary only where analysis has taken place, one has dissected everything, put in pieces (analysis), so one has to piece together. But Supermind is unitarian, has never divided up, so it does not need to add and piece together the parts and fragments. It has always held the conscious Many together in the conscious One."*

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ifested existence is there, but the mutually exclusive separativeness has not yet arisen. The ego, the knot of separativity, appears at a later and lower stage of involution ; what is here is indivisible nexus of individualising centres of the one eternal truth of being. Where Supermind and Overmind meet, one can see the multiple godheads, each distinct in his own truth and beauty and power and yet all together forming the one supreme consciousness infinitely composite and inalienably integral. But stepping back into Supermind one sees something more—Oneness gathering into itself all diversity, not destroying it, but annulling and forbidding the separative consciousness that is the beginning of Ignorance. The first shadow of the Illusory Consciousness, the initial possibility of the movement of Ignorance comes in when the supramental light enters the penumbra of the mental sphere. The movement of Supermind is the movement of light without obscurity, straight, unwavering, unswerving, absolute. The Force here contains and holds in their oneness of Reality the manifold but not separated lines of essential and unalloyed truth: its march is the inevitable progression of each one assured truth entering into and upholding every other and therefore its creation, play or action admits of no trial or stumble or groping or deviation; for each truth rests on all others and on that which harmonises them all and does not act as a Power diverging from and even competing with other Powers of being. In the Overmind commences the play of divergent possibilities—the simple, direct, united and absolute certainties of the supramental consciousness retire, as it were, a step behind and begin to work themselves out through the interaction first of separately individualised and then of contrary and contradictory forces. In the Overmind there is a conscious underlying Unity but yet each Power, Truth, Aspect of that Unity is encouraged to work out its possibilities as if it were sufficient to itself and the others are used by it for its own enhancement until in the denser and darker reaches below Overmind this turns out a thing of blind conflict and battle and, as it would appear, of chance survival. Creation or manifestation originally means the concretisation or devolution of the powers of Conscious Being into a play of united diversity; but on the line which ends in Matter it enters into more and more obscure forms and forces and finally the virtual eclipse of the supreme light of the Divine Consciousness. Creation as it descends towards the Ignorance becomes an involution of the Spirit through Mind and Life into Matter; evolution is a movement backward, a return journey from Matter towards the Spirit: it is the unravelling, the gradual disclosure and deliverance of the Spirit, the ascension and revelation of the involved consciousness through

a series of awakenings—Matter awakening into Life, Life awakening into Mind and Mind now seeking to awaken into something beyond the Mind, into a power of conscious Spirit.

The apparent or actual result of the movement of Nescience —of Involution—has been an increasing negation of the Spirit, but its hidden purpose is ultimately to embody the Spirit in Matter, to express here below in cosmic Time-Space the splendours of the timeless Reality. The material body came into existence bringing with it inevitably, as it seemed, mortality; it appeared even to be fashioned out of mortality, in order that in this very frame and field of mortality, Immortality, the eternal Spirit Consciousness which is the secret truth and reality in Time itself as well as behind it, might be established and that the Divine might be possessed, or rather, possess itself not in one unvarying mode of the static consciousness, as it does even now behind the cosmic play, but in the play itself and in the multiple mode of the terrestrial existence.

## II

The secret of evolution, I have said, is an urge towards the release and unfoldment of consciousness out of an apparent unconsciousness. In the early stages the movement is very slow and gradual; there it is Nature's original unconscious process. In man it acquires the possibility of a conscious and therefore swifter and concentrated process. And this is in fact the function of Yoga proper, viz, to bring about the evolution of consciousness by hastening the process of Nature through the self-conscious will of man.

An organ in the human being has been especially developed to become the effective instrument of this accelerated Yogic process—the self-consciousness which I referred to as being the distinctive characteristic of man is a function of this organ. It is his soul, his "psychic being"; originally it is the spark of the Divine Consciousness which came down and became involved in Matter and has been endeavouring ever since to release itself through the upward march of evolution. It is this which presses on continually as the stimulus to the evolutionary movement; and in man it has attained sufficient growth and power and has come so far to the front from behind the veil that it can now lead and mould his external consciousness. It is also the channel through which the Divine Consciousness can flow down into the inferior levels of human nature. It is the "being no bigger than the thumb ever seated within the heart", spoken of in the Upanishads.

It is likewise the basis of true individuality and personal identity. It is again the reflection or expression in evolutionary Nature of one's essential self—*jīvātman*—that is above, an eternal portion of the Divine, one with the Divine and yet not dissolved and lost in it. The psychic being is thus on the one hand in direct contact with the Divine and the higher consciousness, and on the other it is the secret upholder and controller (*bhartā, antaryāmin*) of the inferior consciousness, the hidden nucleus round which the body and the life and the mind of the individual are built up and organised.

The first decisive step in Yoga is taken when one becomes conscious of the psychic being, or, looked at from the other side, when the psychic being comes forward and takes possession of the external being, begins to initiate and influence the movements of the mind and life and body and gradually free them from the ordinary round of ignorant nature. The awakening of the psychic being means, as I have said, not only a deepening and heightening of the consciousness and its release from the obscurity and limitation of the inferior Prakriti, confined to the lower threefold status, into what is behind and beyond; it means also a return of the deeper and higher consciousness upon the lower hemisphere and a consequent purification and illumination and regeneration of the latter. Finally, when the psychic being is in full self-possession and power, it can be the vehicle of the direct supramental consciousness—which will then be able to act freely and absolutely for the entire transformation of the external nature, its transfiguration into a perfect body of the Truth-consciousness—in a word, its divinisation.

This then is the supreme secret, not the renunciation and annulment, but the transformation of the ordinary human nature:—first of all, its *psychicisation*, that is to say, making it move and live and be in communion' and identification with the light of the psychic being, and, secondly, through the soul and the ensouled mind and life and body, to open out into the supramental consciousness and let it come down here below and work and achieve.

The soul or the true being in man uplifted in the supramental consciousness and at the same time coming forward to possess a divinised mind and life and body as an instrument and channel of its self-expression and an embodiment of the Divine Will and Purpose—such is the goal that Nature is seeking to realise at present through her evolutionary *elan*. It is to this labour that man has been called so that in and through him the destined transcendence and transformation

can take place.

It is not easy, however, nor is it necessary for the moment to envisage in detail what this divinised man would be like, externally—his mode of outward being and living, *kim āsita vrajeta kim*, as Arjuna queried—or how the collective life of the new humanity would function or what would be the composition of its social fabric. For what is happening is a living process, an organic growth; it is being elaborated through the actions and reactions of multitudinous forces and conditions, known and unknown; the precise configuration of the final outcome cannot be predicted with exactitude. But the Power that is at work is omniscient; it is selecting, rejecting, correcting, fashioning, creating, co-ordinating elements in accordance with and by the drive of the inviolable law of Truth and Harmony that reigns in Light's "own home"—swe dame—the Supermind.

It is also to be noted that as mind is not the last limit of the march of evolution, even so the progress of evolution will not stop with the manifestation and embodiment of the Supermind. There are other still higher principles beyond and they too presumably await manifestation and embodiment on earth. Creation has no beginning in time (anadi) nor has it an end (ananta). It is an eternal process of the unravelling of the mysteries of the Infinite. Only, it may be said that with the Supermind the creation here enters into a different order of existence. Before it there was the domain of Ignorance, after it will come the reign of Light and Knowledge. Mortality has been the governing principle of life on earth till now; it will be replaced by the consciousness of immortality. Evolution has proceeded through struggle and pain; hereafter it will be a spontaneous, harmonious and happy flowering.

Now, with regard to the time that the present stage of evolution is likely to take for its fulfilment, one can presume that since or if the specific urge and stress has manifested and come up to the front, this very fact would show that the problem has become a problem of actuality, and even that it can be dealt with as if it had to be solved now or never. We have said that in man, with man's self-consciousness or the consciousness of the psychic being as the instrument, evolution has attained the capacity of a swift and concentrated process, which is the process of Yoga; the process will become swifter and more concentrated, the more that instrument grows and gathers power and is infused with the divine afflatus. In fact, evolution has been such a process of gradual acceleration in tempo from the very beginning.

The earliest stage, for example, the stage of dead Matter, of the play of the mere chemical forces was a very, very long one; it took millions and millions of years to come to the point when the manifestation of life became possible. But the period of elementary life, as manifested in the plant world that followed, although it too lasted a good many millions of years, was much briefer than the preceding period—it ended with the advent of the first animal form. The age of animal life, again, has been very much shorter than that of the plant life before man came upon earth. And man is already more than a million or two years old—it is fully time that a higher order of being should be created out of him.

# *The Divine Man*

THE core of Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the central pivot on which his Yoga and his work rest is the mystery of the Divine Descent—Spirit descending into Matter and becoming Matter, God coming down upon earth and becoming human, and as a necessary and inevitable consequence, Matter rising and being transformed into Spirit and man becoming God and Godlike.

This is a truth, a fact of creation—giving the whole clue to the riddle of this world—that has not been envisaged at all in the past, or otherwise overlooked and not given the value and importance that it has. Poets and seers, sages and saints along with common men from the very birth of humanity have mourned this vale of tears, this sorrowful transient earthly life, *anityam asukham lokam imam*<sup>3</sup>, into which they have been thrown: they have wished and willed and endeavoured to change or reform or re-create it, but have always failed, and in the end, finding it ultimately incorrigible, concluded that escape was the only solution, the only issue, either like the sage going out into Nirvana, spiritual dissolution, or like the atheist stoically going down with a crumbling world into a material disintegration. The truth of the matter is, however, different as Sri Aurobindo sees it. The spectacle is not so gloomy and irremediable. The world has a future and man has hope.

The world is not doomed nor man past cure; for it is not that the world has been merely created by God but that God has become and is the world at the same time: man is not merely God's creature but that he is made of God's substance and is God himself. The Spirit

<sup>3</sup> *The Gita*, IX. 33

has shed its supreme consciousness, that is to say, overtly has become dead matter; God has veiled his effulgent infinity and has taken up a human figure. The Divine has clothed his inviolable felicity in pain and suffering, has become an earthly creature, you and me, a mortal of mortals. And thus, viewed in another perspective because Matter is essentially Spirit, because man is essentially God, therefore Matter can be resolved and transformed into Spirit and man too can become utterly divine. The urge of the spiritual consciousness that is the essence of matter even, the massed energy imbedded or lying frozen in it, manifests itself in the forward drive of evolution that brings out gradually, step by step, the various modes of the consciousness in different degrees and potentials till the original summit is revealed.

But there is a still closer mystery, the mystery of mysteries. There has not been merely a general descent, the descent of a world-force on a higher plane into another world-force on a lower plane; but that there is the descent of the individual, the personal Godhead into and as an earthly human being. The Divine born as a man and leading the life of a man among us and as one of us, the secret of Divine Incarnation is the supreme secret. That is the mechanism adopted by the Divine to cure and transmute human ills—himself becoming a man, taking upon himself the burden of the evil that vitiates and withers life and working it out in and through himself. Something of this truth has been caught in the Christian view of Incarnation. God sent upon earth his only begotten son to take upon himself the sins of man, suffer vicariously for him, pay the ransom and thus liberate him, so that he may reach salvation, procure his seat by the side of the Father in Heaven. Man corrupted as he is by an original sin cannot hope by his own merit to achieve salvation. He can only admit his sin and . repent and wait for the Grace to save him. The Indian view of Incarnation laid more stress upon the positive aspect of the matter, viz, the role of the Incarnation as the inaugurator and establisher of a new order in life—*dharmasamsthapanarthaya*. The Avatar brings down and embodies a higher principle of human organisation, a greater consciousness which he infuses into the existing pattern, individual or collective, which has served its purpose, has become otiose and time-barred and needs to be remodelled, has been at the most preparatory to something else. The Avatar means a new revelation and the uplift of the human consciousness into a higher mode of being. The physical form he takes signifies the physical pressure that is exerted for the corroboration and fixation of the inner illumination that he brings upon earth and in the human frame. The Indian tradition has focussed

its attention upon the Good—sreyas—and did not consider it essential to dwell upon the Evil. For one who finds and sees the Good always and everywhere, the Evil does not exist. Sri Aurobindo lays equal emphasis on both the aspects. Naturally, however, he does not believe in an original evil, incurable upon earth and in earthly life. In conformity with the ancient Indian teaching he declares the original divinity of man: it is because man is potentially and essentially divine that he can become actually and wholly divine. The Bible speaks indeed of man becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect: but that is due exclusively to the Grace showered upon man, not because of any inherent perfection in him. But in according full divinity to man, Sri Aurobindo does not minimise the part of the undivine in him. This does not mean any kind of Manicheism: for Evil, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not coeval or coterminous with the Divine, it is a later or derivative formation under given conditions, although within the range and sphere of the infinite Divine. Evil exists as a stern reality; even though it may be temporary and does not touch the essential reality, it is not an illusion nor can it be ignored, brushed aside or bypassed as something superficial or momentary and of no importance. It has its value, its function and implication. It is real, but it is not irremediable. It is contrary to the Divine but not contradictory. For even the Evil in its inmost substance ” carries or is the reality which it opposes or denies outwardly. Did not the very first of the apostles of Christ deny his master at the crucial moment? As we have said, evil is a formation necessitated by certain circumstances, the circumstances changed, the whole disposition as at present constituted changes automatically and fundamentally. The Divine then descends into the earth-frame, not merely as an immanent and hidden essence—sarvabhutantaratma—but as an individual person embodying that essence—manusim tanum asritam. Man too, however earthly and impure he may be, is essentially the Divine himself, carries in him the spark of the supreme consciousness that he is in his true and highest reality. That is how in him is bridged the gulf that apparently exists between the mortal and the immortal, the Infinite and the Finite, the Eternal and the Momentary, and the Divine too can come into him and become, so to say, his lower self.

The individual or personal Divine leaves his home of all bliss—Vaikuntha—forgets himself and enters into this world of all misery; but this does not mean that he becomes wholly the Man of Misery: he encompasses all misery within himself, penetrates as well into the stuff and substance of all misery, but suffuses all that with the purifying and

transforming pressure of his own supreme consciousness. And yet pain and suffering are real, cruelly real, even to the- Divine Man. Just as the ordinary human creature suffers and agonises in spite of the divine essence in him, in spite of his other deeper truth and reality, his soul of inalienable bliss, his psychic being, the Divine too suffers in the same way in spite of his divinity. This double line of consciousness, this system of parallels running alongside each other, interacting upon each other (even intersecting each other, when viewed in a frame of infinity) gives the whole secret mechanism of creation, its purpose, its working and its fulfilment. It is nothing else than the gradual replacement or elimination, elevation or sublimation of the elements on one line that are transmuted into those of the other. The Divine enters into the Evil to root out the Evil and plant there or release and fructify the seed of Divinity lying covered over and lost in the depths of dead inconscience.

The Divine descends as an individual person fundamentally to hasten the evolutionary process and to complete it; he takes the human form to raise humanity to divinity. The fact and the nature of the process have been well exemplified in Sri Ramakrishna who, it is said, took up successively different lines of spiritual discipline and by a supreme and sovereign force of concentration achieved realisation in each line in the course of a few days what might take in normal circumstances years or even lives to do. The Divine gathers and concentrates in himself the world-force, the Nature-Energy—even like a dynamo—and focuses and canalises it to give it its full, integral and absolute effectivity. And mortal pain he accepts, and swallows the poison of ignorant life—even like Nilakantha Shiva — to transmute it into ecstasy and immortality. The Divine Mother sank into the earth-nature of a human body:

Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword...  
 Hoping her greater being to implant  
 That heaven might native grow on mortal soil.<sup>4</sup>

But this is God's share—la part de Dieu; for man too as man has to do his part. Because the Divine descending and accomplishing the work does not mean either of two things: first, it does not mean that it is a sudden miracle, deus ex machina, a fiat from the heaven which upsets and bears down everything before it and practically has no

<sup>4</sup> *Sri Aurobindo: Savitri, Book I, Canto I*

relation, logical or causal with what precedes and what follows. It is, on the contrary, as we have said, the culmination of a long process, the seal of fulfilment set upon a steady preparation and travelling growth. The Divine descends when the time is ripe, that is to say, when forces and instruments have been developed, refined, sharpened and tempered, so that they can harness and wield the Power from above. But for the preparation, the necessary conditions being there, the Grace would not have descended, although it is also true that but for the Grace, the culmination and the utter fulfilment would not have come about—there would have been only a vicious circle or an unending seesaw. Next, the Descent does not mean either that following upon it the whole business is done and completed automatically and immediately or nothing is left to be done any more. Not so. It means that what has been so long practically beyond reach, towards which one had to move with uncertainty and vague effort and in a roundabout way, as though through a trackless virgin forest or across an uncharted sea, has now been brought nearer and closer to human grasp, is now made part and parcel of earth's familiar atmosphere, so that any human being who genuinely aspires and looks for it can find it about him: there is just a thin veil which has to be put aside a little, into which a little opening is to be made and one comes in contact with or even enters into what one seeks. This means that the Grace has leaned down to man, but man too has at least to stretch his arms to touch and embrace it. Furthermore, to make that Grace permanently active and real in the normal consciousness, one has to labour, work out in fact what is given potentially : the seed is planted for him, it will grow and bloom and come to fruition provided necessary care and attention are given to the soil that bears it.

Thus then the embodied human person who has the embodied Divine Person before his eyes must know how to install and incorporate the Divine Person in him, in his body and physical existence. That was perhaps the mystery sought to be conveyed in the Christian sacrament of transubstantiation. The bread and wine that the initiate has to take in represent —are or become actually and physically, as the Christian mystics assert—the flesh and blood of Christ. One has to become the Divine Person in flesh and blood, wholly and integrally. As the fossil is a transmutation in stone, grain by grain, of a living body—organic elements eliminated and replaced by the inorganic in the very atomic structure and constitution—even so, the living human structure, the mental, vital and physical formation will be translated, grain by grain, atom by atom into the divine substance by

the infusion and imposition of the Divine figure.

The Christian mystics themselves, however, do not seem to have aimed at real physical transubstantiation—although that might have been at the back of the older Hebrew sacrament of the Eucharist; the perfection sought by them was to be enjoyed in Heaven in company of the Father and not on this earth and in this human body: it was more a sublimation than a transformation that was their goal. The flesh for them. was always too weak.

# *Lines of the Descent of Consciousness*

The world has been created by a descent of consciousness; it maintains itself, it proceeds and develops through a series of descents. In fact, creation itself is a descent, the first and original one, the descent of the supreme Reality into Matter and as Matter. The supreme Reality—the fount and origin of things and even that which is beyond—although essentially something absolute, indescribable, ineffable, indeterminable, has been, for purposes of the human understanding, signalised as a triune entity of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. That is to say, first of all, it is, it exists always and for ever—invariably, in unbroken continuity; secondly, it exists not unconsciously, but consciously, in and as full consciousness; thirdly, it exists in delight—through delight and for and as delight; it has no other reason for existence but the pleasure and joy of simply existing. This primal, this original truth or reality transcends creation and is beyond and antecedent to it. What then is creation, what is its nature and character? Strange to say, it is the very opposite of the primal reality. First of all, it is not really existent: its existence is only another name for non-existence, as, in its phenomenal constitution, it is variable, ephemeral, transient and fragmentary or even seems made, as it were, of the stuff of dream. Secondly, it is not conscious; on the contrary, it is unconsciousness. And lastly it is not delight; there is an original insensibility and much undelight, grief and sorrow. That is the actual physical creation; or so, at least, it appears to be. How is this paradox to be explained? What is the significance of this riddle ?

Descent is the master-key that unravels the mystery—that is to say, the descent of the delightful conscious existence as the material world. But why this descent at all? What was the necessity ? What was the

purpose ? The why of a thing is always difficult, if not impossible, to gauge. But we shall try to understand the how of the phenomenon, and in so doing perhaps we may get at the why of it also. At present let us content ourselves by saying that such was His will—*la sua voluntade*—such was His wish—*sa aicchat*. For once perhaps instead of saying, "Let there be light", He (or something in Him) must have said, "Let there be darkness", and there was Darkness.

But the point is, this darkness did not come all on a sudden but arrived gradually through a developing process—we do not refer to physical time here but something antecedent, something parallel to it in another dimension. Let us see how it all came about.

The absolute in its triple or triune status (not in its supreme being but as we see it prior to manifestation) is in essence and principle an infinity and unity. Indeed, it is the infinite unity, and its fundamental character is a supreme and utter equality —*samam brahma*. It is then a status or stasis, that is to say, a state of perfectly stable equilibrium in which there is no movement of difference or distinction, no ripple of high and low or ebb and flow, no mark of quantity or quality. It is a stilled sea of self-identity, a vast limitless or pure consciousness brooding in trance and immobility. And yet in the bosom of this ineffable and inviolable equality, in the 'very hush and lull there lies secreted an urge, a pressure, a possibility towards activity, variation and even an eventual inequality. For the presence and possibility of dynamism is posited by the very infinity of the Infinite, since without it, the Infinite would be incapable of motion, expression and fulfilment of its Force.

There is thus inherent in the vast inalienable equality of the absolute Reality, a Force which can bring out centres of pressure, nuclei of dynamism, nodes of modulation. It is precisely round these centres of precipitation that the original and basic unity crystallises itself and weaves a pattern of harmonious multiplicity. Consciousness, by self-pressure,— *tapas taptva*—turns its even and undifferentiated pristine equanimity into ripples and swirls, eddies and vortices of delight, matrices of creative activity. Thus the One becomes Many by a process of self-concentration and self-limitation.

At the very outset when and where the Many has come out into manifestation in the One—here also it must be remembered that we are using a temporal figure in respect of an extra-temporal fact—there and then is formed a characteristic range of reality which is a perfect equation of the one and the many: that is to say, the one

in becoming many still remains the same immaculate one in and through the many, and likewise the many in spite of its manifoldness—and because of the special quality of the manifoldness—still continues to be the one in the uttermost degree. It is the world of fundamental realities. Sri Aurobindo names it the Supermind or Gnosis. It is something higher than but distantly akin to Plato's world of Ideas or Noumena (ideai, nooumena) or to what Plotinus calls the first divine emanation (nous). These archetypal realities are realities of the Spirit, Idea-forces, truth-energies, the root consciousness-forms, *rta cit*, in Vedic terminology. They are seed-truths, the original mother-truths in the Divine Consciousness. They comprise the fundamental essential many aspects and formulations of an infinite Infinity. At this stage these do not come into clash or conflict, for here each contains all and the All contains each one in absolute unity and essential identity. Each individual formation is united with and partakes of the nature of the one supreme Reality. Although difference is born here, separation is not yet come. Variety is there, but not discord, individuality is there, not egoism. This is the first step of Descent, the earliest one—not, we must remind ourselves again, historically but psychologically and logically—the descent of the Transcendent into the Cosmic as the vast and varied Supermind—*citrah praketo ajanista vibhwa*—of the Absolute into the relational manifestation as *Vidyasakti* (Gnosis).

The next steps, farther down or away, arrive when the drive towards differentiation and multiplication gathers momentum becomes accentuated, and separation and isolation increase in degree and emphasis. The lines of individuation fall more and more apart from each other, tending to form closed circles, each confining more and more exclusively to itself, stressing its own particular and special value and function, in contradistinction to or even against other lines. Thus the descent or fall from the Supermind leads, in the first instance, to the creation or appearance of the Overmind. It is the level of consciousness where the perfect balance of the One and the Many is disturbed and the emphasis begins to be laid on the many. The source of incompatibility between the two just starts here as if Many is not-One and One is not- Many. It is the beginning of Ignorance, *Avidya*, *Maya*. Still in the higher hemisphere of the Overmind, the sense of unity is yet maintained, although there is no longer the sense of absolute identity of the two; they are experienced as complementaries, both form a harmony, a harmony as of different and distinct but conjoint notes. The Many has come forward, yet the unity is also there supporting it—the unity is an immanent godhead, controlling the patent reality

of the Many. It is in the lower hemisphere of the Overmind that unity is thrown into the background half-submerged, nickering, and the principle of multiplicity comes forward with all insistence. Division and rivalry are the characteristic marks of its organisation. Yet the unity does not disappear altogether, only it remains very much inactive, like a sleeping partner. It is not directly perceived and envisaged, not immediately felt but is evoked as a reminiscence. The Supermind, then, is the first crystallisation of the Infinite into individual centres, in the Overmind these centres at the outset become more exclusively individualised and then jealously self-centred.

The next step of Descent is the Mind where the original unity and identity and harmony are disrupted to a yet greater degree, almost completely. The self-delimitation' of consciousness—which is proper to the Supermind and even to the Overmind, at least in its higher domains—gives way to self-limitation, to intolerant egoism and solipsism. The consciousness withdraws from its high and wide sweep, narrows down to introvert orbits. The sense of unity in the mind is, at most, a thing of idealism and imagination; it is an abstract notion, a supposition and a deduction. Here we enter into the very arcana of Maya, the rightful possession of Ignorance. The individualities here have become totally isolated and independent and mutually conflicting lines of movement. Hence the natural incapacity of mind, as it is said, to comprehend more than one object simultaneously. The Supermind and, less absolutely, the Overmind have a global and integral outlook: they can take in each one in its purview all at once the total assemblage of things, they differentiate but do not divide—the Supermind not at all, the Overmind not categorically. The Mind has not this synthetic view, it proceeds analytically. It observes its object by division, taking the parts piecemeal, dismantling them, separating them, attending to each one at a time. And when it observes it fixes itself on one point, withdrawing its attention from all the rest. If it has to arrive at a synthesis, it can only do so by collating, aggregating : and summing. Mental consciousness is thus narrowly one-pointed: and in narrowing itself, being farther away from the source it becomes obscurer, more and more outward gazing [parafici khani) and superficial. The One Absolute in its downward march towards multiplicity, fragmentation and partiality loses also gradually its subtlety, its sup- pleness, its refinement, becomes more and more obtuse, crude, rigid and dense.

Between the Overmind and the Mind proper, varying according to the degree of immixture of the two, according to the degree of

descent and of emergence of one and the other respectively, there are several levels of consciousness of which three main ones have been named and described by Sri Aurobindo. The first one nearest to the Overmind and the least contaminated by the Mind is pure Intuition; next, the intermediary one is called the Illumined Mind, and last comes the Higher Mind. They are all powers of the Overmind functioning in the Mind. The higher ranges are always more direct, intense, synthetic, dynamic than the lower ones where consciousness is slower, duller, more uncertain, more disintegrated. The lower the consciousness descends the more veiled it becomes, losing more and more the directness, the sureness, the intensity and force and the synthetic unity native to the highest ranges of our consciousness and being.

A further descent into obscurity occurs when consciousness passes from Mind to Life. Darkness is almost visible here: there is a greater withdrawal on the part of each unit from its surrounding reality, a narrower concentration upon one's own separative existence—shades of the prison-house have gathered close around. The light, already dulled and faint in the mind, has become a lurid glare here. Passion has arisen and desire and hunger and battle and combat.

Here also in the vital three ranges can be distinguished— the lower becoming more and more turbid and turbulent and fierce or more and more self-centred and selfish. These levels can best be seen by their impact on our vital being and formations there. The first, the highest one, the meeting or confluence of the Mind and the Vital is the Heart, the centre of emotion, the knot of the external or instrumental vehicle, of the frontal consciousness, behind which is born and hides the true individualised consciousness, the psyche. The mid-region is the Higher Vital consisting of larger (egoistic) dynamisms, such as high ambition, great enterprise, heroic courage, capacity for work, adventure, masterfulness, also such movements as sweeping violences, mighty hungers, intense arrogances. The physical seat of this movement is, as perhaps the Tantras would say, the domain ranging between the heart and the navel. Lower down ranges the Lower Vital which consists of small desires, petty hankerings, blind cravings—all urges and impulses that are more or less linked up with the "body and move to gross physical satisfactions.

But always the Consciousness is driving towards a yet greater disintegration and fragmentation, obscuration and condensation of self-oblivion. The last step in the process of transmutation or involution is

Matter where consciousness has wiped itself out or buried itself within so completely and thoroughly that it has become in its outward form totally dark, dense, hard, pulverised into mutually exclusive grains. The supreme luminous Will of Consciousness in its gradual descent and self-obliteration finally ends in a rigid process of mere mechanised drive.

This is, so far then, the original and primal line of descent. It is the line down which the absolute Reality, the absolute Consciousness and the absolute Delight have turned into unreality and unconsciousness and undelight. But it is not all loss and debit. There is a credit side too. For it is only in this way, viz, by the manifestation of utter Ignorance, that the supreme Absolute has become concrete, the Formless has entered into form, the Bodiless has found a body: what was originally an indeterminate equal Infinity of pure consciousness, has become determinate and dynamic in the individual multiplicity of corporeal consciousness. What is the sense in all that, what is the gain or upshot? We shall presently see.

When consciousness has reached the farthest limit of its opposite, when it has reduced itself to absolutely unconscious and mechanical atoms of Matter, when the highest has descended into and become the lowest, then, by the very force of its downward drive, it has swung round and begun to mount up again. As it could not proceed farther on the downward gradient, having reached the extreme and ultimate limit of inconscience, consciousness had to turn round, as it were, by the very pressure of its inner impetus. First, then, there is a descent, a gradual involution, a veiling and closing up; next, an ascent, a gradual evolution, unfoldment and expression. We now see, however, that the last limit at the bottom—Matter—although appearing to be unconscious, is really not so: it is inconscient. That is to say, it holds consciousness secreted and involved within itself; it is, indeed, a special formulation of consciousness. It is the exclusive concentration of consciousness upon single points in itself: it is consciousness throwing itself out in scattered units and, by reason of separative identification with them and absorption into them, losing itself, forgetting itself in an absolute fixation of attention. The phenomenon is very similar to what happens when in the ordinary consciousness a worker, while doing a work, becomes so engrossed in it that he loses consciousness of himself, identifies himself with the work and in fact becomes the work, the visible resultant being a mechanical execution.

Now this imprisoned consciousness in Matter forces Matter to be

conscious again when driven on the upward gradient. This tension creates a fire, as it were, in the heart of Matter, a mighty combustion and whorl in the core of things, of which the blazing sun is an image and a symbol. All this pressure and heat and concussion and explosion mean a mighty struggle in Matter to give birth to that which is within. Consciousness that is latent must be made patent; it must reveal itself in Matter and through Matter, making Matter its vehicle and embodiment. This is the mystery of the birth of Life, the first sprouting of consciousness in Matter. Life is half-awakened consciousness, consciousness yet in a dream state. Its earliest and most rudimentary manifestation is embodied in the plant or vegetable world. The submerged consciousness strives to come still further up, to express itself to a greater degree and in a clearer mode, to become more free and plastic in its movements; hence the appearance of the animal as the next higher formulation. Here consciousness delivers itself as a psyche, a rudimentary one, no doubt, a being of feeling and sensation, and elementary mentality playing in a field of vitalised Matter. Even then it is not satisfied with itself, it asks for a still more free and clear articulation: it is not satisfied, for it has not yet found its own level. Hence after the animal, arrives man with a full-fledged Mind, with intelligence and self-consciousness and capacity for self-determination.

Thus we see that evolution, the unfolding of consciousness follows exactly the line of its involution, only the other way round: the mounting consciousness re-ascends step by step the same gradient, retraces the same path along which it had descended. The descending steps are broadly speaking (1) Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, (2) Supermind and its secondary form Overmind, (3) Mind—(i) mind proper and (ii) the intermediary psyche, (4) Life, (5) Matter. The ascending consciousness starting from Matter rises into Life; passes on through Life and Psyche into Mind, driving towards the Supermind and Schchidananda. At the present stage of evolution, consciousness has arrived at the higher levels of Mind; it is now striving to cross it altogether and enter the Overmind and the Supermind. It will not rest content until it arrives at the organisation in and through the Supermind: for that is the drive and purpose of Nature in the next cycle of evolution.

Physical Science speaks of irreversibility and entropy in Nature's process. That is to say, it is stated that Nature is rushing down and running down: she is falling irrevocably from a higher to an ever lower potential of energy. The machine that Nature is, is driven by energy

made available by a break-up of parts and particles constituting its substance. This katabolic process cannot be stopped or retraced; it can end only when the break-up ceases at dead equilibrium. You cannot lead the river up the channel to its source, it moves inevitably, unceasingly towards the sea in which it exhausts itself and finds its last repose and—extinction. But whatever physical Science may say, the science of the spirit declares emphatically that Nature's process is reversible, that a growing entropy can be checked and countermanded: in other words, Nature's downward current resulting in a continual loss of energy and a break-up of substance is not the only process of her activity. This aspect is more than counterbalanced by another one of upward drive and building up, of re-energisation and re-integration. Indeed, evolution, as we have explained it, is nothing but such a process of synthesis and new creation.

Evolution, which means the return movement of consciousness, consists, in its apparent and outward aspect, of two processes, or rather two parallel lines in a single process. First, there is the line of sublimation, that is to say, the lower purifies and modifies itself into the higher; the denser, the obscurer, the baser mode of consciousness is led into and becomes the finer, the clearer, the nobler mode. Thus it is that Matter rises into Life, Life into Psyche and Mind, Mind into Overmind and Supermind. Now this sublimation is not simply a process of refinement or elimination, something in the nature of our old Indian *nivritti* or *pratyahara*, or what Plotinus called *epistrophe* (a turning back, withdrawal or re-absorption) : it includes and is attended by the process of integration also. That is to say, as the lower rises into the higher, the lower does not cease to exist thereby, it exists but lifted up into the higher, infused and modified by the higher. Thus when Matter yields Life, Matter is not destroyed: it means Life has appeared in Matter and exists in and through Matter and Matter thereby has attained a new mode and constitution, for it is no longer merely a bundle of chemical or mechanical reactions, it is instinct with life, it has become organic matter. Even so, when Life arrives at Mind, it is not dissolved into Mind but both Life and Matter are taken up by the mental stuff, life becomes dynamic sentience and Matter is transformed into the grey substance of the brain. Matter thus has passed through a first transformation in Life and a second transformation in Mind; it awaits other transformations on other levels beyond Mind. Likewise, Life has passed through a first transformation in Mind and there are stages in this transformation. In the plant. Life is in its original pristine mode; in the animal, it has become sentient

and centralised round a rudimentary desire-soul; in man, life-force is taken up by the higher mind and intelligence giving birth to idealism and ambition, dynamisms of a forward-looking purposive will.

We have, till now, spoken of the evolution of consciousness as a movement of ascension, consisting of a double process of sublimation and integration. But ascension itself is only one line of a yet another larger double process. For along with the visible movement of ascent, there is a hidden movement of descent. The ascent represents the pressure from below, the force of buoyancy exerted by the involved and secreted consciousness. But the mere drive from below is not sufficient all by itself to bring out or establish the higher status. The higher status itself has to descend in order to be manifest. The urge from below is an aspiration, a yearning to move ever upward and forward; but the precise goal, the status to be arrived at is not given there. The more or less vague and groping surge from below is canalised, it assumes a definite figure and shape, assumes a local habitation and a name when the higher descends at the crucial moment, takes the lower at its peak-tide and fixes upon it its own norm and form. We have said that all the levels of consciousness have been created—loosened out—by a first Descent; but in the line of the first. Descent the only level that stands in front at the outset is Matter, all the other levels are created no doubt but remain invisible in the background, behind the gross veil of Matter. Each status stands confined, as it were, to its own region and bides its time when each will be summoned to concretise itself in Matter. Thus Life was already there on the plane of Life even when it did not manifest itself in Matter, when mere Matter, dead Matter was the only apparent reality on the material plane. When Matter was stirred and churned sufficiently so as to reach a certain tension and saturation, when it was raised to a certain degree of maturity, as it were, then Life appeared: Life appeared, not because that was the inevitable and unavoidable result of the churning, but because Life descended from its own level to the level of Matter and took Matter up in its embrace. The churning, the development in Matter was only the occasion, the condition precedent. For, however much one may shake or churn Matter, whatever change one may create in it by a shuffling and reshuffling of its elements, one can never produce Life by that alone. A new and unforeseen factor makes its appearance, precisely because it comes from elsewhere. It is true all the planes are imbedded, submerged, involved in the complex of Matter; but, in point of fact, all planes are involved in every other plane. The appearance or manifestation of a new plane is certainly prepared, made

ready to the last—the last but one —degree by the urge of the inner, the latent mode of consciousness that is to be; still the actualization, the bursting forth happens only when the thing that has to manifest itself descends, the actual form and pattern can be imprinted and established by that alone. Thus, again, when Life attains a certain level of growth and maturity, a certain tension and orientation—a definite vector, so to say, in the mathematical language—when it has, for example, sufficiently organised itself as a vehicle of the psychic element of consciousness, then. it buds forth into Mind, but only when the Mind has descended upon it and into it. As in the previous stage, here also- Life cannot produce Mind, cannot develop into Mind by any amount of mechanical or chemical operations within itself, by any amount of permutation and combination or commutation. and culture of its constituent elements, unless it is seized on. by Mind itself. After the Mind, the next higher grade of consciousness shall come by the same method and process, viz, first by an uplifting of the mental consciousness—a certain. widening and deepening and katharsis of the mental consciousness—and then by a descent, gradual or sudden, of the level or levels that lie above it.

This, then, is the nature of creation and its process. First,. there is an Involution, a gradual foreshortening—a disintegration and concretisation, an exclusive concentration and self-oblivion of consciousness by which the various levels of diminishing consciousness are brought forth from the plenary light of the one supreme Spirit, all the levels down to the complete eclipse in the unconsciousness of the multiple and disintegrate Matter. Next, there is an Evolution, that is to say, embodiment in Matter of all these successive states, appearing one by one from the downmost to the topmost; Matter incarnates, all other states contribute to the incarnation and uphold it, the higher always transforming the lower in a new degree of consciousness.

Creation, the universe in its activity, is thus not simply a meaningless play, a pointless fancy. It has a purpose, an end, a goal, a fulfilment, and it follows naturally a definite pattern of process. The goal is the concretisation, the materialisation (which includes, of course, vitalisation and mentalisation) of the Spirit and the spiritual values. It means the establishment of divine names and forms in terrestrial individuals leading a divine life, individually and collectively here below.

We have so far spoken of two lines of descent. But in either case the descent was of a general and impersonal character. Consciousness was considered as a mere force, movement or quality. There is another

aspect, however, in which the descent is of a particular and personal character and consciousness is not force or status only but conscious being or Person.

The various movements or forces of consciousness that play in the various fields or levels of creation are not merely states or degrees and magnitudes, currents and streams of consciousness: they are also personalities with definite forms and figures—not physical indeed, yet very definite even when subtle and fluidic. Thus the supreme Reality, which is usually described as the perfect status of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, is not merely a principle but a personality. It is the Supreme Person with his triune nature (Purushottama). It is the Divine as the supreme Knower and Doer or Creator and Lover. The creation in or from that status of consciousness is not simply a play or result of the force of consciousness, it is even more truly the embodiment of a conscious Will; it is the will of the Divine Father executed by the Divine Mother.

Now, as the Reality along with its consciousness, in the downward involutory course towards materialisation, has been gradually disintegrating itself, multiplying itself, becoming more and more obscure and dense in separated and isolated units, even so the Person too has been following a parallel course of disintegration and multiplication and obscurity and isolation—At the origin lies, as we have said, the Perfect Person, the Supreme Person, in his dual aspect of being and nature, appearing as the supreme purusa and the supreme prakrti, our Father and our Mother in the highest heaven.

Next is the domain of the Supermind with which the manifestation of the Divine starts. We have said it is the world of typical realities, of the first seed-realities, where the One and the Many are united and fused in each other, where the absolute unity of the Supreme maintains itself in undiminished magnitude and expresses and formulates itself perfectly in and through the original multiplicity. Here take birth the first personalities, absolute truth-forms of the Divine. Here are the highest gods, the direct formations of the Divine himself. Here are the Four Powers and Personalities of iswara whom Sri Aurobindo has named after the Vaishnava terminology: (z) Mahavira, embodying the Brahmin quality of Knowledge and Light and wide Consciousness, (n) Balarama, embodying the Kshatriya quality of Force and intense dynamism, (w) Pradyumna, embodying the quality of love and beauty—the Vaishya virtue of mutuality and harmony and solidarity, and (iv) Aniruddha, embodying the Sudra quality of competent

service, of organisation and execution in detail. Corresponding with these Four there are the other Four Powers and Personalities of the Divine Mother—Iswari: (i) Maheshwari, (ii) Mahakali, (iii) Mahalakshmi and (iv) Mahasaraswati. Next in the downward gradient comes the Overmind where the individualised powers and personalities of the Divine tend to become self-sufficient and self-regarding; their absolute unity is loosened and the lines of multiplicity begin to be more independent of each other, each aiming at a special fulfilment of its own. Still the veil that is being drawn over the unity is yet transparent which continues to be sufficiently dynamic. This is the abode of the gods, the true and high gods: it is these that the Vedic Rishis appear to have envisaged and sought after. The all gods (*visve devah*) were indeed acknowledged' to be but different names and forms of one supreme godhead (*devah*): it is the one god, says Rishi Dirghatamas, who is called multifariously whether as Agni or Yama or Matariswan; it is the one god, again, who is described as having a thousand heads and a thousand feet. And yet they are separate entities, each has his own distinct and distinctive character and attribute, each demands a characteristic way of approach and worship. The tendency towards an exclusive stress is already at work on this level and it is the perception of this truth that lies behind the term henotheism used by European scholars to describe the Vedic Religion.

The next stage of devolution is the Mind proper. There or perhaps even before, on the lower reaches of the Overmind, the gods have become all quite separate,—self-centred, each bounded in his own particular sphere and horizon. The Overmind gods—the true gods—are creators in a world of balanced or harmoniously held difference; they are powers that fashion each a special fulfilment, enhancing one another at the same time (*parasparam bhavayanta*). Between the Over-mind and the Mind there is a class of lesser gods—they have been called formateurs; they do not create in the strict sense of the term, they give form to what the anterior gods have created and projected. These form-makers that consolidate the encasement, fix definitely the image, have most probably been envisaged in the Indian *dhydnamurtis*. But in the Mind the gods become still more fixed and rigid, "stereotyped"; the mental gods inspire exclusive systems, extreme and abstract generalisations, theories and principles and formulae that, even when they seek to force and englobe all in their cast-iron mould, can hardly understand or tolerate each other.

Mind is the birth-place of absolute division and exclusivism—it is the "own home" of egoism. Egoism is that ignorant mode—a twist or

knot of consciousness which cuts up the universal unity into disparate and antagonistic units: it creates isolated, mutually exclusive whorls in the harmonious rhythm and vast commonalty of the one consciousness or conscious existence. The Sankhya speaks of the principle of ego coming or appearing after the principle of vastness [mahat]. The Vast 'is the region above the Mind, where the unitary consciousness is still intact; with the appearance of the Mind has also appeared an intolerant self-engrossed individualism that culminates, as its extreme and violent expression, in the asura—Asura, the mentalised vital being.

The Asura or the Titan stands where consciousness descends from the Mind into the Vital or Life-Force. He is the personification of ambition and authority and arrogance, he is the intolerant and absolute self-seeker—he is Daitya, the son of division. The Asura belongs to what we call the Higher Vital; but lower down in the Mid Vital, made wholly of unmixed life impulses, appear beings that are still less luminous, less controlled, more passionate, vehement and violent in their self-regarding appetite. They are the Rakshasas. If the Asura is perverse power, the Rakshasa is insatiate hunger.

All the ancient legends about a principle—and a personality —of Denial and Ignorance, of an Everlasting Nay—refer to this fact of a descending consciousness, a Fall. The Vedantic mayd, spoken of sometimes as the Dark Mother, seems to be the personification of the lower Overmind, Jehovah and Satan of the Hebrews, Olympians and Titans of the Greeks, Ahriman and Ahura Mazda of old Iran, the sons of Diti and Aditi the Indian Puranas speak of, are powers and personalities of consciousness when it has descended entirely into the mind and the vital where the division is complete. These lower reaches have completely lost the unitary consciousness; still there are beings even here that have succeeded in maintaining it as a memory or an aspiration, although in a general way the living reality of the oneness is absent. It is significant that the term asura which came to mean in classical and mythological ages a + sura, not-god, the Titan, had originally a different connotation and etymology, asu + ra, one having force or strength, and was used as a general attribute of all the gods. The degradation in the sense of the word is a pointer to the spiritual Fall: Satan was once Lucifer, the bringer or bearer of light. We may mention in this connection that these beings of which we are speaking, dwelling in unseen worlds, are of two broad categories—(1) beings that are native to each plane and immutably confined and bound to that plane, and (2) those that extend their existence through many or all planes and assume on each plane the norm and form

appropriate to that plane. But this is a problem of individual destiny with which we are not concerned at present.

We were speaking of the descent into the Vital, the domain of dynamism, desire and hunger. The Vital is also the field of some strong creative Powers who follow, or are in secret contact with the line of unitary consciousness, who are open to influences from a deeper or higher or subtler consciousness. Along with the demons there is also a line of daimona, guardian angels, in the hierarchy of vital beings. Much of what is known as aesthetic or artistic creation derives its spirit from this sphere. Many of the gods of beauty and delight are denizens of this heaven. Gandharvas and Kinnaras are here, Dionysus and even Apollo perhaps (at least in their mythological aspect—in their occult reality they properly belong to the Overmind which is the own home of the gods), many of the angels, seraphs and cherubs dwell here. In fact, the mythological heaven for the most part can be located in this region.

All this is comprised within what we term the Higher or the Middle Vital. In the lower vital, we have said, consciousness has become still more circumscribed, dark, ignorantly obstinate, disparately disintegrated. It is the seed-bed of lust and cruelty, of all that is small and petty and low and mean, all that is dirt and filth. It is here that we place the pisacas, djinns, ghouls and ghosts, and vampires, beings who possess the "possessed".

Further down in the scale where life-force touches Matter, where Life is about to precipitate as Matter, appear beings of a still lower order, of smaller dimensions and magnitudes—imps, elves, pixies, goblins, gnomes, fairies or dryads and naiads. There are even creatures or entities so close to Matter that they come into being and pass away with the building up and breaking of a definite pattern of material organisation. This individualisation of consciousness as beings or persons seems to disappear altogether when we enter the strictly material plane. There is here only an agglomeration of uniform dead particles.

We have thus far followed the course of the break-up of Personality, from the original one supreme Person, through a continuous process of multiplication and disintegration, of parcellation and crystallisation into more and more small self-centred units, until we reach the final pulverisation as purely material physico-chemical atoms. Now with the reversal of consciousness, in its return movement, we have again a process of growth and building up of individuality and personality, with the awakening and ascension of consciousness from level to level

on the physical plane and in the material embodiment, there occurs too an evolution of the personal aspect of the reality.

We say that at the lowest level of involution, in Matter, where consciousness has zero magnitude, there is no personality or individuality. It is all a mechanical play of clashing particles that constantly fly apart or come together according to the force or the resultant of forces that act upon them. An individuality means a bounded form as its basis of reaction and a form that tends to persist and grow by assimilation; it means a centre of a definite manner and pattern of reaction. Individuality, in its literal sense, designates that which cannot be divided (*in-dividus*). Division is only another name for death for the particular entity. Even in the case of cell-division or self-division of some lower organisms, in the first instance the original living entity disappears and, secondly, the succeeding entities, created by division, always re-form themselves again into integral wholes. A material particle, on the other hand, is divisible *ad infinitum*. We have been able to divide even an atom (which means also that which cannot be divided) to such an extent as to reduce it to a mere charge of energy, nay, we have sublimated it to a geometrical point. Individualisation starts with the coming of life. It is a ganglion of life-force round which a particular system of action and reaction weaves itself. The characteristic of individuality is that each one is unique, each relates itself to others and to the environment in its own way, each expresses itself, puts forth its energy, receives impacts from outside in a manner that distinguishes it from others. It is true this character of individuality is not very pronounced in the earlier or rudimentary forms of life. Still it is there: it grows and develops slowly along the ladder of evolution. Only in the higher animals it attains a clear and definite norm and form.

In man something else or something more happens. For man is not merely an individual, he is also a personality. He is the outcome of a twofold growth and revelation. He has outgrown the vital and climbed into Mind, and he has dived into the Heart and touched his inner soul, his true psychic centre. It is this soul that is the source of his personality.

The formulation or revelation of the Psyche marks another line of what we have been describing as the Descent of Consciousness. The phenomenon of individualisation has at its back the phenomenon of the growth of the Psyche. It is originally a spark or nucleus of consciousness thrown into Matter that starts growing and organising itself behind the veil, in and through the movements and activities of

the apparent vehicle consisting of the triple nexus of Body (Matter) and Life and Mind. The extreme root of the psychic growth extends perhaps right into the body, consciousness of Matter, but its real physical basis and tenement is found only with the growth and formation of the physical heart. And yet the psychic individuality behind the animal organisation is very rudimentary. All that can be said is that it is there, in potentia, it exists, it is simple being: it has not started becoming. This is man's speciality: in him the psychic begins to be dynamic, to be organised and to organise, it is a psychic personality that he possesses. Now this flowering of the psychic personality is due to an especial Descent, the descent of a Person from another level of consciousness. That Person (or Super- person) is the jivatman, the Individual Self, the central being of each individual formation. The Jivas are centres of multiplicity thrown up in the bosom of the infinite Consciousness: it is the supreme Consciousness eddying in unit formations to serve as the basis for the play of manifestation. They are 'not within the frame of manifestation (as the typical formations in the Supermind are), they are above or beyond or beside it and stand there eternally and invariably in and as part and parcel of the one supreme Reality—Sachchidananda. But the Jivatman from its own status casts its projection, representation, delegated formulation—"emanation," in the phraseology of the neo-Platonists—into the manifestation of the triple complex of mind, life and body, that is to say, into the human vehicle, and thus stands behind as the psychic personality or the soul. This soul, we have seen, is a developing, organising focus of consciousness growing from below and comes to its own in the human being: or we can put it the other way, that is to say, when it comes to its own, then the human being appears. And it has come to its own precisely by a descent of its own self from above, in the same manner as with the other descents already described. Now, this "coming to its own" means that it begins henceforth to exercise its royal power, its natural and inherent divine right, viz, of consciously and directly controlling and organising its terrestrial kingdom which is the body and life and mind. The exercise of conscious directive will, supported and illumined by a self-consciousness, that occurs with the advent of the Mind is a function of the Purusha, the self-conscious being, in the Mind; but this selfconscious being has been able to come up, manifest itself and be active, because of pressure of the underlying psychic personality that has formed here.

Thus we have three characteristics of the human personality accruing from the psychic consciousness that supports and inspires it:—(1)

self-consciousness: an animal acts, feels and even knows, but man knows that he acts, knows that he feels, knows even that he knows. This phenomenon of consciousness turning round upon itself is the hallmark of the human being; (2) a conscious will holding together and harmonising, fashioning and integrating the whole external nature evolved till now; (3) a purposive drive, a deliberate and voluntary orientation towards a higher and ever higher status of individualisation and personalisation,—not only a horizontal movement seeking to embrace and organise the normal, the already attained level of consciousness, but also a vertical movement seeking to raise the level, attain altogether a new poise of higher organisation.

These characters, it is true, are not clear and pronounced, do not lie in front, at the beginning of the human personality. The normal human person has his psyche very much behind; but it is still there as antaryamin, as the secret Inner Controller. And whatever the vagaries of the outer instruments or their slavery to the mode of Ignorance, in and through all that, it is this Inner Guide that holds the reins and drives upward in the end.

Thus naturally there appear gradations of the human personality; as the consciousness in the human being rises higher and higher, the psychic centre organises a higher and higher—a richer, wider, deeper—personality. The first great conversion, the first turning of the human personality to a new mode of life and living, that is to say, living even externally according to the inner truth and reality, the first attempt at a conscious harmonisation of the psychic consciousness with its surface agents and vehicles, is what is known as spiritual initiation. This may happen and it does happen even when man lives in his normal mental consciousness. But there is the possibility of growth and evolution and transformation of personality in higher and higher spiritual degrees through the upper reaches of the higher Mind, the varying degrees of the Overmind and finally the Supermind. These are the spheres, the fields, even the continents of the personality, but the stuff, the substance of the personality, the inner nucleus of consciousness-force is formed, first, by the flaming aspiration, the upward drive within the, developing and increasing psychic being itself, and secondly, by the descent, to a greater and greater degree, of the original Being from which it emanated. The final coalescence of the fully and integrally developed psychic being with the supreme splendour of its very source, the Jivatman, occurs in the Supermind. When this happens the supramental personality becomes incarnate in the physical body: Matter in the material plane is transformed into a



march. Her path is endless, since she follows the trail of infinity. There are still higher modes of consciousness, or, if they cannot properly be called higher, other modes of consciousness that lie in waiting to be brought out and placed and established in' the front of terrestrial evolution. Only, supramentalisation means the definite crossing over from Ignorance, from every trace and shadow of Ignorance, into the abiding and perennial Knowledge and Freedom. Thence-forward the course of Nature's evolution may be more of the kind of expression than ascension; for, beyond the Supermind it is very difficult to speak of a higher or lower order of consciousness. Everything thereafter is in the full perfect light—the difference comes in the mode or manner or stress of expression. However, that is a problem with which we are not immediately concerned.

We have spoken of four lines of Descent in the evolution and organisation of consciousness. There yet remains a fifth line. It is more occult. It is really the secret of secrets, the Supreme Secret. It is the descent of the Divine himself. The Divine, the supreme Person himself descends, not indirectly through emanations, projections, partial or lesser formulations, but directly in his own plenary self. He descends not as a disembodied force acting as a general movement, possessing, at the most, other objects and persons as its medium or instrument, but in an embodied form and in the fullness of his consciousness. The Indian word for Divine Incarnation, *avatara*, literally means he who has descended. The Divine comes down himself as a terrestrial being, on this material plane of ours, in order to raise the terrestrial and material Nature to a new status in her evolutionary course—even so He incarnated as the Great Boar who, with his mighty tusk, lifted a solid mass of earth from out of the waters of the Deluge. It is his purpose to effect an ascension of consciousness, a transmutation of being, to establish a truly New Order, a New Dharma, as it is termed—*dharmasamsthapanarthaya*. On the human level, he appears as a human person—for two purposes. First of all, he shows, by example, how the ascension, the transmutation is to be effected, how a normal human being can rise from a lower status of consciousness to a higher one. The Divine is therefore known as the Lord of Yoga—for Yoga is the means and method by which one consciously uplifts oneself, unites oneself with the Higher Reality. The embodied Divine is the ideal and pattern: he shows the path, himself walks the path and man can follow, if he chooses. The Biblical conception of the Son of God—God made flesh—as the intermediary between the human and the Divine, declaring, "I am the Way and the Goal", expresses a very simi-

lar truth. The Divine takes a body for another—occult—reason also. It is this: Matter or terrestrial life cannot be changed—changed radically, that is to say, transformed—by the pure spiritual consciousness alone, lying above or within; also it is not sufficient to bring about only that much of change in terrestrial life which can be effected by the mere spiritual force acting in a general way. It looks as if the physical transformation which is what is meant by an ascension or emergence in the evolutionary gradient were possible only by a physical impact embodying and canalising the spiritual force: it is with his physical body that the Divine Incarnation seems to push and lift up physical Nature to a new and higher status.

The occult seers declare that we are today on the earth at such a crisis of evolution. Earth and Man and man's earthly life need to be radically transfigured. The trouble and turbulence, the chaos and confusion that are now overwhelming this earth, indicate the acute tension before the release, the detente of a NEW MANIFESTATION.

# *Evolution of the Spiritual Consciousness*

EVEN the Vedic Rishis used to refer to the ancients, more ancient than they themselves. "The ancients", they said, "worshipped Agni, we too the moderns in our turn worship the same godhead". Or again, "Thus spoke our forefathers"; or, "So have we heard from those who have gone before us" and so on.

Indeed, the tradition in the domain of spiritual discipline seems to have been always to realise once again what has already been realised by others, to rediscover what has already been discovered, to re-establish ancient truths. Others have gone before on the Path, we have only to follow. The teaching, the realisation is handed down uninterrupted through millenniums from Master to disciple. In other words, the idea is that the fundamental spiritual realisation remains the 'same always and everywhere: the name and the form only . vary according to the age and the surroundings. The one reality is called variously, says the Veda. Who can say when was the first dawn! The present dawn has followed the track of the infinite series that has gone by and is the first of the infinite series that is to come. So sings Rishi Kanwa. For the core of spiritual realisation is to possess the consciousness, attain the status of the Spirit. This Spirit may be called God by the theist or Nihil by the Negativist or Brahman (the One) by the Positivist (spiritual). But the essential experience of a cosmic and transcendental reality does not differ very much. So it is declared that there is only one goal and aim, and there are, at the most, certain broad principles, clear pathways which one has to follow if one is to move in the right direction, advance smoothly and attain infallibly: but these have been well marked out, surveyed and charted

and do not admit of serious alterations and deviations. The spiritual aspiration is a very definite and unitary movement and its fulfilment is also a definite and invariable status of the consciousness. The spiritual is a typical domain, one may say, there is no room here for sudden unforeseen variation or growth or evolution.

Is it so in fact? For, if one admits and accepts the evolutionary character of human nature and consciousness, the outlook becomes somewhat different. According to this view, human civilisation is seen as moving through progressive stages: man at the outset was centrally lodged in and occupied with his body consciousness, he was an *annamaya purusa*; then he raised himself and centred in the vital consciousness and so became fundamentally a *pranamaya purusa*; next he climbed into the mental consciousness and became a *manomaya purusa*; from that level again he has been attempting to go further beyond. On each plane the normal life is planned according to the central character, the law—*dharma*—of that plane. One can have the religious or spiritual experience on each of these planes, representing various degrees of growth and evolution according to the plane to which it is attached. It is therefore that the Tantra refers to three gradations of spiritual seekers and accordingly three types or lines of spiritual discipline: the animal (*pasu bhava*), the heroic (*vira bhava*) and the godly or divine (*deva bhava*). The classification is not merely typical but also hierarchical and evolutionary in character.

The Divine or the spiritual consciousness, instead of being a simple unitary entity, is a vast, complex, stratified reality. "There are many chambers in my Father's mansion", says the Bible: many chambers on many stories, one may add. Also there are different levels or approaches that serve different seekers each with his own starting-point, his *point de repaire*. When one speaks of union with the Divine or of entering into the spiritual consciousness, one does not refer to the same identical truth or reality as any other. There is a physical Divine, a vital Divine, a mental Divine; and beyond the mind, —from where one may consider that the region of true spirit begins—there are other innumerable modes, aspects, manifestations of the Divine.

As we say, there are not only aspects of the Divine, but there are also levels in him. The spiritual consciousness rises tier upon tier and each spur has its own view and outlook, rhythm and character. Now, as long as man was chiefly preoccupied with his physico-vital or mentalised physico-vital activities, as long as the burden of his body and life and even mind lay heavy on him and their gravitational pull

was normally very strong, almost irresistible, the spiritual impulse in him acted generally and fundamentally as a movement of escape from them into some thing beyond. It was a negative movement on the whole and it was enough to dissociate, reject, sublimate the lower status and somehow rise into something which is not that (*neti*): the question was not important at that stage of the human consciousness about a scientific scrutiny of the Beyond, its precise constitution and composition.

But once there is the possibility gained of a more normalised, familiar and wider reconnaissance of the Beyond, when the human being has been mentalised to a degree and in a manner that makes it inevitable for him to overpass to a higher status and live there habitually, then it becomes an urgent matter of concern to know and find out where one goes exactly, on which level and in what domain, once one is beyond. The question, it is true, engaged the attention of the ancients too; but it was more or less an interesting inquiry, a good part speculative and theoretical; it had not the reality and insistence of the need of the hour. We have today chalked out an almost exhaustive science of the inferior consciousness, of the lower hemisphere—of course, so far as it is possible for such a science to be exhaustive moving in the light of the partial and inferior consciousness. In the same way we need at the present hour a complete and precise science of the Divine Consciousness. As there is a logic of the finite, there is also a logic of the infinite, not merely its magic, and that too has to be discovered and laid out.

Thus, the highest and most comprehensive description of the Divine is perhaps the formula Sat-chit-ananda. But even so, it is a very general and, after all, an inadequate description. It has to be filled in and supplemented by other categories as well, if one may say so. For Sat-chit-ananda presents to us the Sat Brahman. There is also the Asat Brahman. And again we must accept a reality which is neither Sat nor Asat—*nasadasinno sadasit*, says the Veda. And as for the filling up of the details in an otherwise almost blank and featureless infinity, Sri Aurobindo's charting of that vast unknown—with the categories of the Supermind and its various levels, of the Overmind and its levels too, all forming the Divine Status and Consciousness—is a new, almost a revolutionary revelation, just the required science which the present world needs and demands and for which it has been prepared through all the cycles of evolution.

This means to say that with the knowledge that is given us today,

one can determine more or less definitely the altitudes to which the various spiritual realisations of the past rose and one can see also the degrees or graded stages of the evolution of the spiritual consciousness. A broad landmark can be noted here which concerns us at the present moment. The spiritual consciousness has been rising to higher and higher peaks and possessing them one after another. At the present moment we are at a crisis, at a crucial crossing. The spiritual consciousness attained till now and securely held in human possession (in man's inner nature) is confined to the highest level of the mind with some infiltration from the Over-mind and through that, as a springing board, a leap into an indefinite, almost a blank Beyond. Now the time is come and the conditions are ready for the spiritual consciousness in humanity to arrive at the status above the Overmind to the Supermind, and make that a living reality and build in and through that its normal consciousness.

A progressive revelation of higher and higher and more integral states of the spiritual consciousness in and through the realisations of mystics and sages and seers—divine men— —of all ages, such is the process of evolution that marks the life of man upon earth. This spiritual evolution, however, may not be obviously visible in the external life and character of man: it has been a phenomenon more in his inner being and consciousness, an occult phenomenon. Hence there has intervened a veil, wall of separation between the two. The veil has not been rent precisely because the very highest spiritual potential has not been reached and brought into play. The call of the present age is just to do away with this veil, make of human nature a unified, a streamlined entity, a complete incarnation of the spiritual consciousness in the fullness of its own nature at its source and origin.

## *Consciousness as Energy*

A LIVE wire—through which an electric current, say of several thousand volts, is passing—looks quite innocent, motionless, inactive, almost inert. The appearance, needless to say, is deceptive. Even so the still life of a Yogin. Action does not consist merely in mechanical motion visible to the eye: intra-atomic movements that are subtle, invisible, hard to detect even by the most sensitive instruments, possess a tremendous potency, even to unimaginable degrees. Likewise in man, the extent of muscular flexions does not give the measure or potential of his activity. One cannot say that the first-line infantryman who rushes and charges, shoots, bayonets, kills and is killed is more active and dynamic than the general who sits quiet behind in a cabin and merely sends out orders. Vivekananda wandered about the whole of India, crossed the seas, traversed continents, undertook whirlwind campaigns—talking, debating, lecturing: it was a life superbly rich in muscular movements. By his side, Ramakrishna would appear quite tame—inactive, “introvert”: fewer physical displacements or muscular exercises marked his life. And yet, ask anyone who is in touch with the inner life of these great souls, he will tell you, Vivekananda is only a spark from the mighty and concentrated Energy that Ramakrishna was.

What is this spiritual or Yogic Energy? Ordinary people, people with a modern mind, would concede at the most that there are two kinds of activity: (1) real activity—physical action, work, labour with muscle and nerve, and (2) passive activity—activity of mind and thought. According to the pragmatic standard especial, if not entire, importance is given to the first category; the other category, “sicklied over with the pale cast of thought”, is held at a discount. The

thoughtful people are philosophers at the most, they are ineffectual angels in this workaday world of ours. We need upon earth people of sterner stuff, dynamic people who are not thought bound, but know how to apply and execute their ideas, whatever they may be. Lenin was great, not because he had revolutionary ideas, but because he gave a muscular frame to them. Such people alone are the pragmatic, dynamic, useful category of humanity. The others are, according to the more radical leftist view, merely parasitic, and according to a more generous liberal view, chiefly decorative elements in human society. Mind-energy can draw dream pictures, beautiful perhaps, but inane; it is only muscular energy that gives a living and material body—a local habitation and a name—to what otherwise would be airy nothing.

Energy, however, is not merely either muscular (physical) or cerebral. There are energies subtler than thought and yet more dynamic than the muscle (or the electric pile). One such, for example, is vital energy, although orthodox biochemists do not believe in any kind of vitalism that is something more than mere physico-chemical reaction. Indeed, this is the energy that counts in life; for it is this that brings about what we call success in the world. A man with push and go, as it is termed, is nothing but a person with abundant vital energy. But even of this energy there are gradations. It can be deep, controlled, organised or it can be hectic, effusive, confused: the latter kind expresses and spends itself often in mere external, nervous and muscular movements. Those, however, who are known as great men of action are precisely they who are endowed with life energy of the first kind.

The Yogi—the Hatha Yogi, the Raja Yogi, the Tantrik—seeks consciously to master this life energy, to possess and use it as he wills. The Yogi, the true Yogi, aims at a higher quality, a deeper potentiality of the life energy: it may be called the Inner Life Energy. This inner life energy is in a line with, is one with the universal life energy; therefore it is said when one possesses and controls this power one has command over the universal power. All other energies—visible, tangible, concretised and canalised—are particular formations and embodiments of this mother energy. Even the most physical and material energies—mechanical, electrical, nervous, etc.—are all derivatives and lesser potentials of this fount and origin. The mastery of the inner vital energy is the whole secret of what is known as occultism, even magic, black or white, spell and other allied powers or miracles. The eight siddhis well known to the Yogis are the natural results of this

mastery. With such a mastery the Yogi controls and guides his own destiny; he can also in the same way control and guide the destiny of others, even of peoples and humanity at large. That is the deeper meaning the great phrase of the Gita— *lokasamgraha*—carries. Indeed, great souls are precisely they who move with the upward current of Nature, in and through whom Nature works out vast changes, prepares the steps of evolution in the world and humanity.

But what again is this universal vital energy? This also is an instrument, not the ultimate agent. After all, vital energy is blind by itself; it moves instinctively or intuitively, as Bergson would say; it does not know consciously beforehand the next step it is going to take. Consciousness then is the secret. This is "the power behind the throne", it is this to which the Upanishad refers in its analysis of the ultimate dynamics of things as the life of Life, *pranasya pranah*.

It is the aim of all Yoga, spiritual discipline, finally to arrive at this consciousness, this supreme reality which is behind all existence, which is the source and the substance of all. It is in this Consciousness that the whole creation is rolled up and it is from this that it is rolled out. Only there are some paths of spiritual discipline that prefer and follow the movement of in-rolling and others that seek the one of out-rolling: the former is the path of *nivrtti*, the latter that of *pravrtti*.

Thus consciousness is not merely a status of being, but also a force of becoming. All that is to take form and be active, whether in the grossest, the material mode or in the most subtle, the ideative mode is originally a seed, a stress, a point of concentration of this consciousness. The Yogi becomes potentially all-powerful, because he is one with the All-Power, the Mother Consciousness. The perfect spiritual man not merely dwells with or is close to the Divine (*salokya*), he is not merely made in the image of the Divine (*sarupya*), and again he is not merely unified and one with the Divine (*sayujya*) but what is most marvellous, he has the same nature, that is to say, he has the same powers and capacities as the Divine (*sadharmya*).

The dynamic becoming, becoming a power and personality of the omnipotent Divine, is a secret well known to the Yogis and mystics. Only it has not been worked out in all its implications, not given the full value and importance rightfully due to it. The reason is that although the principle was discovered and admitted, the proper key had not been found that could release and manipulate the Energy at its highest potential and largest amplitude. Because the major tendency in the spiritual man till now has been rather to follow the

path of nivrtti than the path of pravrtti, this latter path being more or less identified with the path of Ignorance. But there is a higher line of pravrtti which means the manifestation of the Divine, not merely the expression of the inferior Nature.

## II

The force of consciousness is not simply the force an idea or thought may have. The distinction between the two is not usually understood. In reality, however, thought or idea is a form of energy-action in the mind and mind is only one field or grade—not the most dynamic nor direct or immediate—among many for the play of consciousness, as I have already said. Mind energy, life energy, physical or material energy are various forms and stages in the expression of consciousness-energy (Chit-Tapas). The nature and function of consciousness-energy we may elucidate and understand in another way, by following a different line of its *modus vivendi*.

Consciousness has a fourfold potential. The first is the normal consciousness, which is predominantly mental; it is the sphere comprising movements of which man is usually and habitually aware. It is what the Upanishad names *jagrat* or *jagaritasthana* and characterises as *bahihprajna*: it is the waking state and has cognition only of external things. In other words, the consciousness here is wholly objectivised, externalised—”extrovert”: it is also a strongly individualised formation, the consciousness is hedged in, isolated and contoured by a protective ring, as it were, of a characteristically separative personality; it is a surface formation, a web made out of day- to-day sensations and thoughts, perceptions and memories, impressions and associations. It is a system of outward actions and reactions against or in the midst of one’s actual environment. The second potential is that of the Inner Consciousness: its characteristic is that the consciousness here is no longer trenchantly separative and individual, narrowly and rigidly egoistic. It feels and sees itself as part of or one with the world consciousness. It looks upon its individuality as only a wave of the universal movement. It is also sometimes called the subliminal consciousness; for it plays below or behind the normal surface range of consciousness. It is made up of the residuary powers of the normal consciousness, the abiding vibrations and stresses that settle down and remain in the background and are not immediately required or utilised for life purposes: also it contacts directly energies and movements that well out of the universal life. The phenomena of clairvoyance and clairaudience, the knowledge of the past

and the future and of other worlds and persons and beings, certain more dynamic movements such as distant influence and guidance and controlling without any external means, well known in all yogic disciplines, are various manifestations of the power of this Inner Consciousness. But there is not only an outward and an inner consciousness; there is also a deeper or nether consciousness. This is the great field that has been and is being explored by modern psychologists. It is called the subconscious, sometimes also the unconscious; but really it should be named the inconscient, for it is not altogether devoid of consciousness, but is conscious in its own way—the consciousness is involved or lost within itself or lies buried. It comprises those movements and impulses, inclinations and dispositions that have no rational basis, on the contrary, have an irrational basis; they are not acquired or developed by the individual in his normal course of life experience, they are ingrained, lie imbedded in man's nature and are native to his original biological and physical make-up. As the human embryo recapitulates in the womb the whole history of man's animal evolution, even so the normal man, even the most civilised and apparently the farthest from his ancient moorings and sources, enshrines in his cells, in a miraculously living manner, the memory of vast geological epochs, the great struggles and convulsions through which earth and its inhabitants have passed, the basic urges of the crude life force, its hopes, fears, desires, hungers that constitute the rudimental and aboriginal consciousness, the atavism that links the man of today not only to his primitive ancestry but even to the plant world—even perhaps to the mineral world—out of which his body cells have issued and evolved. Legends and fairy tales, mythologies and fables are a rationalised pattern and picture of the vibrations and urges that moved the original consciousness. It was a collective—a racial—and an aboriginal consciousness. The same lies chromosomic, one can almost say, in the constitution of the individual man of today. This region of the unconscious (or the inconscient) is a veritable field of force: it lies at the root of all surface dynamisms. The surface consciousness, jagrat, is a very small portion of the whole, it is only the tip of the pyramid or an iceberg, the major portion lies submerged beyond our normal view. In reflex movements, in sudden unthinking outbursts, in dreams and day-dreams, this undercurrent is silhouetted and made visible and recognisable. Even otherwise, they exercise a profound influence upon all our conscious movements. This underground consciousness is the repository of the most dark and unenlightened elements that grew and flourished in the slime of man's original habitat. They are small, ugly, violent, anti-social,

chaotic forces, their names are cruelty, lust, hunger, blind selfishness. Nowhere else than in this domain can the great Upanishadic truth find its fullest application—Hunger that is Death.

But this is the seamy side of Nature, there is also a sunny side. If there is a nadir, there must be a corresponding zenith. In the Vedic image, if man is born of the Dark Mother, he is also a child of the White Mother (krsna and sveti), Or again, if Earth is our mother, the Heaven is our father—*dyaur me pita mata prthivi iyam*. In other words, consciousness extends not in depth alone, but in height also—it is vertically extended, infinite both ways. As there is a subconsciousness or unconsciousness, so also there is at the other end superconsciousness.

Now this superconsciousness is the true origin of creation, although the apparent and objective, creation starts with and is based upon Unconsciousness. All norms and archetypes belong to the superconsciousness; for the sake of material creation they are thrown down or cast as seed into the Unconscious and in this process they undergo a change, a deformation and aberration. All the major themes of dream myths and prehistoric legends which the psychologists claim to have found imbedded in man's subconscious consciousness are in fact echoes and mirages of great spiritual—superconscient—realities reflected here below. The theme of the Hero of the Dual Mother (Dark and Fair), of Creation and Sacrifice, these are, according to Jung, dramatisations of some fundamental movements and urges in the dark subconscious nature. Jung, however, throws a luminous suggestion in characterising the nature of this vast complex. The general sense, Jung says, is that of a movement forward, of a difficult journey, of a pull backward and downward, of yawning abysses that call, of a light that beckons. It is an effort, a travail of what lies imbedded and suppressed to come out into the open, into the normal consciousness and thus release an unhealthy tension, restore a balance in the individual's system. Modern psychology lays great stress upon the integration of personality. Most of the ills that human nature suffers from, they say, are due to this division or schism in it, a suppressed subconsciousness and an expressed consciousness seeking to express a negation of that subconsciousness. Modern psychology teaches that one should dive into the nether regions and face squarely whatever elements are there, help these to follow their natural bent to come up and see the light of the day. Only thus there can be established 'a unitary movement, an even consistency and an equilibrium throughout the entire consciousness and being.

So far so good. But two things are to be taken note of. First of all, the resolution of the normal conflict in man's consciousness, the integration of his personality, is not wholly practicable within the scope of the present nature and the field of the actual forces at play. That can give only a shadow of the true resolution and integration. A conscious envisaging of the conflicting forces, a calm survey of the submerged or side-tracked libidos in their true nature, a voluntary acceptance of these dark elements as a part of normal human nature, does not automatically make for their sublimation and purification or transformation. The thing is possible only through another force and on another level, by the intervention and interfusion precisely of the superconsciousness. And here comes the second point to note. For it is this super-consciousness towards which all the strife and struggle of the under-consciousness are turned and directed. The yearning and urge in the subconsciousness to move forward, to escape outside into the light does not refer merely to the march towards normal awareness and consciousness: it has a deeper direction and a higher aim—it seeks that of which it is an aberration and a deformation, the very origin and source, the height from which it fell.

This superconsciousness has a special mode of its quintessential energy which is omnipotent in action, immediate in effectivity. It is pure as the purest incandescent solar light and embodies the concentrated force of consciousness. It is the original creative vibration of the absolute or supreme Being. Sri Aurobindo calls this supreme form of superconsciousness-energy, the Supermind. There are of course other layers and strata of superconsciousness leading up to the super-mind which are of various potentials and embody different degrees of spiritual power and consciousness.

We have spoken of the Inner Consciousness. But there is also, we must now point out, an Inmost Consciousness. As the Superconsciousness is a consciousness-energy in height, the Inmost Consciousness is a consciousness-energy in depth, the deepest depth, beyond or behind the Inner Consciousness. If we wish to put it geometrically, we can say, the vertical section of consciousness represents the line from the super-consciousness to the subconscious or vice versa; the horizontal section represents the normal waking state of consciousness; and there is a transverse section leading from the surface first to the Inner and finally to the Inmost. This inmost consciousness—the consciousness most profound and secreted in the cave of the heart, *guhahitam gahvarestham*,—is the consciousness of the soul, the Psychic Being, as Sri Aurobindo calls it: it is the immortal in the mortal. It

is, as has often been described, the nucleus round which is crystallised and organised the triple nature of man consisting of his mind and life and body, the centre of dynamic energy that secretly vivifies them, gradually purifies and transforms them into higher functions and embodiments of consciousness. As a matter of fact, it is this inmost consciousness that serves as the link, at least as the most powerful link, between the higher and lower forms of consciousness, between the Superconscient and the Subconscient or Inconscient. It takes up within itself all the elements of consciousness that the past in its evolutionary career from the very lowest and basic levels has acquired and elaborated, and by its inherent pressure and secret gestation delivers what was crude and base and unformed as the purest luminous noble substance of the perfectly organised super-conscient reality. Indeed, that is the mystic alchemy which the philosophers experimented in the Middle Ages. In this context, the Inner Consciousness, we may note, serves as a medium through which the action of the Inmost (as well as that of the Uppermost) takes place.

We can picture the whole phenomenon in another way and say in the devotional language of the Mystics that the Inmost Consciousness is the Divine Child, the Superconscient is the Divine Father and the Inferior Consciousness is the Great Mother (*Magna Mater*): the Inner and the Outer Consciousness are the field of play and the instrument of action as well of this Divine Trinity.

Man, we thus see, is an infinitely composite being. We have referred to the four or five major chords in him, but each one has again innumerable gradations of vibration. Man is a bundle or dynamo of energy and this energy is nothing but the force of consciousness. To different modes or potentials of this energy different names are given. And what makes the thing still more complex is that all these elements exist simultaneously and act simultaneously, although in various degrees and stresses. They act upon each other, and severally and collectively impress upon the nature and character of the individual being and mould and direct his physical status and pragmatic life. A man can, however, take consciously a definite position and status, identify himself with a particular form and force of consciousness and build his being and life in the truth and rhythm of that consciousness. Naturally the limits and the limitation of that consciousness mark also the limits and limitation of the disposition he can effect in his life. When it is said that the spiritual force is not effective on the physical plane in mundane affairs—Buddha, it is said, for example, has not been able to rid the earth of age, disease and death (although it was not

Buddha's intention to do so, his purpose was to show a way of escape, of bypassing the ills of life, and in that he wholly succeeded)—it only means that the right mode or potential of spiritual energy has not been found; for that matter even the mightiest mundane forces are not sovereignly effective in mundane affairs, otherwise the Nazi-Force would have been ruling the world today.

Still it must be remembered that all these apparently diverse layers and degrees of being or consciousness or energy form essentially one indivisible unity and identity. What is called the highest and what is called the lowest are not in reality absolutely disparate and incomensurable entities: everywhere it is the highest that lies secreted and reigns supreme. The lowest is the highest itself seen from the reverse side, as it were: the norms and typical truths that obtain in the superconsciousness are also the very guiding formulas and principles in the secret heart of the Inconscience too, only they appear externally as deformations and caricatures of their true reality. But even here we can tap and release the full force of a superconscious energy. A particle of dead matter, we know today, is a mass of stilled energy, electrical and radiant in nature; even so an apparently inconscient entity is a packet of Superconsciousness in its highest potential of energy. The secret of releasing this atomic energy of the Spirit is found in the Science of Yoga.

# *The Intuition of the Age*

ALL movements—whether of thought or of life, whether in the individual or in the mass—proceed from a fundamental intuition which lies in the background as the logical presupposition, the psychological motive and the spiritual force. A certain attitude of the soul, a certain angle of vision is what is posited first; all other things—all thoughts and feelings and activities are but necessary attempts to express, to demonstrate, to realise on the conscious and dynamic levels, in the outer world, the truth which has thus already been seized in some secret core of our being. The intuition may not, of course, be present to the conscious mind, it may not be ostensibly sought for, one may even deny the existence of such a preconceived notion and proceed to establish truth on a tabula rasa; none the less it is this hidden bias that judges, this secret consciousness that formulates, this unknown power that fashions.

Now, what is the intuition that lies behind the movements of the new age? What is the intimate realisation, the underlying viewpoint which is guiding and modelling all our efforts and achievements—our science and art, our poetry and philosophy, our religion and society? For, there is such a common and fundamental note which is being voiced forth by the human spirit through all the multitude of its present day activities.

A new impulse is there, no one can deny, and it has vast possibilities before it, that also one need not hesitate to accept. But in order that we may best fructuate what has been spontaneously sown, we must first recognise it, be luminously conscious of it and develop it along its proper line of growth. For, also certain it is that this new impulse or intuition, however true and strong in itself, is still groping and erring

and miscarrying; it is still wasting much of its energy in tentative things, in mere experiments, in even clear failures. The fact is that the intuition has not yet become an enlightened one, it is still moving, as we shall presently explain, in the dark vital regions of man. And vitalism is naturally and closely affianced to pragmatism, that is to say, the mere vital impulse seeks immediately to execute itself, it looks for external effects, for changes in the form, in the machinery only. Thus it is that we see in art and literature discussions centred upon the scheme of composition, as whether the new poetry should be lyrical or dramatic, popular or aristocratic, metrical or free of metre, and in practical life we talk of remodelling the state by new methods of representation and governance, of purging society by bills and legislation, of reforming humanity by a business pact.

All this may be good and necessary, but there is the danger of leaving altogether out of account the one thing needful. We must then pause and turn back, look behind the apparent impulsion that effectuates to the Will that drives, behind the ideas and ideals of the mind to the soul that informs and inspires; we must carry ourselves up the stream and concentrate upon the original source, the creative intuition that lies hidden somewhere. And then only all the new stirrings that we feel in our heart—our urges and ideals and visions will attain an effective clarity, an unshaken purpose and an inevitable achievement.

That is to say, the change has been in the "soul of man himself, the being has veered round and taken a new orientation. It is this which one must envisage, recognise and consciously possess, in order that one may best fulfil the call of the age. But what we are doing instead is to observe the mere external signs and symbols and symptoms, to fix upon the distant quiverings, the echoes on the outermost rim, which are not always faithful representations, but very often distorted images of the truth and life at the centre and source and matrix. We must know that if there has been going on a redistribution and new marshalling of forces, it is because the fiat has come from the Etat Major.

Now, in order to understand the new orientation of the spirit of the present age, we may profitably ask what was the inspiration of the past age, the characteristic note which has failed to satisfy us and which we are endeavouring to transform. We know that that age was the Scientific age or the age of Reason. Its great prophets were Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists or if you mount further up in time, we may begin

from Bacon and the humanists. Its motto was first, "The proper study of mankind is man" and secondly, Reason is the supreme organon of knowledge, the highest deity in man—la Deesse Raison. And it is precisely against these two basic principles that the new, age has entered its protest. In face of Humanism, Nietzsche has posited the Superman and in face of Reason; Bergson has posited Intuition.

The worship of man as something essentially and exclusively human necessitates as a corollary, the other doctrine, viz. the deification of Reason; and vice versa. Humanism and Scientism go together and the whole spirit and mentality of the age that is passing may be summed up in those two words. So Nietzsche says, "All our modern world is captured in the net of the Alexandrine culture and has, for its ideal, the theoretical man, armed with the most powerful instruments of knowledge, toiling in the service of science and whose prototype and original ancestor is Socrates." Indeed, it may be generally asserted that the nation whose prophet and sage claimed to have brought down *Philosophia* from heaven to dwell upon earth among men was precisely the nation, endowed with a clear and logical intellect, that was the very embodiment of rationality and reasonableness. As a matter of fact, it would not be far wrong to say that it is the Hellenic culture which has been moulding humanity for ages; at least, it is this which has been the predominating factor, the vital and dynamic element in man's nature. Greece when it died was reborn in Rome; Rome, in its return, found new life in France; and France means Europe. What Europe has been and still is for the world and humanity one knows only too much. And yet, the Hellenic genius has not been the sole motive power and constituent element; there has been another leaven which worked constantly within, if intermittently without. If Europe represented mind and man and this side of existence, Asia always reflected that which transcends the mind—the spirit, the Gods and the Beyonds.

However, we are concerned more with the immediate past, the mentality that laid its supreme stress upon the human rationality. What that epoch did not understand was that Reason could be overstepped, that there was something higher, something greater than Reason; Reason being the sovereign faculty, it was thought there could be nothing beyond, unless it were *deraison*. The human attribute par excellence is Reason. Exactly so. But the fact is that man is not bound by his humanity and that reason can be transformed and sublimated into other more powerful faculties.

Now, the question is, what is the insufficiency of Reason? How does it limit man? And what is the Superman into which man is asked or is being impelled to grow?

Reason is insufficient and unsatisfactory because, as Bergson explains, it does not and cannot embrace life as a whole, seize man and the world in an integral realisation/The greater part of the vast mystery of existence escapes its enverchure. Reason is that faculty which is for analysing, defining, classifying and fixing things. It is a power that has grown in man in order that he may best manipulate the things of the world. It is utilitarian, practical in its nature and outlook. And as practical dealing requires that things should be stable and separate entities, therefore Reason cannot but see things in solid and in the fragments of a solid. It cuts up existence into distinct parts and diverse elements; and these again it seeks to relate and aggregate, in accordance with what it calls "laws". Such a process has been necessary for man in conducting life and action successfully. Originally a bye-product of active life. Reason gradually separated itself and came finally to have an independent status and function, became or sought to become the instrument of knowledge, of Truth.

But although Reason has been and is useful for the practical, we may say almost, the manual aspect of life, life itself it leaves unexplained and uncomprehended. For life is mobility, a continuous flow that has nowhere any gap or stop and things have in reality no isolated or separate existence, they merge and mingle into one another and form an indissoluble whole. Therefore the forms and categories that Reason imposes upon existence are more or less arbitrary; they are shackles that seek to bind up and limit life, but are often rent asunder in the very effort. So the civilisation that has its origin in Reason and progresses with discoveries and inventions—devices for artfully manipulating nature—has been essentially and preeminently mechanical in its structure and outlook. It has become more and more efficient perhaps, but less and less soul-inspired, less and less endowed with the free-flowing sap of organic growth and vitality.

So instead of the rational principle, the new age wants the principle of Nature or Life. Even as regards knowledge Reason is not the only, nor the best instrument. For animals have properly no reason; the nature-principle of knowledge in the animal is Instinct—the faculty that acts so faultlessly, so marvellously where Reason can only pause and be perplexed. This is not to say that man is to or can go back to this primitive and animal function; but certainly he can replace

it by something akin which is as natural and yet purified and self-conscious—illuminated instinct, we may say or Intuition, as Bergson terms it. And Nietzsche's definition of the Superman has also a similar orientation and significance; for, according to him, the Superman is man who has outgrown his Reason, who is not bound by the standards and the conventions determined by Reason for a special purpose. The Superman is one who has gone beyond "good and evil," who has shaken off from his nature and character elements that are "human, all too human"—who is the embodiment of life-force in its absolute purity and strength and freedom.

This then is the mantra of the new age—Life with Intuition as its guide and not Reason and mechanical efficiency, not Man but Superman. The right mantra has been found, the principle itself is irreproachable. But the interpretation, the application, does not seem to have been always happy. For, Nietzsche's conception of the Superman is full of obvious lacunae. If we have so long been adoring the intellectual man, Nietzsche asks us, on the other hand, to deify the vital man. According to him the superman is he who has (1) the supreme sense of the ego, (2) the sovereign will to power and (3) who lives dangerously. All this means an Asura, that is to say, one who has, it may be, dominion over his animal and vital impulsions in order, of course, that he may best gratify them—but who has not purified them. Purification does not necessarily mean annihilation but it does mean sublimation and transformation. So if you have to transcend man, you have to transcend egoism also. For a conscious egoism is the very characteristic of man and by increasing your sense of egoism you do not supersede man but simply aggrandise your humanity, fashion it on a larger, a titanic scale. And then the will to power is not the only will that requires fulfilment, there is also the will to knowledge and the will to love. In man these three fundamental constitutive elements coexist, although they do it, more often than not, at the expense of each other and in a state of continual disharmony. The superman, if he is to be the man "who has surmounted himself", must embody a poise of being in which all the three find a fusion and harmony—a perfect synthesis. Again, to live dangerously may be heroic, but it is not divine. To live dangerously means to have eternal opponents, that is to say, to live ever on the same level with the forces you want to dominate. To have the sense that one has to fight and control means that one is not as yet the sovereign lord, for one has to strive and strain and attain. The supreme lord is he who is perfectly equanimous with himself and with the world. He has not to batter things into a shape

in order to create. He creates means, he manifests. He wills and he achieves—"God said 'let there be light' and there was light."

As a matter of fact, the superman is not, as Nietzsche thinks him to be, the highest embodiment of the biological force of Nature, not even as modified and refined by the aesthetic and aristocratic virtues of which the higher reaches of humanity seem capable. For that is after all humanity only accentuated in certain other fundamentally human modes of existence. It does not carry far enough the process of surmounting. In reality it is not a surmounting but a new channelling. Instead of the ethical and intellectual man, we get the vital and aesthetic man. It may be a change but not a transfiguration.

And the faculty of Intuition said to be the characteristic of the New Man does not mean all that it should, if we confine ourselves to Bergson's definition of it. Bergson says that Intuition is a sort of sympathy, a community of feeling or sensibility with the urge of the life-reality. The difference between the sympathy of Instinct and the sympathy of Intuition being that while the former is an unconscious or semiconscious power, the latter is illumined and self-conscious. Now this view emphasises only the feeling-tone of Intuition, the vital sensibility that attends the direct communion with the life movement. But Intuition is not only purified feeling and sensibility, it is also purified vision and knowledge. It unites us not only with the movement of life, but also opens out to our sight the Truths, the fundamental realities behind that movement. Bergson does not, of course, point to any existence behind the continuous flux of life-power—the *elan vital*. He seems to deny any static truth or truths to be seen and seized in any scheme of knowledge. To him the dynamic flow—the Heraclitian *panta reei* is the ultimate reality. It is precisely to this view of things that Bergson owes his conception of Intuition. Since existence is a continuum of Mind-Energy, the only way to know it is to be in harmony or unison with it, to move along its current. The conception of knowledge as a fixing and delimiting of things is necessarily an anomaly in this scheme. But the question is, is matter the only static and separative reality? Is the flux of vital Mind-Energy the ultimate truth?

Matter forms the lowest level of reality. Above it is the *elan vital*. Above the *elan vital* there is yet the domain of the Spirit. And the Spirit is a static substance and at the same a dynamic creative power. It is Being (*Sat*) that realises or expresses itself through certain typical nuclei or nodi of consciousness (*chit*) in a continuous becoming, in a flow of creative activity (*ananda*). The dynamism of the vital energy

is only a refraction or precipitation of the dynamism of the spirit; and so also static matter is only the substance of the spirit concretised and solidified. It is in an uplift both of matter and vital force to their prototypes—*swarupa* and *swabhava*—in the Spirit that lies the real transformation and transfiguration of the humanity of man.

This is the truth that is trying to dawn upon the new age. Not matter but that which forms the substance of matter, not intellect but a vaster consciousness that informs the intellect, not man as he is, an aberration in the cosmic order, but as he may and shall be the embodiment and fulfilment of that order— this is the secret Intuition which, as yet dimly envisaged, nevertheless secretly inspires all the human activities of today. Only, the truth is being interpreted, as we have said, in terms of vital life. The intellectual and physical man gave us one aspect of the reality, but neither is the vital and psychical man the complete reality. The one acquisition of this shifting of the viewpoint has been that we are now in touch with the natural and deeper movement of humanity and not as before merely with its artificial scaffolding. The Alexandrine civilisation of humanity, in Nietzsche's phrase, was a sort of divagation from nature, it was following a loop away from the direct path of natural evolution. And the new Renaissance of today has precisely corrected this aberration of humanity and brought it again in a line with the natural cosmic order.

Certainly this does not go far enough into the motive of the change. The cosmic order does not mean mentalised vitalism which is also in its turn a section of the integral reality. It means the order of the spirit, it means the transfiguration of the physical, the vital and the intellectual into the supernal Substance, Power and Light of that Spirit. The real transcendence of humanity is not the transcendence of one or other of its levels but the total transcendence to an altogether different status and the transmutation of humanity in the mould of that status— not a Nietzschean Titan nor a Bergsonian Dionysus but the tranquil vision and delight and dynamism of the Spirit—the incarnation of a godhead.

# *The Creative Soul*

THE difference between living organism and dead matter is that while the former is endowed, with creative activity the latter has only passive receptivity. Life adds, synthesises, new- creates—gives more than what it receives; matter only sums up, gathers, reflects, gives just what it receives. Life is living, glad and green through its creative genius. Creation in some form or other must be the core of everything that seeks vitality and growth, vigour and delight. Not only so, but a thing in order to be real must possess a creative function. We consider a shadow or an echo unreal precisely because they do not create but merely image or repeat, they do not bring out anything new but simply reflect what is given. The whole of existence is real because it is eternally creative.

So the problem that concerns man, the riddle that humanity has to solve is how to find out and follow the path of creativity. If we are not to be dead matter nor mere shadowy illusions we must be creative. A misconception that has vitiated our outlook in general and has been the most potent cause of a sterilising atavism in the moral evolution of humanity is that creativity is an aristocratic virtue, that it belongs only to the chosen few. A great poet or a mighty man of action creates indeed, but such a creator does not appear very frequently. A Shakespeare or a Napoleon is a rare phenomenon; they are, in reality, an exception to the general run of mankind. It is enough if we others can understand and follow them—*Mahajano yena gatah*— let the great souls initiate and create, the common souls have only to repeat and imitate.

But this is not as it should be, nor is it the truth of the matter. Every individual soul, however placed it may be, is by nature creative; every

individual being lives to discover and to create.

The inmost reality of man is not a passive receptacle, a mere responsive medium but it is a dynamo—a power-station generating and throwing out energy that produces and creates.

Now the centre of this energy, the matrix of creativity is the soul itself, one's own soul. If you want to create—live, grow and be real—find yourself, be yourself. The simple old wisdom still remains the eternal wisdom. It is because we fall off from our soul that we wander into side-paths, paths that do not belong to our real nature and hence that lead to imitation and repetition, decay and death. This is what happens to what we call common souls. The force of circumstances, the pressure of environment or simply the momentum of custom or habit compel them to choose the easiest and the readiest way that may lie before them. They do not consult the demand of the inner being but the requirement of the moment. Our bodily needs, our vital hungers and our mental prejudices obsess and obscure the impulses that thrill the hidden spirit. We hasten to gratify the immediate and forget the eternal, we clutch at the shadow and let go the substance. We are carried away in the flux and tumult of life. It is a mixed and collective whirl—a *Weltgeist* that moves and governs us. We are helpless straws drifting in the current. But manhood demands that we stop and pause, pull ourselves out of the Maelstrom and be what we are. We must shape things as we want and not allow things to shape us as they want.

Let each take cognisance of the godhead that is within him—for self is God—and in the strength of the soul-divinity create his universe. It does not matter what sort of universe he creates, so long as he creates it. The world created by a Buddha is not the same as that created by a Napoleon, nor should they be the same. It does not prove anything that I cannot become a Kalidasa; for that matter Kalidasa cannot become what I am. If you have not the genius of a Shankara it does not mean that you have no genius at all. Be and become yourself—*ma gridhah kasyachit dhanam*, says the Upanishad. The fountain-head of creative genius lies there, in the free choice and the particular delight—the self-determination of the spirit within you and not in the desire for your neighbour's riches. The world has become dull and uniform and mechanical, since everybody endeavours to become not himself, but always somebody else. Imitation is servitude and servitude brings in grief.

In one's own soul lies the very height and profundity of a god-head.

Each soul by bringing out the note that is his, makes for the most wondrous symphony. Once a man knows what he is . and holds fast to it, refusing to be drawn away by any necessity or temptation, he begins to uncover himself, to do what his inmost nature demands and takes joy in, that is to say, begins to create. Indeed there may be much difference in the forms that different souls take. But because each is itself, therefore each is grounded upon the fundamental equality of things. All our valuations are in reference to some standard or other set up with a particular end in view, but that is a question of the practical world which in no way takes away from the intrinsic value of the greatness of the soul. So long as the thing is there, the how of it does not matter. Infinite are the ways of manifestation and all of them the very highest and the most sublime, provided they are a manifestation of the soul itself, provided they rise and flow from the same level. Whether it is Agni or Indra, Varuna, Mitra or the Aswins, it is the same supreme and divine inflatus.

The cosmic soul is true. But that truth is borne out, effectuated only by the truth of the individual soul. When the individual soul becomes itself fully and integrally, by that very fact it becomes also the cosmic soul. The individuals are the channels through which flows the Universal and the Infinite in its multiple emphasis. Each is a particular figure, aspect— Bhava, a particular angle of vision of All. The vision is entire and the figure perfect if it is not refracted by the lower and denser parts of our being. And for that the individual must first come to itself and shine in its opal clarity and translucency.

Not to do what others do, but what your soul impels you to do. Not to be others but your own self. Not to be anything but the very cosmic and infinite divinity of your soul. Therein lies your highest freedom and perfect delight. And there you are supremely creative. Each soul has a consort—Prakriti, Nature —which it creates out of its own rib. And in this field of infinite creativity the soul lives, moves and has its being.

# *Human Progress*

CREATION has evolved. That is to say, there has been a growth and unfoldment and progress. From nebulae to humanity the march cannot but be called an advance, a progress, in more senses than one. But the question is about man. Has man advanced, progressed since his advent upon earth? If so, in what manner, to what extent? Man has been upon earth for the last two million years, they say. From what has happened before him in the course of Nature's evolution, it is legitimate to infer that man too, in his turn, has moved forward in the line towards growth and development. In fact, if we admit that man started life as a savage or jungle-man or ape-man, and look at him as he is today, we have perforce to acknowledge that he has not merely changed but progressed too. The question to be answered is in what sense this progress has been made.

Modern knowledge has taught us that what marks the growth of man is his use of tools. An animal has nothing else than its own limbs as its all-serving tool. Man emerged as man the day he knew how to use tools as an extension of his limbs. And the cycles of human growth have, in consequence, been marked off by the type of tools used. As we all know, anthropologists tell us, there have been four such cycles or ages: (1) the Old Stone Age, (2) the New Stone Age, (3) the Bronze Age and (4) the Iron Age.

In the first age, which is by far the longest period, a period of slow and difficult preparation, man had his first lessons in a conscious and victorious dealing with Nature. The day when he first started chipping a stone was a red-letter day for him; for, by that very gesture he began shredding his purely animal vesture. And when he not only chipped but succeeded in grinding and polishing a piece of stone, he moved

up one step further and acquired definitely his humanity. Again, ages afterwards when his hand could wield and manipulate as it liked not only a stone but a metal, his skill and dexterity showed a development unique in its kind, establishing and fixing man's manhood as a new emergent factor. In this phase also there was a first period of training and experiment, the period of craftsmanship in bronze; with the age of iron, man's arms and fingers attained a special deftness and a conscious control directed from a cranium centre which has become by now a model of rich growth and complex structure and marvellous organisation. The impetus towards more and more efficiency in the making and handling of tools has not ceased: the craftsmanship in iron soon led to the discovery of steel and steel industry. The temper and structure of steel are symbolic and symptomatic of the temper and structure of the brain that commands the weapon—strong, supple, resistant, resilient, capable of fineness and sharpness and trenchancy to an extraordinary degree.

This growing fineness and efficiency of the tool has served naturally to develop and enrich man's external possession and dominion. But this increasing power and dominion over Nature is not the most important consequence involved; it is only indicative of still greater values, something momentous, something subjective, pregnant with far-reaching possibilities. For the physical change is nothing compared with the psychological change, the change in the consciousness. In taking up his tool to chip a stone man has started hewing out and moulding entire Nature: he has become endowed with the sense of independence and agency. An animal is a part and parcel of Nature, has no life and movement apart from the life and movement of Nature—even like Wordsworth's child of Nature—

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,  
With rocks, and stones, and trees.<sup>6</sup>

An animal does not separate itself from Nature, exteriorise it and then seek to fashion it as he wants, try to make it yield things he requires. Man is precisely man because he has just this sense of self and of not-self and his whole life is the conquest of the not-self by the self: this is the whole story of his evolution. In the early stages his sense of agency and selfhood is at its minimum. The rough-hewn flint instruments are symbolic of the first attempts of the brain to

<sup>6</sup> "A slumber did my spirit seal", *Miscellaneous Poems*

set its impress, upon crude and brute nature. The history of man's artisanship, which is the history of his civilisation, is also the history of his growing self-consciousness. The consciousness in its attempt to react upon nature separated itself from Nature, and at first stood over against it and then sought to stand over and above it. In this process of extricating itself from the sheath in which it was involved and fused, it came back upon itself, became more and more aware of its freedom and individual identity and agency.

The question is now asked how far this self-consciousness—given to man by his progress from stone to steel—has advanced and what is its future. The crucial problem is whether man has progressed in historical times. Granted that man with an iron tool is a more advanced type of humanity than man with a chipped stone tool, it may still be enquired whether he has made any real advance since the day he learnt to manipulate metal. If by advance or -progress we mean efficiency and multiplication of tools, then surely there can be no doubt that Germany of today (perhaps now we have to say Germany of yesterday and America of today) is the most advanced type of humanity—indeed they do make the claim in that country.

So it is argued that man may have built up more and more efficient organisation in his outer life, he may have learnt to wield a greater variety and wealth of tools and instruments in an increasing degree of refinement and power; but this, does not mean that his character, his nature or even the broad mould of his intelligence has changed or progressed. The records and remains of Predynastic Egypt or of Proto-Aryan Indus valley go to show that those were creations of civilised men, as civilised as any modern people. The mind that produced the Rig Veda or the Book of the Dead or conceived the first pyramid is, in essential power of intelligence, no whit inferior to any modern scientific brain. Hence a distinction is sometimes made between culture and civilisation; what the moderns have achieved is progress with regard to civilisation, that is to say, the outer paraphernalia; but as regards culture a Plato, a Lao-tse, a Yajnavalkya are names to which we still bow down.

One can answer, however, that even if in the last eight or ten thousand years which, they say, is the extent of the present cycle, the civilised or cultural life of humanity has not changed much, this does not mean that it cannot, will not change. The paleolithic age, it appears, covered a period of thirty to forty thousand years; the neolithic age also must have lasted some fifteen thousand years. The metal age

is now not more than ten thousand years. So it does not seem to be too late; perhaps it is just time for another radical and crucial change to come as the chronological scheme would seem to demand.

We propose, however, to reopen the question and enquire if there has not been some kind of radical change or progress in the make-up of human nature and civilisation even within the span of historical times. This reminds us of the remarkable conclusion or discovery made by the much maligned and much adulated Psycho-analysts.

Jung speaks of two kinds or grades of thinking: (1) the directed thinking and (2) the wishful thinking; one conscious and objective, the other automatic and subjective. The first is the modern or scientific thinking, the second the old-world mythoposic thinking. These two lines of mental movement mark off two definite stages in the cultural history of man. Down to the Middle Ages man's mental life was moved and coloured by his libido—desire soul; it is with the Renaissance that he began to free his mind from the libido and transfer and transform the libido into non-egoistic and realistic thinking. In simpler psychological terms we can say that man's mentality was coloured and modulated by his biological make-up out of which it had emerged; the age of modernism and scientism began with the development of a rigorous rationalism which means a severance and transcendence of the biological antecedent.

In other words, it can be said that the older humanity was intuitive and instinctive, while modern humanity is rationalistic. Now it has been questioned whether this change or reorientation is a sign of progress, whether it has not been at the most a mixed blessing. Many idealists and reformers frankly view the metamorphosis with anxiety. Gerald Heard vehemently declares that the rationalism of the modern age is a narrowing down of the consciousness to a superficial movement, a foreshortening, and a top-heavy specialisation which means stagnation, decay and death. He would rather release the tension in the strangulation of consciousness, even if it means a slight coming down to the anterior level of instinct and intuition, but of more plasticity and less specialisation: it is, he says, only in conditions of suppleness and variability, of life organised yet sufficiently free that the forces of evolution can act fruitfully. It has also been pointed out that homo sapiens is not a direct descendant of homo neanderthalis who was already a far too specialised being, but of a stock anterior to it which was still uncertain, wavering, groping towards a definite emergence.

Now, these two positions—of Jung and of Heard—offer us a good basis upon which we can try to estimate the nature of man's progress in historical times. Both refer to a crucial change in human consciousness, a far-reaching change having no parallel since it invented the metal tool. The change means the appearance of pure intelligence in man, a change, as we may say, in modern terms, in the system of reference, from biological co-ordinates to those of pure reason. Only Jung thinks that the reorganisation of the human consciousness is to happen precisely round the focus of pure reason, while Gerald Heard is doubtful about the efficacy of this faculty— of "directive thinking", as Jung puts it—if it is to lead to overspecialisation, which means the swelling of one member and atrophy of the rest; a greater and supreme direction he seeks elsewhere in a transcendence of intelligence and reason which, besides, is bound to happen, in the course of evolution.

We characterise the change as a special degree or order of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, we have seen, is the sine qua non of humanity. It is the faculty or power by and with which man appears on earth and maintains himself as such, as a distinct species. Thanks to this faculty man has become the tool-making animal, the artisan—*homo faber*. But on emerging from the original mythopœic to the scientific status man has become doubly self-conscious. Self-consciousness means to be aware of oneself as standing separate from and against the environment and the world and acting upon it as a free agent, exercising one's deliberate will. Now the first degree of self-consciousness displayed itself in a creative activity by which consciousness remained no-longer a suffering organon, but became a growing and directing, a reacting and new-creating agent. Man gained the power to shape the order of Nature according to the order of his inner will and consciousness. This creative activity, the activity of the artisan, developed along two lines: first, artisanship with regard to one's own self, one's inner nature and character, and secondly, with regard to the external nature, the not-self. The former gave rise to mysticism and Yoga and was especially cultivated in India, while the second has led us to Science, man's physical mastery, which is the especial field of European culture.

Now the second degree of self-consciousness to which we referred is the scientific consciousness par excellence. It can be described also as the spirit and power of experimentation, or more precisely, of scientific experimentation: it involves generically the process with which we are familiar in the domain of industry and is termed "synthetic",

that is to say, it means the skill and capacity to create the conditions under which a given phenomenon can be repeated at will. Hence it means a perfect knowledge of the process of things—which again is a dual knowledge: (1) the knowledge of the steps gradually leading to the result and (2) the knowledge that has the power to resolve the result into its antecedent conditions. Thus the knowledge of the mechanism, the detailed working of things, is scientific knowledge, and therefore scientific knowledge can be truly said to be mechanistic knowledge, in the best sense of the term. Now the knowledge of the ends and the knowledge of the means (to use a phrase of Aldous Huxley) and the conscious control over either have given humanity a new degree of self-consciousness.

It can be mentioned here that there can be a knowledge of ends without a corresponding knowledge of means, even there can be a control over ends without a preliminary control over means—perhaps not to perfection, but to a sufficient degree of practical utility. Much of the knowledge—especially secular and scientific—in ancient times was of this order; what we mean to say is that the knowledge was more instinctive or intuitive than rational or intellectual. In that knowledge the result only, the end that it to say, was the chief aim and concern, the means for attaining the end was, one cannot perhaps say, ignored, but slurred or slipped over as it were: the process was thus involved or understood, not expressed or detailed out. Thus we know of some mathematical problems to which correct solutions were given of which the process is not extant or lost as some say. Our suggestion is that there was in fact very little of the process as we know it now—the solution was reached *per saltum*, that is to say, somehow, in the same manner as we find it happening even today in child prodigies.

One can point out however that even before the modern scientific age, there was an epoch of pure intellectual activity, as represented, for example, by scholasticism. The formal intellectualism which was the gift of the Greek sophists or the Mimansakas and grammarians in ancient India has to be recognised as a pure mental movement, freed from all life value or biological bias. What then is the difference? What is the new characteristic element brought in by the modern scientific intellectualism ?

The old intellectualism generally and on the whole, was truly formal and even to a great extent verbal. In other words, it sought to find norms and categories in the mind itself and impose them upon objects, objects of experience, external or internal. The first discovery

of the pure mind, the joy of indulging in its own free formations led to an abstraction that brought about a cleavage between mind and nature, and when a harmony was again attempted between the two, it meant an imposition of one (the Mind) upon another (Matter), a subsumption of the latter under the former. Such scholastic formalism, although it has the appearance of a movement of pure intellect, free from the influence of instinctive or emotive reactions, cannot but be, at bottom, a mythopoeic operation, in the Jungian phraseology; it is not truly objective in the scientific sense. The scientific procedure is to find Nature's own categories—the constants, as they are called.—and link up mind and intellect with that- reality. This is the Copernican revolution that Science brought about in the modern outlook. Philosophers like Kant or Berkeley may say another thing and even science itself just nowadays may appear hesitant in its bearings. But that is another story which it is not our purpose to consider here and which does not change the fundamental position. We say then that the objectivity of the scientific outlook, as distinguished from the abstract formalism of old-world intellectualism, has given a new degree of mental growth and is the basis of the "mechanistic" methodology of which we have been speaking.

Indeed, what we lay stress upon is the methodology of modern scientific knowledge—the apparatus of criticism and experimentation.

We have said that this "methodologism"—the knowledge of means and the consequent control over means—the hall-mark of modern scientific knowledge—is a new degree of self-consciousness which is the special characteristic of the human consciousness. Put philosophically, we can say that the discovery of the subject and its growing affirmation as an independent factor in a subject-object relation marks the evolutionary course of the human consciousness.

A still further unveiling seems to be in progress now. The subject has discovered itself as separate from the observed object and still embracing it: but a given subject-object relationship in its turn again is being viewed as itself an object to another subject consciousness, a super-subject. That way lie the ever widening horizons of consciousness opened up by Yoga and spiritual discipline.

In other words, the self-consciousness which marks off man as the highest of living beings as yet evolved by Nature is still not her highest possible instrumentation. As has been experienced and foreseen by Yogins in all ages and climes and as it is being borne in upon the modern mind more and more imperatively, this self-consciousness

has -to be consciously transcended, lifted, transmuted—worked out into the super-consciousness. Such is Nature's evolutionary nusus and such is the truth and fact man is being driven to face in his inner individual consciousness as well as outer collective life.

We can thus note, broadly speaking, three stages in the human cycle of Nature's evolution. The first was the period of emergence of self-consciousness and the trials and experiments it went through to establish and confirm itself. The ancient civilisations represented this character of the human spirit. The subject freeing itself more and more from its environmental tegument, still living and moving within it and dynamically reacting upon it—this was the character we speak of. Next came the period when the free and dynamic subject feeling itself no more tied down to its natural objective sphere sought lines of development and adventure on its own account. This was the age of speculation and of scholasticism in philosophy and intellectual inquiry and of alchemy in natural science—a period roughly equated with the Middle Ages. The Scientific Age coming last seeks to re-establish a junction and co-ordination between the free and dynamic self-consciousness and the mode and pattern of its objective field, involving a greater enrichment on one side—the subjective consciousness —and on the other, the objective environment, a corresponding change and effective reorganisation.

The present age which ushers a fourth stage—significantly called *tunya* or the transcendent, in Indian terminology—is pregnant with a fateful crisis. The stage of self-consciousness to which scientific development has arrived seems to land in a *cul-de-sac*, a blind alley: Science also is faced, almost helplessly, with the antinomies of reason that Kant discovered long ago in the domain of speculative philosophy. The way out, for a further growth and development and evolution, lies in a supersession of the self-consciousness, an elevation into a superconsciousness—as already envisaged by Yogis and Mystics everywhere—which will give a new potential and harmony to the human consciousness.

This super consciousness is based upon a double movement of sublimation and integration which are precisely the two things basically aimed at by present-day psychology to meet the demands of new facts of consciousness. The rationalisation, specialisation or fore-shortening of consciousness, mentioned above, is really an attempt at sublimation of the consciousness, its purification and ascension from baser—animal and vegetal —confines: only, ascension does not

mean alienation, it must mean a gathering up of the lower elements also into their higher modes. Integration thus involves a descent, but it has to be pointed out, not merely or exclusively that, as Jung and his school seem to say. Certainly one has to see and recognise the aboriginal, the infra-rational elements imbedded in our nature and consciousness, the roots and foundations that lie buried under the super-structure that Evolution has erected. But that recognition must be accompanied by an upward look and sense: indeed it is healthy and fruitful only on condition that it occurs in a consciousness open to an infiltration of light coming from summits not only of the mind but above the mind. If we go back, it must be with a light that is ahead of us: that is the sense of evolution.

# *Human Destiny*

ANTHROPOLOGISTS <sup>7</sup> speak of a very interesting, if not strange biological phenomenon. A baby monkey's face, it seems, is much nearer to the adult human face than to its own form when adult and grown-up. Also the characteristic accentuations that mark out the grown-up ape come in its case too soon, but the human being continues, generally and on the whole, the stamp of his early, i.e., immature animality through-out his life. The rough and gold blotches, the rude and crude structures that make up the adult simian face, meaning all the specialisation of its character are not inherited by man; man retains always something of the fragility and effeminity of the child. Reference is made to the fore cranium proportion, delicate jaws corresponding smaller teeth, shortened cranial base, expanding brain, bulging forehead, face retracted neatly beneath the brow which are characteristics of the simian baby. There is a lack of a certain forceful' hard masculinity that becomes so dominant in the ultimate phase.

This phenomenon is akin and may be linked to the other one also pointed out by anthropologists. A new species, it is said, grows not out of a mature, fully developed, that is to say, specialised type, but out of an earlier, somewhat immature, undeveloped, non-specialised type. The new shoot of the genealogical tree branches out not from the topmost, the latest stem, but from one just below it, an earlier stock. The latest means the most developed, that is to say, the most specialised, and that means fossilised—barren; nothing new can be produced out of that; it can repeat only what was before so long as it

<sup>7</sup> *The Immense Journey*, by Loren Eiseley.

does not die out and perish.

The aboriginal types that have survived today are, it has also been pointed out, a growth towards decline and deterioration, owing to a stereotyped functioning and a consequent coarsening and hardening of traits, both psychological and physical, a loss of plasticity, loss of the "early innocence."

The continuance and maintenance of an innocent baby animality in man shown in his physical features has been termed reversion to type or foetalisation. Some declare that for man at least it is a sign of weakness, a possible incapacity to face squarely the blows of life and nature. This is due to culture and refinement that makes one sensitive but weak. There have been races in the past that attained cultural effeminacy—the Egyptians for example—and could not last, last long enough to withstand the impact of less cultured, less refined, but more vigorous races. The Graeco-Roman succeeded the Egyptian, but they too in their turn were overwhelmed by the onslaught of ruder races, the Nordic barbarians, and gave way and perished. And once more, in the modern age, do we not see the repetition of a similar drama? The more cultured, the more refined, the older races seem to have paid heavily for their culture and refinement by being more and more delicate and weak and thus being slowly pushed to the wall by newer races built with heavier and coarser grain.

But that perhaps is not the real truth of the matter. It may be considered in a somewhat different perspective. We say cultures, races, species die not because they become too refined, delicate, effeminate, but rather because they develop on a single track; they become lop-sided, specialised, rigid, fossilised, as we have already said. Circumstances change, the environment brings up new conditions and if the previous form continues in its groove and does not know how to react adequately to the demand, is petrified and unchanging, then it breaks and is thrown away as a thing of the dead past.

A certain plasticity, a good deal of it, a little less finality it regard to structure and function, youthfulness, in one word, is the basic condition of life and life's progress. Hence even an immaturity, a certain slowness in pubescence, a longer adolescence signifies a more enduring plasticity, that is to say, the capacity for change and progress. A quick leap into old age and fixity, as is the rule with the lower animals, means arrest of all growth and sooner or later decay and dissolution. Even if such a life-form continues to exist, the existence is only death in life; a fossil exists for millions of years: it is not a

significant existence.

If man has maintained a longer and greater youthfulness than his animal forbears, it means he has greater possibilities and through longer vistas of time. But leaving aside the animal creation, if we consider man himself and his prospect, certain conclusions forcibly present themselves which we shall try to clarify.

On a comparatively shorter view of the human evolution we observe as, for example, Spengler has shown, a serial or serials of the rise and fall of races and nations and cultures. Is that a mere repetition, more or less of the same or very similar facts of life, or is there a running thread that points to a growth, at least a movement towards some goal or purpose to attain and fulfil? The present cycle of humanity, which we may call and is usually called the historic age, dates from the early Egyptians and, in India, from the ancestral Vedic sages (purve pitrah). On a longer outlook, what has been the nature of man's curve of life since then to the present day? Races and cultures have risen and have perished, but they have been pursuing one line, moving towards one direction—the growth of homo fabricus—the term coined by Nietzsche —Man the artisan. Man has become man through the discovery and use of tools—from tools of stone to tools of iron, that marks his growth from primitiveness to civilisation. And the degree of civilisation, the distance he has travelled from his origins is measured precisely by the development of his tools in respect of precision, variety, efficiency, serviceability. Viewed from that standpoint the modern man has travelled indeed very far and has civilised himself consummately. For the tools have become the whole man; man has lost his human element and almost become a machine. A machine cannot run indefinitely, it has got to stop when life is not there. So it is often prognosticated now that man is at the end of his career. He is soon going to be a thing of the past, an extinct race—like one of the prehistoric species that died out because they could not change with the circumstances of life, because they became unchanging, hard and brittle, so to say, and fell to pieces, or otherwise they continued to exist but in a degraded, a mere vegetative form.

But, as we have said, man seems to have yet retained his youthfulness. He always just falls short of the perfect perfection, that is to say, in any single form or expression of life—Life did become stereotyped, mechanised, and therefore fossilised, more or less, in Egypt of the later Dynasties; in India too life did not become less inert and vegetative during two-long periods, once just preceding the advent of the

Buddha, and a second time just preceding the Moslem advent—and a third time perhaps just preceding the British advent. And yet man has survived all falls and has been reborn and rejuvenated every time he seems to be off the stage.

The very lack of perfection and fixity in the human consciousness leaves a kind of plasticity in his nature and therefore an opening towards further life and progress. However perfect man's sten-gun is, it is not as sure and efficient as the bee's sting. Man outlives, because he progresses through apparent regressions. The cycles of human life upon earth are not mere repetitions of the same pattern as some have supposed, they indicate a growth and development. We have referred to the growth and development in the matter of tools, but that is only a sign and expression of another growth and development—development in mind and consciousness. In the earlier races of mankind there was a vital, a kind of instinctive and intuitive—Bergsonian—light of consciousness; that slowly has grown into a rich intellectual consciousness, and significantly and characteristically, into a more and more self-conscious consciousness. That points to man's characteristic progressive march through all the changes in his life-pattern..

The danger in the growth and progress of the consciousness is that it progresses along a definite line or lines, cuts out a groove and in the end lands into a blind alley or cul-de-sac. This, as I have said, is perhaps the original or secret cause of decline and fall of many individual races and nations. But on the whole mankind steps back, it seems, just at, the danger point and escapes the final catastrophe. A new vein of consciousness awakes in man and gives him a new power of self-adjustment. From Imperial Egypt to, say, modern France or Russia is a far cry; the two ends give very different connotations of the human consciousness, although there are many things common in certain life-instincts and some broad mental impulsions. And there is not only progress, that is to say, advancement on the same plane, but there is a kind of ascension on a somewhat different plane. Yajnavalkya represented a type of elite which is far away and far other than that of Vivekananda, for example, today.

We have described man, especially, modern man as homo fabricus; but that is a particular aspect of application of homo intellectualis. And it is a sign and warning that he must step back and look for a new connotation of his consciousness in order to go forward and continue to exist. If, as we have said in the beginning, man is capable of a

durable youthfulness, by his very nature, it means he has a resiliency that will enable him to leap into new conditions and adapt ' himself to them more easily and without much delay.

Mankind has to enter and is entering into new conditions of life, it has to adopt a new mode of living; and for that a new mode of consciousness is imperative and imminent.

Human history has shown that man is capable of facing catastrophic changes and himself undergoing such changes. At this critical turn of human history where we stand today, man has to choose his destiny—either the Capitol or the Tarpeian Rock, as in the classical phrase. Either he becomes a new man with a new consciousness or he goes down into inconstance and is no more man.

# *The March of Civilisation*

WE are familiar with the phrase "Augustan Age": it is in reference to a particular period in a nation's history when its creative power is at its highest both in respect of quantity and quality, especially in the domain of art and literature, for it is here that the soul of a people finds expression most easily and spontaneously. Indeed, if we look at the panorama that the course of human evolution unfolds, we see epochs of high light in various countries spread out as towering beacons or soaring peaks bathed in sunlight dominating the flat plains or darksome valleys of the usual normal periods. Take the Augustan Age itself which has given the name: it is a very crucial and one of the earlier outflowerings of the human genius on a considerable scale. We know of the appearance of individuals on the stage of life each with a special mission and role in various ages and various countries. They are great men of action, great men of thought, creative artists or spiritual and religious teachers. In India we call them Vibhutis (we can include the Avataras—Divine Incarnations—also in the category). Even so, there is a collective manifestation too, an upsurge in which a whole race or nation takes part and is carried and raised to a higher level of living and achievement. There is a tide in the affairs not only of men, but of peoples also: and masses, large collectivities live on the crest of their consciousness, feeling and thinking deeply and nobly, acting and creating powerfully, with breadth of vision and intensity of aspiration, spreading all around something that is new and not too common, a happy guest come from else-where.

Ancient Greece, the fountainhead of European civilisation —of the world culture reigning today, one can almost say— found itself epitomised in the Periclean Age. The light— grace, harmony, sweet

reasonableness—that was Greece, reached its highest and largest, its most characteristic growth in that period. Earlier, at the very beginning of her life cycle, there came indeed Homer and no later creation reached a higher or even as high a status of creative power: but it was a solitary peak, it was perhaps an announcement, not the realisation of the national glory. Pericles stood as the guardian, the representative, the emblem and nucleus of a nation-wide efflorescence. Not to speak of the great names associated with the age, even the common people—more than what was normally so characteristic of Greece—felt the tide that was moving high and shared in that elevated sweep of life, of thought and creative activity. Greece withdrew. The stage was made clear for Rome. Julius Caesar carried the Roman genius to its sublimest summit: but it remained for his great nephew to consolidate and give expression to that genius in its most characteristic manner and lent his name to a characteristic high-water mark of human civilisation.

Greece and Rome may be taken to represent two types of culture. And accordingly we can distinguish two types of elevation or crest-formation of human consciousness—one of light, the other of power. In certain movements one feels the intrusion, the expression of light, that is to say, the play of intelligence, understanding, knowledge, a fresh outlook and consideration of the world and things, a revaluation in other terms and categories of a new consciousness. The greatest, at least, the most representative movement of this kind is that of the Renaissance. It was really a New Illumination: a flood of light poured upon the mind and intellect and understanding of the period. There was a brightness, a brilliance, a happy agility and keenness in the movements of the brain. A largeness of vision, a curious sensibility, a wide and alert consciousness: these are some of the fundamental characteristics of this remarkable New Birth. It is the birth of what has been known as the scientific outlook, in the broadest sense: it is the threshold of the modern epoch of humanity. All the modern European languages leaped into maturity, as it were, each attaining its definitive form and full-blooded individuality. Art and literature flooded in their magnificent creativeness all nations and peoples of the whole continent. The Romantic Revival, starting somewhere about the beginning of the nineteenth century, is another outstanding example of a similar phenomenon, of the descent of light into human consciousness. The light that descended into human consciousness at the time of the Renaissance captured the higher mind and intelligence—the Ray touched as it were the frontal lobe of the brain; the later descent

touched the heart, the feelings and emotive sensibility, it evoked more vibrant, living and powerful perceptions, created varied and dynamic sense-complexes, new idealisms and aspirations. The manifestation of Power, the descent or inrush of force—mighty and terrible—has been well recognised and experienced in the great French Revolution. A violence came out from somewhere and seized man and society: man was thrown out of his gear, society broken to pieces. There came a change in the very character and even nature of man: and society had to be built upon other foundations. The past was gone. Divasa gatah. Something very similar has happened again more recently, in Russia. The French Revolution brought in the bourgeois culture, the Russian Revolution has rung in the Proletariate.

In modern India, the movement that led her up to Independence was at a crucial moment a mighty evocation of both Light and Power. It had not perhaps initially the magnitude, the manifest scope or scale of either the Renaissance or the Great Revolutions we mention. But it carried a deeper import, its echo far-reaching into the future of humanity. For it meant nothing less than the spiritual awakening of India and therefore the spiritual regeneration of the whole world: it is the harbinger of the new epoch in human civilisation.

These larger human movements are in a sense anonymous. They are not essentially the creation of a single man as are some of the well-known religious movements. They throw up great aspiring souls, strong men of action, indeed, but as part of themselves, in their various aspects, facets, centres of expression, lines of expansion. An Augustus, a Pericles, a Leo X, a Louis XIV, or a Vikramaditya are not more than nuclei, as I have already said, centres of reference round which their respective epoch crystallises as a peak culture unit. They are not creators or originators; they are rather organisers. A Buddha, a Christ or a Mohammed or even a Napoleon or Caesar or Alexander are truly creators: they bring with them something—some truth, some dynamic revelation—that was not there before. They realise and embody each a particular principle of being, a unique mode of consciousness—a new 'gift to earth and mankind. Movements truly anonymous, however, have no single nucleus or centre of reference: they are multinuclear. The names that adorn the Renaissance are many, it had no single head; the men through whom the great French Revolution unrolled itself were many in number, that is to say, the chiefs, who represented each a face or phase of the surging movement.

The cosmic spirit works itself out in the world and in human affairs

in either of these forms : (1) as embodied in a single personality and (2) as an impersonal movement, sometimes through many personalities, sometimes through a few outstanding personalities and sometimes even quite anonymously as a mass movement. Either mode has each its own special purpose, its function in the cosmic labour, its contribution to the growth and unfoldment of the human consciousness upon earth as a whole. Generally, we may say, when it is an intensive work, when it is a new truth that has to be disclosed and set in man's heart and consciousness, then the individual is called up and undertakes the work: when, however, the truth already somehow found or near at hand is to be spread wide and made familiar to men and established upon earth, then the larger anonymous movements are born and have sway.

Indeed, these movements, the appearance of great souls upon earth and the manifestation of larger collective surges in human society, are not isolated happenings, having no reference or point of contact with one another. On the contrary, they are two limbs of a global evolutionary process. In and through them across countries and centuries the spirit of humanity moves towards greater and greater fulfilment. Evolution means the growth of consciousness. In man in his collective existence the growth continues: it lies in two directions. First of all, in extension. A sufficiently large physical body is needed to house the growing life and consciousness: therefore the unicellular organism has developed into the multicellular. In the same way, in the earliest stages of human society, the light and power of consciousness, characteristic of that age, found expression among a few only: it was the age of representative individuals, leaders—Rishi, Magi, Patriarch, Judge, King. Next a stage came when the cultural consciousness widened and, instead of scattered individuals or some families, we have a large group, a whole class or section of society who become the guardian of the light: thus arose the Brahmin, the elite, the cultured class, the aristocracy of talents. The light and culture filters down further and embraces larger masses of people who take living interest and share in the creative activities of man, in the higher preoccupations of mind and thought; this is the age of enlightened bourgeoisie. In comparatively recent times what is familiarly known as the "middle class" was the repository and purveyor of human culture.

The light sinks further down and extends still more its scope seeking to penetrate and encircle the whole of humanity. The general mass of mankind, the lowest strata of society have to be taken in, elevated and illumined. That must be the natural and inevitable con-

summation of all progress and evolution. And that is the secret sense and justification of the Proletarian Revolution of today. Although, the many names and forms given to it by its violent partisans do not bring out or sufficiently honour the soul and spirit that informs it.

This then is the pattern of cultural development as it proceeds in extension and largeness. It moves in ever-widening concentric circles. Individuals, small centres few and far between, then larger groups and sections, finally vast masses are touched and moved (and will be moulded one day) by the infiltrating light. That is how in modern times all movements are practically world-wide, encompassing all nations and peoples: there seems to be nothing left that is merely local or parochial. It is a single wave, as it were, that heaves up the whole of humanity. Political, social, economic and even spiritual movements, although not exactly of the same type or pattern, all are interrelated, interlocked, inspired by a common breath and move from one end of the earth to the other. They seem to be but modulations of the same world-theme. A pulse-beat in Korea or Japan is felt across the Pacific in America and across that continent, traversing again the Atlantic it reaches England, sways the old continent in its turn and once more leaps forward through the Asiatic vastnesses back again to its place of origin. The wheel comes, indeed full circle: it is one movement girdling the earth. What one thinks or acts in one corner of the globe is thought and acted simultaneously by others at the farthest corner. Very evidently it is the age of radiography and electronics.

In the early stages of humanity its history consists of the isolated histories of various peoples and lands: intercommunication was difficult, therefore all communion was of the nature of infiltration and indirect influence. The difference between countries far distant from each other were well marked and very considerable in respect of their cultures and civilisations. To put it in a somewhat scholarly yet graphic manner, we can say, the isometric chart of the tides of civilisation in various countries over the globe in those days presents a very unequal and tortuous figure. On the other hand, a graph depicting the situation in modern times would be formed by lines that are more even, uniform and straight. In other words, the world has become one, homogeneous: a consciousness has grown same or similar on the whole in outlook and life-impulse embracing all peoples and races in a tight embrace. The benefit of the descending or manifesting Light is now open equally and freely to each and every member of the human kind.

Not only in extension but the growth or evolution has progressed in another direction. There has not only been a quantitative but also a qualitative development. Culture movements have grown in intent, in depth or elevation, in the meaning and significance of the consciousness involved. And they have converged towards a single aim and purpose. That purpose is not only the establishment of the global consciousness, but the expression and embodiment of the highest, the supreme consciousness. The process here too, as in the domain of extension, is one of graduation, advance by stages. The light, the light of awakening consciousness first touches the more easily accessible parts of human nature, the higher domains that are not too much involved in the gross material or animal nature. It is the realm of thoughts and ideas, of idealism, imagination and aspiration: it is man's mind, which is the least heavily weighted or ballasted by a downward gravitational pull and the most buoyant and supple—the Ariel in him. It is his head that first receives the glow of the morning sun.

If we look at Europe once again and cast a glance at its origins, we find at the source the Greece-Roman culture. It was pre-eminently a culture based upon the powers of mind and reason: it included a strong and balanced body (both body natural and body politic) under the aegis of *mens sana* (a sound mind). The light that was Greece was at its zenith / a power of the higher mind and intelligence, intuitively dynamic in one—the earlier—phase through Plato, Pythagoras, Heraclitus and the mystic philosophers, and discursively and scientifically rational through the Aristotelian tradition. The practical and robust Roman did not indulge in the loftier and subtler activities of the higher or intuitive mind; his was applied intelligence and its characteristic turn found expression in law and order and governance. Virgil was a representative poet of the race, finely sensitive and yet very self-conscious —earth-bound and mind-bound—as a creative artist: a clear and careful intelligence with an idealistic imagination that is yet sober and fancy-free is the very hall mark of his poetic genius. In the post-Roman age this bias for mental consciousness or the play of reason and intellectual understanding moved towards the superficial and more formal faculties of the brain ending in what is called scholasticism: it meant stagnation and decadence. It is out of this slough that the Renaissance raised the mind of Europe and bathed it with a new light. That movement gave to the mind a wider scope, an alert curiosity, a keener understanding; it is, as I have said, the beginning of that modern mentality which is known as the scientific outlook, that is

to say, study of facts and induction from given data, observation and experience and experiment instead of the other scholastic standpoint which goes by a priori the arising and abstraction and deduction and dogmatism.

We may follow a little more closely the march of the centuries in their undulating movement. The creative intelligence of the Renaissance too belonged to a region of the higher mind, a kind of inspirational mind. It had not the altitude or even the depth of the Greek mind nor its subtler resonances : but it regained and re-established and carried to a new degree the spirit of inquiry and curiosity, an appreciation of human motives and preoccupations, a rational understanding of man and the mechanism of the world. The original intuitive fiat, the imaginative brilliance, the spirit of adventure (in the mental as well as the physical world) that inspired the epoch gradually dwindled: it gave place to an age of consolidation, organisation, stabilisation—the classical age. The seventeenth century Europe marked another peak of Europe's civilisation. That is the Augustan Age to which we have referred. The following century marked a further decline of the Intuition and higher imagination and we come to the eighteenth century terre a terre rationalism. Great figures still adorned that age—stalwarts that either stuck to the prevailing norm and gave it a kind of stagnant nobility or already leaned towards the new light that was dawning once more. Pope and Johnson, Montesquieu and Voltaire are its high-lights. The nineteenth century brought in another crest wave with a special gift to mankind; apparently it was a reaction to the rigid classicism and dry rationalism of the preceding age, but it came burdened with a more positive mission. Its magic name was Romanticism. Man opened his heart, his higher feeling and nobler emotional surge, his subtler sensibility and a general sweep of his vital being to the truths and realities of his own nature and of the cosmic nature. Not the clear white and transparent almost glaring light of reason and logic, of the brain mind, but the rosy or rainbow tint of the emotive and aspiring personality that seeks in and through the cosmic panorama and dreams of

A light that was ne'er on sea or land...  
A glory that hath passed away from earth.

The Romantic Revival was a veritable source movement: it was, one can say, a kind of watershed from where various streams of new creation and fresh adventure flowed down in all directions. Its echoes

and repercussions are met with even today and continue. The next stage that followed naturally and inevitably was man's preoccupation with his sense being, his external, his physical and material personality. It is the age of Naturalism, Realism, Pragmatism, Scientism: it proclaims the birth of the economic man. From the heart and emotions we drop down into the field of the nervous and sensuous existence, from the vital sphere into the sphere of the body. And that is where we are today. It means that we have been made more than ever self-conscious on this plane and of this personality of ours. We have been given and are being given greater knowledge of its mechanism; we are intensively (and extensively too) getting familiar with all the drawbacks and lacunae that are there so that we can remedy them—and discover new latent forces too,—and re-create and possess a truly "brave new world".

That is how the spirit of progress and evolution has worked and advanced in the European world. And one can take it as the pattern of human growth generally; but in the scheme described above we have left out one particular phase and purposely. I refer to the great event of Christ and Christianity. For without that European civilisation loses more than half of its import and value. After the Roman Decline began the ebb-tide, the trough, the dark shadow of the deepening abyss of the Middle Ages. But even as the Night fell and darkness closed around, a new light glimmered, a star was born. A hope and a help shone "in a naughty world". It was a ray of consciousness that came from a secret cave, from a domain hidden behind and deep within in the human being. Christ brought a leaven into the normal manifest mode of consciousness, an other-worldly mode into the worldly life. He established a living and dynamic contact with the soul, the inner person in man, the person that is behind but still rules the external personality made of mind and life and body consciousness. The Christ revelation was also characteristic in the sense that it came as 'a large, almost a mass movement—this approach of the soul personality to earthly life. The movement faded or got adulterated, deformed like all human things; but something remained as a permanent possession of man's heritage.

This episode links up with the inner story of mankind, its spiritual history. The growing or evolving consciousness of-man was not only an outgoing and widening movement: it was also a heightening, an ascent into ranges that are not normally perceived, towards summits of our true reality. We have spoken of the Graeco-Roman culture as the source and foundation of European civilisation; but apart from

that there was a secret vein of life that truly vivified it, led it by an occult but constant influence along channels and achievements that are meant 'to serve the final goal and purpose. The Mysteries prevalent and practised in Greece itself and Crete and the occult rites of Egyptian priests, the tradition of a secret knowledge and discipline found in the Kabbalah, the legendary worship of gods and goddesses—sometimes confused, sometimes identified with Nature forces—all point to the existence of a line of culture which is known in India as Yoga. If all other culture means knowledge, Yoga is the knowledge of knowledge. As the Upanishad says, there are two categories of knowledge, the superior and the inferior. The development of the mind and life and body belongs to the domain of Inferior Knowledge: the development of the soul, the discovery of the Spirit means the Superior Knowledge.

This knowledge remained at the outset scattered, hidden, confined to a few, a company of adepts: it had almost no direct contact with the main current of life. Its religious aspect too was so altered and popularised as to represent and serve the secular life. The systematisation and propagation of that knowledge—at least the aspiration for that knowledge—was attempted on an effective scale in the Hebrew Old Testament. But then a good amount of externalities, of the Inferior Knowledge was mixed up with the inner urge and the soul perception. The Christ with his New Testament came precisely with the mission of cleaning the Augean stables, in place of the dross and coverings, the false and deformed godheads, to instal something of the purest ray of the inner consciousness, the unalloyed urge of the soul, the demand of our spiritual personality. The Church sought to build up society on that basis, attempting a fusion of the spiritual and the temporal power, so that instead of a profane secular world, a mundane or worldly world, there may be established God's own world, the City of God.

The drive towards the building of Heaven upon earth and with earth, the materialisation of the Spirit on a cosmic scale, the remodelling of the whole human society in spiritual terms was the secret inspiring the other Semitic Revelation, that of Mohammed. The Arab Master sought to bring down and establish and express in life-force what the Rabi of Bethlehem saw and felt in the inner heart—one was a lover, the other a servant warrior of God.

Turning to India we find a fuller and completer—if not a global—picture of the whole movement. India, we may say, is the spiritual world itself: and she epitomised the curve of human progress in a

clearer and more significant manner. ^ Indian history, not its political but its cultural and spiritual history, divides itself naturally into great movements with corresponding epochs each dwelling upon and dealing with one domain in the hierarchy of man's consciousness. The stages and epochs are well known: they are—(1) Vedic, (2) Upanishadic, (3) Darshanas—roughly from Buddha to Shankara, (4) Puranic, (5) Bhagavata or the Age of Bhakti, and finally (6) the Tantric. The last does not mean that it is the latest revelation, the nearest to us in time, but that it represents a kind of complementary movement, it was there all along, for long at least, and in which the others find their fruition and consummation. We shall explain presently. The force of consciousness that came and moved and moulded the first and the earliest epoch was Revelation. It was a power of direct vision and occult will and cosmic perception . Its physical seat is somewhere behind and or just beyond the crown of the head: the peak of man's manifest being that received the first touch of Surya Savitri (the supreme Creative Consciousness) to whom it bowed down uttering the invocation mantra of Gayatri. The Ray then entered the head at the crown and illumined it: the force of consciousness that ruled there is Intuition, the immediate perception of truth and reality, the cosmic consciousness gathered and concentrated at that peak. That is Upanishadic knowledge. If the source and foundation of the Vedic initiation was occult vision, the Upanishad meant a pure and direct Ideation. The next stage in the coming down or propagation of the Light was when it reached further down into the brain and the philosophical outlook grew with rational understanding and discursive argumentation as the channel for expression, the power to be cultivated and the limb to be developed. The Age of the Darshanas or Systems of Philosophy started with the Buddha and continued till it reached its peak- in Shankaracharya. The age sought to give a bright and strong mental, even an intellectual body to the spiritual light/the consciousness of the highest truth and reality. In the Puranic Age the vital being was touched by the light of the spirit and principally on the highest, the mental level of that domain. It meant the advent of the element of feeling and emotiveness and imagination into the play of the Light, the beginning of their reclamation. This was rendered more concrete and more vibrant and intense in the next stage of the movement. The whole emotional being was taken up into the travailing crucible of consciousness. We may name it also as the age of the Bhagavatas, god-lovers, Bhaktas. It reached its climax in Chaitanya whose physical passion for God denoted that the lower ranges of the vital being (its physical foundations) were now stirred in man to awake and to

receive the Light. Finally remains the physical, the most material to be worked upon and made conscious and illumined. That was the task of the Tantras. Viewed in that light one can easily understand why especial stress was laid in that system upon the esoteric discipline of the five m's (pancha makara), all preoccupied with the handling and harnessing of the grossest physical instincts and the most material instruments. The Tantric discipline bases itself upon Nature Power coiled up in Matter: the release of that all-conquering force through a purification and opening into the consciousness of the Divine Mother, the transcendent creatrix of the universe. The dynamic materialising aspect of consciousness was what inspired the Tantras: the others forming the Vedantic line, on the whole, were based on the primacy of the static being, the Purusha, aloof and withdrawing.

The Indian consciousness, we say, presented the movement as an intensive and inner, a spiritual process: it dealt with the substance itself, man's very nature and sought to know it from within and shape it consciously. In Europe where the frontal consciousness is more stressed and valued, the more characteristic feature of its history is the unfoldment and metamorphosis of the forms and expressions, the residuary powers, as it were, of man's evolving personality, individual and social.

To sum up then. Man progresses through cycles of crest movements. They mark an ever-widening circle of the descent of Light, the growth of consciousness. Thus there is at first a small circle of elite, a few chosen people at the top, then gradually the limited aristocracy is widened out into a larger and larger democracy. One may describe the phenomenon in the Indian terms of the Four Orders. In the beginning there is the Brahminic culture, culture confined only to the highest and the fewest possible select representatives. Then came the wave of Kshatriya culture which found a broader scope among a larger community. In India, after the age of the Veda and the Upanishad, came the age of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata which was pre-eminently an age of Kshatriya-hood. In Europe too it was the bards and minstrels, sages and soothsayers who originally created, preserved and propagated the cultural movement: next came the epoch of the Arthurian legends, the age of chivalry, of knights and templars with their heroic code of conduct and high living. In the epoch that followed, culture was still further broad-based and spread to the Vaishya order. It is the culture of the bourgeoisie: it was brought about, developed and maintained by that class in society preoccupied with the production or earning of wealth. The economic

bias of the literature of the period has often been pointed out. Lastly the fourth dimension of culture has made its appearance today when it seeks to be coterminous with the proletariat. With the arrival of the Sudra, culture has extended to the very base of the social pyramid in its widest commonalty.

This movement of extension, looked at from the standpoint of intensiveness, is also a movement of devolution, of reclamation. The Brahminic stage represents culture that is knowledge; it touches the mind, it is the brain that is the recipient and instrument of the Light. The Kshatriya comes into the field when the light, the vibration of awakening, from the mind comes down into the vital energies, from the brain to the heart region. The Vaishya spirit has taken up man still at a lower region, the lower vital: the economic man that has his gaze fixed upon his stomach and entrails. Lastly, the final stage is reached when physical work, bodily labour, material service have attained supreme importance and are considered almost as the only values worth the name for a human being. To walk and work firmly upon Earth the Light needs a strong pair of feet. Therefore, the Veda says, Padbhyam sudro ajayata, out of the feet of the Cosmic Godhead the Sudra was born.

That is how man has become and is becoming integrally conscious—conscious in and of all parts of his being. He is awakening and opening to the light that descends from above: indeed the true light, the light of truth is something transcendent and it is that that comes down and slowly inhabits the world and possesses humanity. Its progress marks the steps of evolution. It means the gradual enlightening and illumining of the various layers of our being, the different strands of consciousness from the higher to the lower, from the less dense to the more dense, from mind to the body. It means also in the same process a canalisation, materialisation and fixing upon earth and in the physical being of the increasing powers of the Light.

The Light as it descends from its own home above to the lower levels of our being expresses itself no doubt in one way, but also gets diminished, modified, even deformed in another respect. The work of purification certainly goes on and until that is complete and there comes the fullest expression, it will continue. The action of light on the physical plane, for example, on the body of the Cosmic Being is so blurred and confusing apparently that it looks almost like the action of Darkness. And yet the Dark Night of the soul is not simply

the obscurity of Ignorance. It is only the mud that lay' diffused or settled in the being which has come up in its gathered mass in the process of churning and cleaning and appears like an obscure screen.

# *The New Humanity*

THE world is in the throes of a new creation and the pangs of that new birth have made mother Earth restless. It is no longer a far-off ideal that our imagination struggles to visualise, nor a prophecy that yet remains to be fulfilled. It is Here and Now.

Although we may not know it, the New Man—the divine race of humanity is already among us. It may be in our next neighbour, in our nearest brother, even in myself. Only a thin veil covers it. It marches just behind the line. It waits for an occasion to throw off the veil and place itself in the forefront. We are living in strenuous times in which age-long institutions are going down and new forces rearing their heads, old habits are being cast off and new impulses acquired. In every sphere of life, we see the urgent demand for a recasting, a fresh valuation of things. From the base to the summit, from the economic and political life to the artistic and spiritual, humanity is being shaken to bring out a new expression and articulation. There is the hidden surge of a Power, the secret stress of a Spirit that can no longer suffer to remain in the shade and behind the mask, but wills to come out in the broad daylight and be recognised in its plenary virtues.

That Power, that Spirit has been growing and gathering its strength during all the millenniums that humanity has lived through. On the momentous day when man appeared on earth, the Higher Man also took his birth. Since the hour the Spirit refused to be imprisoned in its animal sheath and came out as man, it approached by that very uplift a greater freedom and a vaster movement. It was the crest of that underground wave which peered over the surface from age to age, from clime to clime through the experiences of poets and prophets and sages—the Head of the Sacrificial Horse galloping towards the

## Dawn

And now the days of captivity or rather of inner preparation are at an end. The voice in the wilderness was necessary, for it was a call and a communion in the silence of the soul. Today the silence seeks utterance. Today the shell is ripe enough to break and to bring out the mature and full-grown being. The king that was in hiding comes in glory and triumph, in his complete regalia.

Another humanity is rising out of the present human species. The beings of the new order are everywhere and it is they who will soon hold sway over earth, be the head and front of the terrestrial evolution in the cycle that is approaching as it was with man in the cycle that is passing away. What will this new order of being be like? It will be what man is not, also what man is. It will not be man, because it will overstep the limitations and incapacities inherent in man; and it will be man by the realisation of those fundamental aspirations and yearnings that have troubled and consoled the deeper strata—the soul—in him throughout the varied experiences of his terrestrial life.

The New Man will be Master—and not slave. He will be master, first, of himself and then of the world. Man as he actually is, is but a slave. He has no personal voice or choice; the determining soul, the Ishwara, in him is sleep-bound and hushed. He is a mere plaything in the hands of nature and circumstances. Therefore it is that Science has become his supreme Dharmashastra; for science seeks to teach us the moods of Nature and the methods of propitiating her. Our actual ideal of man is that of the cleverest slave. But the New Man will have found himself and by and according to his inner will, mould and create his world. He will not be in awe of Nature and in an attitude of perpetual apprehension and hesitation, but will ground himself on a secret harmony and union that will declare him as the lord. We will recognise the New Man by his very gait and manner, by a certain king-like ease and dominion in every shade of his expression.

Not that this sovereign power will have anything to do with aggression or over-bearingness. It will not be a power that feels itself only by creating an eternal opponent—Erbfeind—by coming in constant clash with a rival, that seeks to gain victory by subjugating. It will not be Nietzschean "will to power," which is, at best, a supreme Asuric power. It will rather be a Divine Power, for the strength it will exert and the victory it will achieve will not come from the ego—it is the ego which requires an object outside and against to feel and affirm itself—but it will come from a higher personal self which is one with

the cosmic soul and therefore with other personal souls. The Asura, in spite of, or rather, because of his aggressive vehemence betrays a lack of the sovereign power that is calm and at ease and self-sufficient. The Devic power does not assert but simply accomplishes; the forces of the world act not as its opponent but as its instrument. Thus the New Man shall affirm his individual sovereignty and do so to perfection by expressing through it his unity with the cosmic powers, with the infinite godhead. And by being Swarat, Self-Master, he will become Samrat, world-master.

This mastery will be effected not merely in will, but in mind and heart also. For the New Man will know not by the intellect which is egocentric and therefore limited, not by ratiocination which is an indirect and doubtful process, but by direct vision, an inner communion, a soul revelation. The new knowledge will be vast and profound and creative, based as it will be upon the reality of things and not upon their shadows. Truth will shine through every experience and every utterance—"a truth shall have its seat on our speech and mind and hearing", so have the Vedas said. The mind and intellect will not be active and constructive agents but the luminous channel of a self-luminous knowledge. And the heart too which is now the field of passion and egoism will be cleared of its noise and obscurity; a serener sky will shed its pure warmth and translucent glow. The knot will be rent asunder—*bhidyate hridaya granthih*—and the vast and mighty streams of another ocean will flow through. We will love not merely those to whom we are akin but God's creatures, one and all; we will love not with the yearning and hunger of a mortal but with the wide and intense *Rasa* that lies in the divine identity of souls.

And the new society will be based not upon competition, nor even upon co-operation. It will not be an open conflict, neither will it be a convenient compromise of rival individual interests. It will be the organic expression of the collective soul of humanity, working and achieving through each and every individual soul its most wide-winged freedom, manifesting the godhead that is proper to each and every one. It will be an organisation, most delicate and subtle and supple, the members of which will have no need to live upon one another but in and through one another. It will be, if you like, a henotheistic hierarchy in which everyone will be the greatest, since everyone is all and all everyone simultaneously.

The New Humanity will be something in the mould that we give to the gods. It will supply the link that we see missing between gods

and men; it will be the race of embodied gods. Man will attain that thing which has been his first desire and earliest dream, for which he coveted the gods—Immortality, amritatwam. The mortalities that cut and divide, limit and bind man make him the sorrowful being he is. These are due to his ignorance and weakness and egoism. These are due to his soul itself. It is the soul that requires change, a new birth, as Christ demanded. Ours is a little soul that has severed itself from the larger and mightier self that it is. And therefore does it die every moment and even while living is afraid to live and so lives poorly and miserably. But the age is now upon us when the god-like soul anointed with its immortal royalties is ready to emerge and claim our salutation.

The breath and the surge of the new creation cannot be mistaken. The question that confronts us today is no longer Whether the New Man, the Super-humanity, will come or if at all, when; but the question we have to answer is who among us are ready to be its receptacle, its instrument and embodiment.

*Part II*

INDIA and HER SWADHARMA

# *The Spiritual Genius of India*

WHAT is it that we precisely mean when we say that India is spiritual? For, that is how we are accustomed to express India's special genius—her backbone, as Vivekananda puts it—the fundamental note of her culture and nature, which distinguishes her from the rest of the world. What then are the distinguishing marks of spirituality? How does a spiritual collectivity live and move—*kim asita vrqjeta kim*? And do we find its characteristic gait and feature exclusively or even chiefly in India?

Was not Europe also in her theocratic and mediaeval ages as largely spiritual and as fundamentally religious as India? Churches and cathedrals and monasteries grew like mushrooms in every nook and corner, in all the countries of Europe; it was the clergy who, with their almost unbounded influence and power, moulded and guided the life and aspiration of the people; devotion to God and love of prayer and pilgrimage were as much in the nature of the average European of those times as they are in any Indian of today; every family considered it a duty and an honour to rear up one child at least to be consecrated to the service of God and the Church. The internal as well as the external life of the men of mediaeval Europe was steeped through and through in a religious atmosphere.

The whole world, in fact, was more or less religious in the early stages of its evolution; for it is characteristic of the primitive nature of man to be god-fearing and addicted to religious rite and ceremony. And Europe too, when she entered on a new cycle of life and began to reconstruct herself after the ruin of the Graeco-Latin culture, started with the religion of the Christ and experimented with it during a long period of time. But that is what was—Troja fuit. Europe has

outgrown her nonage and for a century and a half, since the mighty upheaval of the French Revolution, she has been rapidly shaking off the last vestiges of her mediaevalism. Today she stands clean shorn of all superstition, which she only euphemistically calls religion or spirituality. Not Theology but Science, not Revelation but Reason, not Magic but Logic, not Fiction but Fact, governs her thoughts and guides her activities. Only India, in part under the stress of her own conservative nature, in part under compelling circumstances, still clings to her things of the past, darkneses that have been discarded by the modern illumination. Indian spirituality is nothing but consolidated mediaevalism; it has its companion shibboleth in the cry, "Back to the village" or "Back to the bullock-cart"! One of the main reasons, if not the one reason why India has today no place in the comity of nations, why she is not in the vanguard of civilisation, is precisely this obstinate atavism, this persistent survival of a spirit subversive of all that is modern and progressive.

It is not my purpose here to take up the cause of spirituality and defend it against materialism. Taking it for granted that real spirituality embodies a truth and power by far higher and mightier than anything materialism can offer, and that man's supreme ideal lies there, let us throw a comparing glance on the two types of spirituality,—the one that India knows and the other that Europe knew in the Middle Ages.

To say that Europe was once as religious and spiritual as India herself is not precisely incorrect, but it is to view the matter from too general a stand-point, almost, we may say, *grosso modo*. In order to arrive at an accurate and precise estimation, and to find out the most significant truths, we have to look a little more closely, observe differences in shade and stress, make certain distinctions. For the things that the ordinary mind indiscriminately designates as religion, spirituality and the like, do not always fall in the same category. These names are often applied to distinct realities, each with its particular dharma, norm and form, wide apart from each other, although to the common eye they may appear to be of the same mould and substance.

Thus Religion and Spirituality, two fundamental categories that form one realm when held up in opposition to Materialism, are, when considered by themselves, really very different things and may be even contradictory to and destructive of each other. What then is Religion? and what, on the other hand, is Spirituality? Religion starts from and usually ends with a mental and emotional approach to realities beyond the mind;

Spirituality goes straight forward to direct vision and communion with the Beyond. Religion labours to experience and express the world of Spirit in and through a turn, often a twist, given by the mental being—*manu*—in man; it bases itself upon the demands of the mental, the vital and the physical complex—the triple nexus that forms the ordinary human personality and seeks to satisfy them under a holier garb. Spirituality knows the demands of the Spirit alone; it lives in a realm where the body, the life and the mind stand uplifted and transmuted into their utter realities. Religion is the human way of approaching and enjoying the Divine; Spirituality is the divine way of meeting the Divine. Religion, as it is usually practised, is a special art, one—the highest it may be, still only one— among many other pursuits that man looks to for his enjoyment and fulfilment; but spirituality is nothing if it does not swallow up the entire man, take in his each and every preoccupation and new-create it into an inevitable expression of its own master truth. Religion gives us a moral discipline for the internal consciousness, and for the external life, a code of conduct based upon a system of rules and rites and ceremonies; spirituality aims at a revolution in the consciousness and in the being.

Keeping this difference in view, we may at once point out that Europe, when she is non-materialist, is primarily religious and only secondarily spiritual, but India is always primarily spiritual and only secondarily religious. The vein of real spirituality in European culture runs underground and follows narrow and circuitous by-paths; rarely does it appear on the top in sudden and momentary flashes and even then only to dive back again into its subterranean hiding-place; upon the collective life and culture it acts more as an indirect influence, an auxiliary leaven than as a direct and dynamic Force. In India there is an abundance, a superfluity even, of religious paraphernalia, but it is the note of spirituality that rings clear and high above all lesser tones and wields a power vivid and manifest. We could say in terms of modern Biology that spirituality tends to be a recessive character in European culture, while in India, it is dominant.

But when we say that India is spiritual, we do not mean that all or most Indians, or even a very large minority among them, are adepts in spirituality, or that the attachment to life, the passion for earthly possessions, the sway of the six *ripus* are in any way less prevalent in the Indian character. On the contrary, it may well seem to the casual onlooker whose eyes are occupied with the surface actualities of the situation, that the Indian nature, as it is today, shut out from this

world's larger spaces, cut off from its deeper channels and movements of greater magnitude, has been given over more and more to petty worldlinesses that hardly fill the same space even in the life of peoples who are notorious for their worldly and unspiritual temperament.

It is not so much a question of concrete realisation, of attainment and achievement arrived at by the Indian people in their work-a-day life, but primarily and above all a question of ultimate valuation, of what they hold as the supreme ideal, of what they cherish in their heart of hearts, and of the extent to which that standard has obtained general currency among them. It is not a fact with which we are concerned, but the force behind the fact, and the special nature, and purpose of that force. It is the power that we discover in the general atmosphere, or that emerges in the stress and rhythm of the cultural life of the people, in the level of its inner consciousness, in the expression of its highest and most wide-spread aspirations, in the particular stamp of its soul.

The psychological atmosphere in India is of a luminous tenuity. Here, it appears, the veil between this world and the other has so thinned away that the two meet and interpenetrate easily and freely; immersed in one, you can at the same time bathe in the other. Owing to the cumulative effect of the sddhana of her saints and sages who appeared in countless number down countless ages, or, perhaps, owing to the grace of a descent into her consciousness, or some immanence there, of the breath and light of a Superior World, India has developed and possesses, already prepared, a magnetic field, a luminous zone of spiritual consciousness; and to enter into it the Indian has only to turn aside, to go round a corner, to take one step forward. However thick and hard the crust of the Ignorance may lie upon the Indian soul, once that soul awakes and is upon the path, it finds itself on a familiar ground; it is in a - domain which it has the impression of having frequented often and anon and for long.

But. in Europe the division between this world and the other, in the inner consciousness of the people, is more rigorous, a thick wall divides the two and to pass from the one to the other demands a violent break, a total revolution; and even when the Rubicon is crossed, one feels oneself in unfamiliar surroundings, moving in a shadowy world, and with the uncertain and faltering steps of a child.

The average European has a strong basis of the earth-nature in him; he is heavily enclosed in his physical sheath and firmly placed upon the material world. Therefore he keeps a very stable terres-

trial equilibrium and is not easily ousted from his earthly footing; his is not a nature easily upset from its poise, or disturbed by the currents and forces that play about him. But the Indian, both physically, and psychically, has a more delicate frame and' his footing upon earth is less secure. The balance in his consciousness between the different forces— especially between those of this world and the other—is delicately held; and the adjustment that obtains at a given moment is liable to be disturbed by the least change, either in the inner consciousness, or in the outer conditions.

In other words, when we speak of the spirituality of the Indian people, it is to the disposition of their psychic elements that we refer, to the tone and temper of the soul they possess and to a constant nearness of latent spiritual possibilities: that may at any time materialise, and the consequent possibilities of a spiritual impulse, that may at any time awaken.

Other peoples have other and more concrete virtues to be proud of; but the Indian has his soul as his most characteristic possession.

That is not to say that other peoples of the world are soulless, and that India alone may claim to possess the treasure. But no other people has lived so much in and from the soul, none other has sacrificed so much for the sake of this one thing needful. The soul-consciousness in other nations lies ve ed behind the more pressing activities and immediate occupations of the external nature; at the most, what is characteristic in them is the soul, / not in its pure and fundamental being, but expressed, and therefore encased and limited, within some particular mode of becoming. In India, on the other hand, the external activities and operations have never altogether swamped or clouded this soul-consciousness; they have been either subjugated to it as minor auxiliaries or totally sacrificed as obstacles. The Indian's soul is not imbedded in some far-off region of his unconscious nature; he has succeeded in raising it up and bringing it forward to the level of his waking consciousness,— as the gold-tusked Divine Boar lifted the Earth out of the dark depths of the primeval deluge to the light of the Day.

The French, for example, have developed as a people a special characteristic and mental turn that has set its pervading impress upon their culture and civilisation, upon their creations ~ and activities; that which distinguishes them is a fine, clear and subtle, rational, logical, artistic and literary mind. France, it has often been said, is the head of modern Europe. The Indians are not in the same way

a predominantly intellectual race, in spite of the mighty giants of intellect India has always produced, and still produces. Nor are they a literary race, although a rich and grandiose literature, unrivalled in its own great qualities, is their patrimony. It was the few, a small minority, almost a closed circle, that formed in India the elite whose interest and achievement lay in this field; the characteristic power, the main life-current of the nation, did not flow this way, but followed a different channel. Among the ancients the Greeks, and among the moderns the French alone, can rightfully claim as their special genius, as the hallmark of their corporate life, a high intellectual and literary culture. It is to this treasure,—a serene and yet vigorous and organized rational mind, coupled with a wonderful felicity of expression in speech,—that one turns when one thinks of the special gift that modern France and ancient Greece have brought to the heritage of mankind.

Again, the Japanese, as a people, have developed to a consummate degree the sense of beauty, especially as applied to life and living. No other people, not even the old-world Greeks, possessed almost to a man, as do these children of the Rising Sun, so fine and infallible an aesthetic sensibility,—not static or abstract, but of the dynamic kind,—uniformly, successful in making out of their work-a-day, life, even to its smallest accessories, a flawless object of art. It is a wonder to see in Japan how, even an unlettered peasant, away in his rustic environment, chooses with unerring taste the site of his house, builds it to the best advantage, arranges everything about it in a faultless rhythm. The whole motion of the life of a Japanese is almost Art incarnate.

Or take again the example of the British people. The practical, successful life instinct, one might even call it the business instinct, of the Anglo-Saxon races is, in its general diffusion, something that borders on the miraculous. Even their Shakespeare is reputed to have been very largely endowed with this national virtue. It is a faculty which has very little to do with calculation, or with much or close thinking, or with any laborious or subtle mental operation,—a quick or active mind is perhaps the last thing with which the British people can be accredited; this instinct of theirs is something spontaneous, almost aboriginal, moving with the sureness, the ruthlessness of nature's unconscious movements,—it is a tact, native to the force that is life. It is this attribute which the Englishman draws from the collective genius of his race that marks him out from among all others; this is his forte, it is this which has created his nation and made it great and strong.

All other nations have this one, or that other, line of self-expression, special to each; but it is India's characteristic not to have had any such single and definite *modus vivendi*—what was single and definite in her case was a mode not of living but of being. India looked above all to the very self in things, and in all her life-expression it was the soul *per se* which mattered to her,—even as the great Yajnavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi, *atmanastu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati*. The expressions of the self had no intrinsic value of their own and mattered only so far as they symbolised or embodied or pointed to the secret reality of the Atman. And perhaps it was on this account that India's creative activities, even in external life, were once upon a time so rich and varied, so stupendous and full of marvel. Because she was attached and limited to no one dominating power of life, she could create infinite forms, so many channels of power for the soul whose realisation was her end and aim.

There was no department of life or culture in which it could be said of India that she was not great, or even, in a way, supreme. From hard practical politics touching our earth, to the nebulous regions of abstract metaphysics, everywhere India expressed the power of her genius equally well. And yet none of these, neither severally nor collectively, constituted her specific genius; none showed the full height to which she could raise herself, none compassed the veritable amplitude of her innermost reality. It is when we come to the domain of the Spirit, of God-realisation that we find the real nature and stature and genius of the Indian people; it is here that India lives and moves as in her own home of Truth. The greatest and the most popular names in Indian history are not names of warriors or statesmen, nor of poets who were only poets, nor of mere intellectual philosophers, however great they might be, but of Rishis, who saw and lived the Truth and communed with the gods, of Avatars who brought down and incarnated here below something of the supreme realities beyond.

The most significant fact in the history of India is the unbroken continuity of the line of her spiritual masters who never ceased to appear even in the midst of her most dark and distressing ages. Even in a decadent and fast disintegrating India, when the whole of her external life was a mass of ruins, when her political and economical and even her cultural life was brought to stagnation and very near to decomposition, this undying Fire in her secret heart was ever alight and called in the inevitable rebirth and rejuvenation. Ramakrishna, with Vivekananda as his emanation in life dynamic and material, symbolises this great secret of India's evolution. The promise that

the Divine held out in the Gita to Bharata's descendant finds a ready fulfilment in India, in Bharata's land, more perhaps than anywhere else in the world; for in India has the Divine taken birth over and over again to save the pure in heart, to destroy the evil-doer and to establish the Right Law of life.

Other peoples may be the arms and the feet and the head of Humanity, but India is its heart, its soul—for she cherishes always within her the Truth that lives for ever, the flaming God-head, the Immortal awake in mortality, as say the Vedas, *amrto martyesu rtava*.

# *Vivekananda*

A PERSONAL reminiscence. A young man in prison, accused of conspiracy and waging war against the British Empire. If convicted he might have to suffer the extreme penalty, at least, transportation to the Andamans. The case is dragging on for long months. And the young man is in a solitary cell. He cannot always keep up his spirits high. Moments of sadness and gloom and despair come and almost overwhelm him. Who was there to console and cheer him up ? Vivekananda. Vivekananda's speeches, From Colombo to Almora, came, as a godsend, into the hands of the young man. Invariably, when the period of despondency came he used to open the book, read a few pages, read them over again, and the cloud was there no longer. Instead there was hope and courage and faith and future and light and air.

Such is Vivekananda, the embodiment of Fearlessness— *abhiih*, the Upanishadic word, the mantra, he was so fond of. The life and vision of Vivekananda can be indeed summed up in the mighty phrase of the Upanishads, *nayam atma balahinena labhyah*. "This soul no weakling can attain. Strength! More strength! Strength evermore! One remembers the motto of Danton, the famous leader in the French Revolution: *De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace!*

The gospel, of strength that Vivekananda spread was very characteristic of the man. For it is not mere physical or nervous bravery, although that too is indispensable, and it is something more than moral courage. In the speeches referred to, the subject-matter (as well as the manner to a large extent) is philosophical, metaphysical, even abstract in outlook and treatment: they are not a call to arms, like the French National Anthem, for example; they are not merely an ethical

exhortation, a moral lesson either. They speak of the inner spirit, the divine in man, the supreme realities that lie beyond. And yet the words are permeated through and through with a vibration life-giving and heroic—not so much in the explicit and apparent meaning as in the style and manner and atmosphere: it is catching, even or precisely when he refers, for example, to these passages in the Vedas and the Upanishads, magnificent in their poetic beauty, sublime in their spiritual truth, *nee plus ultra*, one can say, in the grand style supreme:

*Yasyaite himavanto mahitva*

*He whose greatness these snowy ranges declare*

or,

*Na tatra suryo bhati na candratarakam....*

*There the sun shines not, nor the moon nor the stars*

or again,

*Nasad asit na sad asit tadanim:  
nasit rajo no vyoma paro yat...*

*Then existence was not nor non-existence, the mid-world was not nor the Ether nor what is beyond.*

The consciousness that breathed out these mighty words, these heavenly sounds was in itself mighty and heavenly and it is that that touches you, penetrates you, vibrates in you a kindred chord, "awakening in you someone dead" till then— *mrtam kancana bodhayanti*, More than the matter, the thing that was said, was the personality, the being who embodied the truth expressed, the living consciousness behind the words and the speech that set fire to your soul. Indeed it was the soul that Vivekananda could awaken and stir in you. Any orator, any speaker with some kind of belief, even if it is for the moment, in what he says, by the sheer force of assertion, can convince your mind and draw your acquiescence and adhesion. A leader of men, self-confident and bold and fiery, can carry you off your feet

and make you do brave things. But that is a lower degree of character and nature, ephemeral and superficial, that is touched in you thereby. The spiritual leader, the Guide, goes straight to the spirit in you—it is the call of the deep unto the deep. That was what Vivekananda meant when he said that Brahman is asleep in you, awaken it, you are the Brahman, awaken it, you are free and almighty. It is the spirit consciousness—Sachchidananda—that is the real man in you and that is supremely mighty and invincible and free absolutely. The courage and fearlessness that Vivekananda gave you was the natural attribute of the lordship of your spiritual reality. Vivekananda spoke and roused the Atman in man.

Vivekananda spoke to the Atman in man, he spoke to the Atman of the world, and he spoke specially to the Atman of India. India had a large place in Vivekananda's consciousness: for the future of humanity and the world is wedded to India's future. India has a great mission, it has a spiritual, rather the spiritual work to do. Here is India's work as Vivekananda conceived it in a nutshell:

"Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct." And wherefore is this call for the life spiritual? Thus the aspiring soul would answer:

"If I do not find bliss in the life of the spirit, shall I seek satisfaction in the life of the senses? If I cannot get nectar, shall I, fall back upon ditch water?"

The answer is as old as that of Nachiketas: "These horses and these songs and dances of yours, let them remain yours, man is not appeased with riches"; or that of Maitreyi, "What am I to do with that which will not bring me immortality?" This is then man's mission upon earth:

"Man is higher than all animals, than all angels: none is greater than man. Even the Devas will have to come down again and attain to salvation through a human body. Man alone attains to perfection, not even the Devas." Indeed, men are gods upon earth, come down here below to perfect themselves and perfect the world—only, they have to be conscious of themselves. They do not know what they are, they have to be actually and sovereignly what they are really and potentially. This then is the life-work of everyone:

"First, let us be Gods, and then help others to be Gods. Be and make', let this be our motto."

That is indeed the only way of securing a harmonious and perfected humanity:

”Manifest the divinity within you, and everything will be harmoniously arranged around it.”

The path to this higher harmonious divine life is that of hard labour, of scrupulously untiring, conscientious work:

”It is struggle against nature and not conformity to nature that makes man what he is.”

Work and not abstention from work is the way, but not work for ignorant enjoyment:

”The dwelling-place of the Jivatman, this body, is a veritable means of work, and he who converts this into an infernal den is guilty, and he who neglects it is also to blame.”

”No work is petty.... He who can properly prepare a chilam (pipe of tobacco) can also properly meditate.”

These are luminous life-giving mantras and the world and humanity of today, sore distressed and utterly confounded, have great need of them to live them by and be saved.

# *The Basis of Unity*

A MODERN society or people cannot have religion, that is to say, credal religion, as the basis of its organized collective life. It was mediaeval society and people that were organized on that line. Indeed mediaevalism means nothing more—and nothing less —than that. But whatever the need and justification in the past, the principle is an anachronism under modern conditions. It was needed, perhaps, to keep alive a truth which goes into the very roots of human life and its deepest aspiration; and it was needed also for a dynamic application of that truth on a larger scale and in smaller details, on the mass of mankind and in its day to day life. That was the aim of the Church Militant and the Khilafat; that was the spirit, although in a more Sattwic way, behind the Buddhistic evangelism or even Hindu colonization.

The truth behind a credal religion is the aspiration, towards the realization of the Divine, some ultimate reality that gives a permanent meaning and value to the human life, to the existence lodged in this 'sphere of sorrow' here below. Credal paraphernalia were necessary to express or buttress this core of spiritual truth when mankind, in the mass, had not attained a certain level of enlightenment in the mind and a certain degree of development in its life-relations. The modern age is modern precisely because it had attained to a necessary extent this mental enlightenment and this life development. So the scheme or scaffolding that was required in the past is no longer unavoidable and can have either no reality at all or only a modified utility.

A modern people is a composite entity, especially with regard to its religious affiliation. Not religion, but culture is the basis of modern collective life, national or social. Culture includes in its grain that

fineness of temperament which appreciates all truths behind all forms, even when there is a personal allegiance to one particular form.

In India, it is well known, the diversity of affiliations is colossal, *sui generis*. Two major affiliations have today almost cut the country into two; and desperate remedies are suggested which are worse than the malady itself, as they may kill the patient outright. If it is so, it is, I repeat, the mediaeval spirit that is at the bottom of the trouble.

The rise of this spirit in modern times and conditions is a phenomenon that has to be explained and faced: it is a ghost that has come out of the past and has got to be laid and laid for good. First of all, it is a reaction from modernism; it is a reaction from the modernist denial of certain fundamental and eternal truths, of God, soul, and immortality: it is a reaction from the modernist affirmation of the mere economic man. And it is also a defensive gesture of a particular complex of consciousness that has grown and lives powerfully and now apprehends expurgation and elimination.

In Europe such a contingency did not arise, because the religious spirit, rampant in the days of Inquisitions and St. Bartholomews, died away: it died, and (or, because) it was replaced by a spirit that was felt as being equally, if not more, authentic and, which for the moment, suffused the whole consciousness with a large and high afflatus, commensurate with the amplitude of man's aspiration. I refer, of course, to the spirit of the Renaissance. It was a spirit profane and secular, no doubt, but on that level it brought a catholicity of temper and a richness in varied interest—a humanistic culture, as it is called—which constituted a living and unifying ideal for Europe. That spirit culminated in the great French Revolution which was the final coup de grace to all that still remained of mediaevalism, even in its outer structure, political and economical.

In India the spirit of renaissance came very late, late almost by three centuries; and even then it could not flood the whole of the continent in all its nooks and corners, psychological and physical. There were any number of pockets (to use a current military phrase) left behind which guarded the spirit of the past and offered persistent and obdurate resistance. Perhaps, such a dispensation was needed in India and inevitable also; inevitable, because the religious spirit is closest to India's soul and is its most direct expression and cannot be uprooted so easily; needed, because India's and the world's future demands it and depends upon it.

Only, the religious spirit has to be bathed and purified and enlightened by the spirit of the renaissance: that is to say, one must learn and understand and realize that Spirit is the thing—the one thing needful—Tamevaikam janatha; 'religions' are its names and forms, appliances and decorations. Let us have by all means the religious spirit, the fundamental experience that is the inmost truth of all religions, that is the matter of our soul; but in our mind and life and body let there be a luminous catholicity, let these organs and instruments be trained to see and compare and appreciate the variety, the numberless facets which the one Spirit naturally presents to the human consciousness. Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti. It is an ancient truth that man discovered even in his earliest seekings; but it still awaits an adequate expression and application in life.

## II

India's historical development is marked by a special characteristic which is at once the expression of her inmost nature and the setting of a problem which she has to solve for herself and for the whole human race. I have spoken of the diversity and divergence of affiliations in a modern social unit. But what distinguishes India from all other peoples is that the diversity and divergence have culminated here in contradictoriness and mutual exclusion.

The first extremes that met in India and fought and gradually coalesced to form a single cultural and social whole were, as is well known, the Aryan and the non-Aryan. Indeed, the geologists tell us, the land itself is divided into two parts structurally quite different and distinct, the Deccan plateau and the Himalayan ranges with the Indo-Gangetic plain: the former is formed out of the most ancient and stable and, on the whole, horizontally bedded rocks of the earth, while the latter is of comparatively recent origin, formed out of a more flexible and weaker belt (the Himalayan region consisting of a colossal flexing and crumpling of strata). The disparity is so much that a certain group of geologists hold that the Deccan plateau did not at all form part of the Asiatic continent, but had drifted and dashed into it: in fact the Himalayas are the result of this mighty impact. The usual division of an Aryan and a Dravidian race may be due to a memory of the clash of the two continents and their races.

However, coming to historical times, we see wave after wave of the most heterogeneous and disparate elements—Sakas and Huns and Greeks, each bringing its quota of exotic material— enter into the oceanic Indian life and culture, lose their separate foreign identity

and become part and parcel of the common whole. Even so,—a single unitary body was formed out of such varied and shifting materials—not in the political, but in a socio-religious sense. For a catholic religious spirit, not being solely doctrinal and personal, admitted and embraced in its supple and wide texture almost an infinite variety of approaches to the Divine, of forms and norms of apprehending the Beyond. It has been called Hinduism: it is a vast synthesis of multiple affiliations. It expresses the characteristic genius of India and hence Hinduism and Indianism came to be looked upon as synonymous terms. And the same could be defined also as Vedic religion and culture, for its invariable basis—the bed-rock on which it stood firm and erect—was the Vedas, the Knowledge seen by the sages. But there had already risen a voice of dissidence and discord—that of Buddha, not so much, perhaps, of Buddha as of Buddhism. The Buddhistic enlightenment and discipline did not admit the supreme authority of the Vedas; it sought other bases of truth and reality. It was a great denial; and it meant and worked for a vital schism. The denial of the Vedas by itself, perhaps, would not be serious, but it became so, as it was symptomatic of a deeper divergence. Denying the Vedas, the Buddhistic spirit denied life. It was quite a new thing in the Indian consciousness and spiritual discipline. And it left such a stamp there that even today it stands as the dominant character of the Indian outlook. However, India's synthetic genius rose to the occasion and knew how to bridge the chasm, close up the fissure, and present again a body whole and entire. Buddha became one of the Avatars: the discipline of Nirvana and Maya was reserved as the last duty to be performed at the end of life, as the culmination of a full-length span of action and achievement; the way to Moksha lay through Dharma and Artha and Kama, Sannyasa had to be built upon Brahma-charya and Garhasthya. The integral ideal was epitomized by Kalidasa in his famous lines about the character of the Raghus:

They devoted themselves to study in their boyhood, in youth they pursued the objects of life; when old they took to spiritual austerities, and in the end they died united with the higher consciousness.

Only this process of integration was not done in a day, it took some centuries and had to pass through some unpleasant intermediary stages.

And still this was not the last—it could not be the last— antithesis that had to be synthesized. The dialectical movement led to a more serious and fiercer contradiction. The Buddhistic schism was after

all a division brought about from within: it could be said that the two terms of the antinomy belonged to the same genus and were commensurable. The idea or experience of Asat and Maya was not unknown to the Upanishads, only it had not there the exclusive stress which the later developments gave it. Hence quite a different, an altogether foreign body was imported into what was or had come to be a homogeneous entity, and in a considerable mass. Unlike the previous irruptions that merged and were lost in the general life and consciousness, Islam entered as a leaven that maintained its integrity and revolutionized Indian life and culture by infusing into its tone a Semitic accent. After the Islamic impact India could not be what she was before—a change became inevitable even in the major note. If was a psychological cataclysm almost on a par with the geological one that formed her body; but the spirit behind which created the body was working automatically, inexorably towards the greater and more difficult synthesis demanded by the situation. Only the thing is to be done' now consciously, not through an unconscious process of *laissez-faire* as on the inferior stages of evolution in the past. And that is the true genesis of the present conflict.

History abounds in instances of racial and cultural immixture. Indeed, all major human groupings of today are invariably composite formations. Excepting, perhaps, some primitive aboriginal tribes there are no pure races existent. The Briton, the Dane, the Anglo-Saxon, and the Norman have combined to form the British; a Frenchman has a Gaul, a Roman, a Frank in him; and a Spaniard's blood would show, an Iberian, a Latin, a Gothic, a Moorish element in it. And much more than a people, a culture in modern times has been a veritable cockpit of multifarious and even incongruous elements. There are instances also in which a perfect fusion could not be accomplished, and one element had to be rejected or crushed out. The complete disappearance of the Aztecs and Mayas in South America, the decadence of the Red Indians in North America, of the Negroes in Africa as a result of a fierce clash with European peoples and European culture illustrate the point.

Nature, on the whole, has solved the problem of blood fusion and mental fusion of different peoples, although on a smaller scale. India today presents the problem on a larger scale and on a higher or deeper level. The demand is for a spiritual fusion and unity. Strange to say, although the Spirit is the true bed-rock of unity—since, at bottom, it means identity—it is on this plane that mankind has not yet been able to really meet and coalesce. India's genius has been precisely working

in the line of a perfect Solution of this supreme problem.

Islam comes with a full-fledged spiritual soul and a mental and vital formation commensurable with that inner being and consciousness. It comes with a dynamic spirit, a warrior mood, that aims at conquering the physical world, for the Lord, a temperament which Indian spirituality had not, or had lost long before, if she had anything of it. This was, perhaps, what Vivekananda meant when he spoke graphically of a Hindu soul with a Muslim body. The Islamic dispensation, however, brings with it not only something complementary, but also something contradictory, if not for anything else, at least for the strong individuality which does not easily yield to assimilation. Still, in spite of great odds, the process of assimilation was going on slowly and surely. But of late it appears to have come to a dead halt; difficulties have been presented which seem insuperable.

If religious toleration were enough, if that made up man's highest and largest achievement, then Nature need not have attempted to go beyond cultural fusion; a liberal culture is the surest basis for a catholic religious spirit. But such a spirit of toleration and catholicity, although it bespeaks a widened consciousness, does not always enshrine a profundity of being. Nobody is more tolerant and catholic than a dilettante, but an ardent spiritual soul is different.

To be loyal to one's line of self-fulfilment, to follow one's self-law, swadharma, wholly and absolutely—without this no spiritual life is possible—and yet not to come into clash with other lines and loyalties, nay more, to be in positive harmony with them, is a problem which has not been really solved. It was solved, perhaps, in the consciousness of a Ramakrishna, a few individuals here and there, but it has always remained a source of conflict and disharmony in the general mind even in the field of spirituality. The clash of spiritual or religious loyalties has taken such an acute form in India today, they have been carried to the bitter extreme, in order, we venture to say, that the final synthesis might be absolute and irrevocable. This is India's mission to work out, and this is the lesson which she brings to the world.

The solution can come, first, by going to the true religion of the Spirit, by being truly spiritual and not merely religious, for, as we have said, real unity lies only in and through the Spirit, since Spirit is one and indivisible; secondly, by bringing down something—a great part, indeed, if not the whole—of this puissant and marvellous Spirit into our life of emotions and sensations and activities.

If it is said that this is an ideal for the few only, not for the mass, our answer to that is the answer of the Gita—Yad yad acharati sreshthah. Let the few then practise and achieve the ideal: the mass will have to follow as far as it is possible and necessary. It is the very character of the evolutionary system of Nature, as expressed in the principle of symbiosis, that any considerable change in one place (in one species) is accompanied by a corresponding change in the same direction in other contiguous places (in other associated species) in order that the poise and balance of the system may be maintained.

It is precisely strong nuclei that are needed (even, perhaps, one strong nucleus is sufficient) where the single and integrated spiritual consciousness is an accomplished and established fact: that acts inevitably as a solvent drawing in and assimilating or transforming and re-creating as much of the surroundings as its own degree and nature of achievement inevitably demand.

India did not and could not stop at mere cultural fusion— which was a supreme gift of the Moguls. She did not and could not stop at another momentous cultural fusion brought about by the European impact. She aimed at something more. Nature demanded of her that she should discover a greater secret of human unity and through progressive experiments apply and establish it in fact. Christianity did not raise this problem of the greater synthesis, for the Christian peoples were more culture-minded than religious-minded. It was left for an Asiatic people to set the problem and for India to work out the solution.

# *Towards a New Ideology*

INDIA must evolve her own political and social ideology; she must discover and establish in this domain also, as in all others that concern her collective life, her own genius and rule. This is what Swaraj really means and demands.

Russia has her Sovietic Communism, Germany, for the present at least, her Nazidom, Italy her totalitarian Fascism, old England her Parliamentarianism and France her Bureau cratism; each nation finds the norm and scheme of self-rule that suits its temperament and character and changes and modifies that also in its own characteristic manner. Even so India must find her own scheme of Swarajya. If she is to live and be great and contribute something to the enrichment and glory of human civilisation, she must look to herself, enter into herself and know and bring out what lies there buried. It is a grievous blunder to try to transplant a Mussolinian or Leninian or a Hitlerian gospel on an Indian soil'. It is not desirable nor is it truly possible.

If, however, we take a right about turn and look away from the West to the Far East, we already see in Japan a different type of national self-government. It is based on an altogether different basis which may appear even novel to the modern and rationalistic European mentality. I am referring to the conception of duty which moulds and upholds the Japanese body politic and body social, as opposed to the conception of right obtaining royal rule in the Occident.

The distinction between the attitudes that underlie these two conceptions was once upon a time greatly stressed by Vivekananda, who was the first to strike two or three major chords that were needed to create the grand symphony of the Indian Renaissance. It is true Europe too had her Mazzini whose scheme of a new humanity was

based on the conception of the duties of man. But his was a voice in the wilderness and he was not honoured in his own country.

The malady of the modern age springs precisely from this poisonous source, viz., it views man as a bundle of rights and its problem of social organisation is the problem of safeguarding and, if possible, even of increasing individual and collective rights. Thus came into being the competitive society—a society necessarily red in tooth and claw like Nature.

Vivekananda pointed out that one should rather think of one's duties, how best to accomplish them and leave the rights to take care of themselves. Such an attitude would give a man the correct outlook, the correct poise, the correct inspiration in living the collective life. Instead of each one demanding and claiming what one regards as one's dues and consequently scrambling and fighting for them (and most often not getting them or getting at a ruinous expense—what made Arjuna cry, "What shall I do with the kingdom and all if in gaining it I lose everything that makes it worth having?") if one were content with knowing one's duty and doing it with a single mind, not only would there be peace and amity on earth, but also none would be deprived of anything that is really due to him.

It may be answered that there does not seem to be any special virtue in the word "duty"; for, the crimes committed under that ensign are not less numerous or violent than those inspired by the ideal of Rights. It was once considered in some religions to be the duty of the faithful to kill or coerce or convert as many as possible of another faith; it was the bounden duty of the good shepherd to burn and flay -the heretic. And in recent times the ceremony of "purge" bespeaks of the same compulsion of the sense of duty in the consciousness of modern Messiahs. But the true name of the thing in all these cases is not duty, but fanaticism.

For fanaticism may be defined as duty running away with itself; but duty proper, the genuine form of it is something give than to demand, it is less easily provoked to aggression and battle. Even so, it may be claimed on behalf of Right that the right hand of Right is not likely to do harm, for it is then another name for liberty, it means the freedom to live one's life unhampered without infringing on an equal facility for others to do the same. But the whole difficulty comes in precisely with regard to the frontier of each other's sphere of rights. It is easy to declare the principle, but to tarry it out in life and action is a different matter. The line of demarcation between

one's own rights and the rights of another is always indeterminate and indefinable. In establishing and maintaining one's rights there is always the possibility, even the certainty of "frontier incidents", of encroaching upon other's rights. Liberty, alone and by itself, is not a safe guide therefore so much stress is being laid nowadays upon discipline and obedience in modern ideologies.

But perhaps the real truth of the matter here is that all these terms—liberty or right or even duty—are mental conceptions. They are indeed ideals, that is to say, made of the stuff of ideas and do not always coincide with the deeper realities of life and hence are not able to produce the perfect and durable harmony among warring members whether in the individual or in the collective life.

We had in India a fairer word than "duty", a deeper and more luminous mantra: it is dharma. The expression has certainly "fallen on evil days and on evil tongues"; it smells today of mediaevalism and obscurantism and whatever is not "forward" and "radical". Still we hark back to it: it is high time that we should resuscitate the old word mantra—in spite of its musty covering, it carries the purest nugget of gold.

Indeed, Right, Duty and Dharma are three terms that represent the three stages of an ascending consciousness in its play of forces. At the base and beginning the original and primary state of consciousness is dominated by the mode of inertia (tamos), in that state things are an inchoate mass and are simply jumbled together; they are moved and acted upon helplessly by forces that are outside them. A rise in the scale of growth and evolution occurs when things begin to be organised, that is to say, differentiated and coordinated. And this means at the outset the self-assertion of each and every unit, the claim and the right of the individual to be itself first and foremost. It is a necessary development, for it signifies the growth of self-conscious units out of a general, unconsciousness.

It is the appearance of rajas, the mode of life and activity. Right belongs to this field and level: it is the lever that serves to bring out the individual nuclei from a general formlessness, it is the force that crystallises and organises the separative centres for separate fulfilment in life. And naturally it is the field also of competition and conflict. This is a stage and has to be transcended, from the domain of differentiation and contrariety one has to rise to the domain of co-ordination and co-operation. Here comes in the concept of duty which seeks to remedy the ills of the modus of rights in two ways, first, by replacing

the movement of taking by that of giving, orienting the consciousness from the sense of self-sufficiency and self-importance towards that of submission and humbleness; secondly, by the recognition of the just rights of others also against one's own. Duty represents the mode of sattwa in action.

But the conception of duty too has its limitations. Even apart from the misuses of the ideal to which we have already referred, the ideal itself, is of the mental plane; it is more or less an act of mental will that seeks to impose a rule of co-operation upon the mutually excluding and conflicting entities. The result is bound to be imperfect and precarious. For mind force, although it can exercise some kind of control over the life forces, cannot altogether master them, and eradicate even the very seeds of conflict that breed naturally in that field. The sense of duty raises the consciousness to the mode of sattwa; sattwa holds rajas in check, but is unable to eliminate wholly the propensities and impulses of aberration ingrained in rajas, cannot radically purify or transfigure it.

We have to rise above rajas and sattwa to enter a domain where one meets the source of inevitable harmony, where the units without losing their true self and nature and returning to the undifferentiated primordial mass, fulfil themselves and are yet held together in a rich and faultless symphony. This is Dharma, that which holds together. Dharma means the law of one's soul. And when each soul follows its own law and line of life, there cannot be any conflict; for the essence and substance of the soul is made of unity and harmony. The souls move like the planetary bodies, each in its own orbit, and, because they do not collide or clash, all together creating the silent music of the spheres.

This then is the basis upon which the new society and humanity have to be built up, if we want to have a life on earth really worth living. Individuals have to find out their real being and nature and embody that in life. Individuals will associate and combine and form groups in response to the urge and impetus of a group harmony that seeks expression and embodiment.

The system of varnas and ashramas of ancient India—even if it be supposed that it never existed actually in its purest ideal form—serves as a graphic example of how man as a social being should create and organise his existence in order that that existence might be rendered as perfect and integrally sound as things can be. That system we hold forth as only an illustration; we do not mean that

it is a pattern of life that should be or could be implanted on our present day social circumstances. These are certainly very different and demand different groupings and hierarchies that must naturally grow out of them.

It should be noted that in contemporary life stress is laid upon one side, one part and one- function of human nature which cover only a superficial—however useful and necessary— area. Man is not a political animal (even in the Aristotelian sense); and it is an error to say that he is an economic animal. These notions divide man's integral being into various sectional views only; they seek to cut out and suppress all other members excepting the favoured one. The politically militant bourgeois ideal of the Nazi or the Fascist and the economically militant ideal of the proletarian are equally guilty of this lapse. Even the ideal of man as a rational being does not go far enough to be able to save man and mankind. All of them evoke conflict, some deliberately, and the resolution of the conflict ends in suppression, amputation and atrophy.

We have to recognise that man, in his individual as well as in his collective being, is a complex entity, not something simple and one-dimensional. The healthy growth of himself and his society means a simultaneous development on many lines, all moving together in concord and harmony. And this movement of all-harmony can be found only when the movements are initiated from the very source of harmony which is the soul. Certain soul-principles that seek expression in life today that are necessary to the age or to the coming age, have to be recognised and each given a field and a scope. That should be the basis of social groupings. And a composite variety of group- ing with strands and strata, each expressing a particular mode of being of the one group-soul—which in its turn is an aspect of the Vishva Purusha in his play—is the ideal pattern of social organisation. What exactly the lines of grouping would be need not and perhaps cannot be settled now; a certain preliminary growth and change of consciousness in man is necessary before anything definite and precise can be foreseen as to the form and schema that consciousness will manifest and lay out.

Still some kind of hierarchy seems to be the natural and inevitable form of collective life. A dead level, however high that may possibly be, appears to be rather a condition of malaise and not that of a stable equilibrium. The individual man cannot with impunity be brains alone—he becomes then what is called "a barren intellectual", "an

ineffectual angel"; nor can he rest satisfied with being a mere hewer of wood and drawer of water—he is no more than a bushman then. Like-wise a society cannot be made of philosophers alone, nor can it be a monolithic construction of the proletariat and nothing but the proletariat—if the proletariat choose to remain literally proletarian. As the body individual is composed of limbs that rise one upon another from the inferior to the superior, even so a healthy body social also should consist of similar hierarchical ranges. Only this distinction should not mean—and it does not necessarily mean—a difference in moral values, as it was pointed out long ago by Aesop in his famous fable. The distinction is functional—and spiritual. In the spirit, all differences and distinctions are based upon and are instinct with an inviolable and inalienable unity, even identity. Differences here do not mean invidious distinction, they are not the sources of inequality, conflict, strife, but make for a richer harmony, a greater organisation.

However the crucial point arises here—how is the collective life, the group existence to be made soul-conscious? One can understand the injunction upon individuals to seek and find their souls; but how can a society be expected to act from its soul and according to the impulses of its soul? And then, has a collectivity at all a soul? What is usually spoken of as the group-soul does not seem to be anything spiritual; it is an euphemism for herd instinct, the flair of the pack.

The real truth is that a group has the soul—the spiritual being—that is put into it. How can that be done? It is done by the individual, in and through the individual. Not a single individual perhaps, but a few, a select body, a small minority who by their conscious will and illumined endeavour form the strong nucleus that builds up automatically and inevitably the larger organisation instinct with its spirit and dharma. In fact all collective organisations are made in the same way. The form that a society takes is given to it by the ideology of one man or of a few men. All depends upon the truth and reality, the depth and fecundity of the inspiration and vision, whether it will last a day or be the eternal law of life, whether it will be a curse for mankind or work for its supreme good. Naturally, the higher the aim, the more radical the remedy envisaged, the greater the difficulty that has to be surmounted. An aggregate always tends to live and move on a lower level of consciousness than the individual's. It is easy to organise a society on forces and passions that belong to the lower nature of man—although it can be questioned whether such a society will last very long or conduce to the good or happiness of man.

On the other hand, although difficult, it may not prove impossible to cast the nature, character and reactions of the aggregate into the mould prepared out of spiritual realities by those who have realised and lived them. Some theocratic social organisations, at least for a time, during the period of their apogee illustrate the feasibility of such a consummation. Only, in the present age, when all foundations seem to be shaking, when all principles on which we stood till now are crumbling down, when even fundamentals—those that were considered as such—can no more give assurance, well, in such a revolutionary age, one has perforce to be radical and revolutionary to the extreme: we have to go deep down and beyond, beyond the shifting sands of more or less surface realities to the un-shaking bed-rock, the rock of ages. And that is nothing but the truth of the soul, the realities of the Spirit.

And India is pre-eminently fitted to discover this pattern of spiritual values and demonstrate how our normal life—individual and collective—can be moulded and built according to that pattern. It has been India's special concern throughout the millenaries other history to know and master the one thing needful (*tamevaikam janatha atmanam anya vaco vimuncatha*), knowing which one knows all (*tasmin vijnate sarvam vijnatam*). She has made countless experiments in that line and has attained countless achievements. Her resurgence can be justified and can be inevitable only if she secures the poise and position which will enable her to impart to the world this master secret of life, this art of a supreme *savoir vivre*. A new India in the old way of the nations of the world, one more among the already too many has neither sense nor necessity. Indeed, it would be the denial of what her soul demands and expects to be achieved and done.

## *A Stainless Steel Frame*

CORRUPTION is the order of the day. In all walks of life, wherever we have to live and move, we come across the monster; we cannot pass him by, we have to accost him (even in the Shakespearean sense, that is) welcome him, woo him. It is like one of the demons of the Greek legends that come out of the unknown, the sea or the sky, to prey upon a help- less land and its people until a deliverer comes.

Corruption appears today with a twofold face, Janus like: violence and falsehood. In private life, in the political field, in the business world, in social dealings, it is now an established practice, it has gained almost the force of a law of nature that success can be achieved only with these two comrades on your either side. A gentle, honest, peace-loving man is inevitably pushed back, he has to go to the wall; a straightforward truthful candid soul will get no hearing and make no living. From high diplomacy on the international level to village pettifoggery, from the blast of the atom bomb to the thrust of the dagger, we have all the degrees of the two cardinal virtues that make up the warp and woof of modern life.

In the old world—not so old however, for the landslide started in fact with the First World War—evil there was and abundantly in man and in man's society, but it was not accepted as virtue or even as an acceptable or inevitable thing. It was tolerated, suffered, and generally with a heavy heart. Indeed the heart was sound, it was the flesh only that was weak. There was an idealism, an aspiration and although one could not always live up to it, yet one did not deny it or spurn it; one endeavoured as best one could, even though in leisure hours, in the inner mind and consciousness at least, to obey and follow its dictates. It is the Nazi theory of life that brought to the

very forefront and installed in the consciousness of man Evil as Good, Falsehood as Truth. That is pragmatism with a vengeance. Whatever leads to success, to worldly success, that is to say, brings you wealth, prosperity, power to rule over men and things, enriches you in your possession—vittana, as the Upanishad terms it—that is Good, that is Truth. All the rest are mental conceptions, notions, abstractions, day-dreams meant to delude you, take you away from the road to your fulfilment and achievement. That is how we have listened to the voice of Mephistopheles and sold away our soul.

The government of a country is, as we know, the steel frame that holds together the life of its people: it is that that gives the primary stability and security, scope and free play to all its activities. In India it was the pride of the British that they built up such a frame; and although that frame sometimes see med almost to throttle the nation in its firm and rigid grip still today we are constrained to recognise that it was indeed. a great achievement: Pax Britannica was in fact a very efficient reality. The withdrawal of the power that was behind us has-left the frame very shaky; and our national government is- trying hard to set it up again, strengthening, reinforcing,. riveting wherever and however necessary. But the misfortune is that the steel has got rusted and worn out from inside.

In other words, a diminution of public morality and collective honesty has set in, an ebbing of the individual consciousness too that made for rectitude and justice and equity and fair dealing. Men who are limbs of that frame, who by their position ensure the strength of that frame—the bolts and nuts, screws and hinges—have, on a large scale, allowed themselves to be uncertain and loose in their moral make-up. Along with the outer check, the inner check too has given way: hence the colossal disintegration, the general debacle in the life of the body politic and the body social.

How to stop this rot that is gaining ground every day, how to react against the inexorable chain reaction that is leading to a final explosion? It is not merely the laymen but the members of the very supporting frame itself, as I have said, that have fallen and gone over to the enemy. And the fact is true not only of the political frame, but the social frame too made up of the elite, the intelligentsia. The remedy that easily suggests itself and is being attempted and applied is something Catonian, that is to say, a greater stringency of external rules and regulations, enforcement of punishment, even of heavy punishment as a deterrent of crime.

The institution of punishment is no longer respected or appreciated in modern times to the same extent as in the past, even a century ago. When character goes awry, punishment is of no avail. Punishment does not cure or redeem the criminal; it often hardens, fixes the trait that is sought to be eradicated. Fear of punishment does not always prevent one from doing wrong things. Often danger has an irresistible fascination for, a certain type of temperament, especially danger of the wrong kind—indeed the greater the wrong, the greater the danger and the greater the fascination. "To live dangerously" is the motto of the heroic soul, as well as of the lost soul. A strong penal system, a rigorous policing is of help no doubt to maintain "peace and order" of some kind in a society; but that is an external pressure which cannot last very long or be effective in the end.

So the ideal proposed is that of moral regeneration. But what is the kind of moral regeneration and how is it to be effected? All depends upon that. If you issue some moral rules and regulations, inscribe them on pillars, print them in pamphlets, preach them from the platform and the pulpit, these things have been done in the past and for ages, the result is not assured and the world goes its way as ever. Something more than mental and moral rules has to be discovered: some dynamic and irresistible element in man has to be touched, evoked and brought put, something that challenges the whole world and maintains its truth and the fiat of its truth. That is the inmost soul in man, the real being behind all the apparent forms of his personality, the divine element, the very Divine in him. It is the outer man, the marginal man, man in his inferior nature that lives and moves in normal circumstances; instead, the central man, man in his higher and highest nature has to come out and take his place in the world.

What is needed then is an army of souls: individuals, either separately or in groups, who have contacted their inmost reality, their divinity, in some way or other—men with a new consciousness and aspiration, a new life and realisation. They will live in the midst of the general degeneration and disintegration, not aloof and immured in their privacy of purity, but take part 'in the normal activities of everyday life, still acting from the height and depth of the pure consciousness prove by their very living that one can be in the world and yet not of it, doing what is necessary for the maintenance and enhancement of life and yet not stooping to the questionable ways that are supposed to be necessary and inevitable. In other words, they will disprove that safety and success and prosperity in life can be had only if one follows the lead of Evil, if one sells one's soul. On the

contrary, by living out one's divine essence one will have conquered the world— ihaiva tairjitam. At every moment, in all circumstances one follows the voice of the highest in oneself. If it is that and no other inferior echo, then one becomes fearless and immortal and all-conquering.

Such souls living and moving among men with little faith and in circumstances adverse and obscure will forge precisely the new steel frame, the stainless steel frame upon which the new society will be securely based.

# *The Basis of Social Reconstruction*

ANY real reconstruction of society, any permanent reformation of the world presupposes a real reconstruction, a permanent reformation of human nature. Otherwise any amount of casting and recasting the mere machineries would not bring about any appreciable result, but leave the thing as it is-. Change the laws as much as you like, but if you do not change the nature of man, the world will not change. For it is man that makes laws and not laws that make man. Laws express at best the demand which man feels within himself. A truth must realise itself in human nature before it can be codified. You may certainly legalise an ideal, but that does not necessarily mean realising it. The realisation must come first in nature and character, then it is naturally translated into laws and institutions. A man lives the laws of his soul and being and not the law given him by the shastras. He violates the shastras, modifies them, utilises them according to the greater imperative of his Swabhava.

The French Revolution wanted to remould human society and its ideal was liberty, equality and fraternity. It pulled down the old machinery and set up a new one in its stead. And the result? "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" remained always in effect a cry in the wilderness. Another wave of idealism is now running over the earth and the Bolsheviks are its most fiercely practical exponents. Instead of dealing merely with the political machinery, the Socialistic Revolution tries to break and remake, above all, the social machinery. But judged from the results as yet attained and the tendencies at work, few are the reasons to hope but many to fear the worst. Even education does not seem to promise us anything better. Which nation was better educated—in the sense we understood and still commonly understand

the word—than Germany?

And yet we have no hesitation today to call them Huns and Barbarians. That education is not giving us the right thing is proved further by the fact that we are constantly changing our programmes and curriculums, everyday remodelling old institutions and founding new ones. Even a revolution in the educational system will not bring about the desired millennium, so long as we lay so much stress upon the system and not upon man himself. And finally, look to all the religions of the world—we have enough of creeds and dogmas, of sermons and mantras, of churches and temples—and yet human life and society do not seem to be any the more worthy for it.

Are we then to say that human nature is irrevocably vitiated by an original sin and that all our efforts at reformation and regeneration are, as the Indian saying goes, like trying to straighten out the crooked tail of a dog?

It is this persuasion which has led many spiritual souls, siddhas, to declare that theirs is not the kingdom upon this earth, but that the kingdom of Heaven is within. And it is why great lovers of humanity have sought not to eradicate but only to mitigate, as far as possible, the ills of life. Earth and life, it is said, contain in their last analysis certain ugly and loathsome realities which are an inevitable and inexorable part of their substance and to eliminate one means to annihilate the other. What can be done is to throw a veil over the nether regions in human nature, to put a ban on their urges and velleities and to create opportunities to make social arrangements so that the higher impulses only find free play while the lower impulses, for want of scope and indulgence, may fall down to a harmless level. This is what the Reformists hope and want and no more. Life is based upon animality, the soul is encased in an earth-sheath—man needs must procreate, man needs must seek food. But what human effort can achieve is to set up barriers and limitations and form channels and openings, which will restrain these impulses, allow them a necessary modicum of play and which for the greater part will serve to encourage and enhance the nobler urges in man. Of course, there will remain always the possibility of the whole scaffolding coming down with a crash and the aboriginal in man running riot in his nudity. But we have to accept the chance and make the best of what materials we have in hand.

No doubt this is a most dismal kind of pessimism. But it is the logical conclusion of all optimism that bases itself upon a particular

view of human nature. If we question that pessimism, we have to question the very grounds of our optimism also. As a matter of fact, all our idealism has been so long infructuous and will be so in the future, if we do not shift our foundation and start from a different Intuition—Weltanschauung.

Our ideals have been mental constructions, rather than spiritual realities—realities of the deepest and highest being. And the power by which we sought to realise those ideals was mainly the insistence of our emotional urges, rather than Nature's Truth-Power. For this must be understood that the mental, the vital and the physical form a nexus of reality which works in its own inexorable law and so long as we are within them we cannot but obey the laws that guide them. Of these three strata which form the human adhara, it is the vital which holds the key to man's nature. It is the executive power, the force that fashions the realities on the physical plane; it is what creates the character. The power of thought and sentiment is often much too exaggerated, even so the power of the body, that of physical and external rules and regulations. The mental or the physical or both together can mould the vital only to a limited extent, to the extent which is allowed by the inherent law of the vital. If the demands of the mental and the physical are stretched too far and are not suffered by the vital, a crash and catastrophe is bound to come in the end.

This is the meaning of the Reformist's pessimism. So long as we remain within the domain of the triple nexus, we must always take account of an original sin, an aboriginal irredeemability in human nature. And it is this fact which a too hasty optimistic idealism is apt to ignore. The point, however, is that man need not be necessarily bound to this triple chord of life. He can go beyond, transcend himself and find a reality which is the basis of even this lower poise of the mental and vital and physical. Only in order to get into that higher poise we must really transcend the lower, that is to say, we must not be satisfied with experiencing or envisaging it through the mind and heart but must directly commune with it, be it. There is a higher law that rules there, a power that is the truth-substance of even the vital and hence can remould it with a sovereign inevitability, according to a pattern which may not and is not the pattern of mental and emotional idealism, but the pattern of a supreme spiritual realism.

What then is required is a complete spiritual regeneration in man, a new structure of his soul and substance—not merely the realisation of the highest and supreme Truth in mental and emotional conscious-

ness, but the translation and application of the law of that truth in the power of the vital. It is here that failed all the great spiritual or rather religious movements of the past. They were content with evoking the divine in the mental being, but left the vital becoming to be governed by the habitual un-divine or at the most to be just illumined by a distant and faint glow which served, however, more to distort than express the Divine.

The Divine Nature only can permanently reform the vital nature that is ours. Neither laws and institutions, which are the results of that vital nature, nor ideas and ideals which are often a mere revolt from and more often an auxiliary to it, can command the power to regenerate society. If it is thought improbable for any group of men to attain to that God Nature, then there is hardly any hope for mankind. But improbable or probable, that is the only way which man has to try and test, and there is none other.

## *The Moral and the Spiritual*

Is there anything essentially wrong, evil in its very being and nature? Some religious traditions say, there is: Satan is such a thing, Ahriman is such a thing, and what else is maya or mard?

However that may be, the sense of something essentially wrong is the fount and origin of the moral sense. The moral sense stems from and lives on the sense of sin and guilt.

The sense of sin is the fundamental inspiration behind some religious disciplines, even the sense of something irrevocably bad or something irreparable; for that gives a stronger impetus, a more dynamic urge to the spur of the religious consciousness. The sense of something irreparable, a final doom, has before it the vision of an eternal hell, the Lord of hell and his hosts and his captives. Upon this basic picture of Hell has loomed out Dante's vision of Paradise.

The Indian consciousness did not consider anything essentially evil, anything irrevocably and eternally condemned to perdition. Even the Asura, the anti-Divine is viewed, in the last analysis of things, also as an aspect, a formation of the Divine himself. Did and Aditi are sisters, twin aspects of the same Supreme Being. All the legends in narrating the life-history of the Asura describe his end as a submission to the Divine Will and a merging in Him. An entire life of bitter hostility culminates in the same degree of love for the Divine. The process of enmity seems to have a deeper occult meaning conducive to the more perfect union with the Divine. We know in Savitri how Sri Aurobindo speaks of Death as only a mask of Immortality.

In fact, evil, as we usually know it, as human mind construes it, is only a misplacement of a thing, a thing not in its place— a thing need

not be essentially wrong, it is wrong because it is not in its right place. Even things considered reprehensible by the moral sense are not so when they are viewed from another standpoint.

The moral consciousness seeks to rescue man from the animal consciousness. Its effort is to be delivered from the inferior vital instincts and rise to something higher, genuinely human. It does that or tries to do that by cultivating a feeling of repulsion, even of horror towards things that are sought to be rejected, cast out. The feeling of repulsion, of revulsion and horror, is indispensable to the growth and maintenance of the moral feeling.

The Indian discipline, on the other hand, teaches that to rise to a higher state of consciousness one need not have, one must not have, any feeling of revulsion or hatred. There is no such thing as saintly hatred. One must be free from attachment to the movements of inferior nature, one must cultivate detachment from them, but not necessarily through hatred or horror. The spiritual discipline bases itself upon a sense of perfect equality.

When you have hatred or horror for a thing it means you are on the same plane with it, your consciousness is level with the consciousness of the opposite feelings. You have to rise above the status of the lower nature and this can be done only by a calm detachment, a quiet withdrawal. One need not entertain repulsion or hatred for animal life in order to rise superior to it, one automatically rises superior to it when one links oneself to the higher status, when one is imbued with the superior consciousness. The animal consciousness is not a wrong consciousness in itself, it is a life of the animal; the human consciousness may regard it as such and may still discover a superior consciousness looking at the movements of the lower world dispassionately, indifferently, or even appreciatively, for a thing of beauty is there even in the animal life, for the Divine is everywhere.

The moral impulse is towards a self-exceeding but this self-exceeding, I have said, is to be done in perfect equanimity, in absolute detachment and indifference. To rise in consciousness, from the physical and animal to the divine, means, of course, abandoning the inferior, reaching the higher: but 'inferior' does not mean something low, something to be despised and reviled, but simply something to be passed over, transcended. And the ideal would be not only to surpass but to find out a secret parallelism between the two, discover the seed of the higher embedded even in the lower. The Indian discipline, including the school that advocates total rejection of the lower and

enjoins simple detachment and separation, does not approve of any feeling of contempt or disgust.

The states of being or consciousness from the animal, or down from Matter itself up to the Supreme—abrahmastamba— constitute what is called a hierarchy. Hierarchy means a structure rising upward tier upon tier, step by step: it is a scale, as it were, of increasing values, only the values are not moral, they indicate only a measure, a neutral measure respecting position or a kind of mass content. As in a building where brick is laid upon brick, or stone upon stone, the one laid above is not superior to the one laid below; the terms inferior and superior indicate only the simple position of the objects. Even the system of the four social orders in ancient India was originally such a hierarchy. The higher and lower orders did not carry any moral appreciation or depreciation. The four orders placed one above the other schematically denote only the respective social functions classified according to the nature of each, even as the human body represents such a hierarchy, rising from the feet at the bottom towards the head at the top. This is to say all objects and movements in nature are right when they are confined each to its own domain, following its own dharma of that domain. Thus one can be perfectly calm and at ease witnessing the catastrophies and cataclysms in nature, for one knows it is the dharma of material nature. Man terms them disasters for he judges them according to his own convenience. Even so, one should not be perturbed at the wild behaviour—man calls it wild—of wild animals. Likewise the gods in their sovereign tranquillity smile at the crudeness and stupidities of human beings. One has to lift oneself up, withdraw and stand high above all that one wishes to surpass and look at it, with a benign godly smile.

The world is a gradation of developing consciousness, of growing states or status of being. There is a higher and lower level in point of the measure of consciousness but that involves no moral judgement: the moral judgement is man's; it is man's, one might almost say, idiosyncrasy, that is to say, a notion that is a prop to help him mount the ladder. Though it might be necessary at a certain stage, in certain circumstances, it is not a universal or ineluctable law, not even in his personal domain. The growing consciousness is like the growing tree rising upward first into a trunk, then spreading out into branches, into twigs and tendrils, then in flowers and finally, in fruits. These are mounting grades of growth, but the growth above is not superior to the growth below. It is a one unified whole and each portion has its own absolute value, beauty and utility.

The modern mind has forgotten this lesson. It is terribly moral—I say moral, not immoral—its immorality has found play, has almost been cultured so that its moral sense may remain intact. Its dislike and even abhorrence for things it chooses to call immoral is the ransom it pays for rescuing its sense of morality, and paradoxically this very abhorrence for unholy things has pushed it all the more into their grasp. This is the characteristic turn or twist of the modern consciousness, the perversity unknown to the ancient 'sinners'. Perversity means, you yield, not only yield, but take delight in the thing you dislike, detest or abhor even. In the vein of St. Augustine who said "I believe because it is impossible",<sup>1</sup> the modern consciousness says: I love because I hate.

A strange fascination for the forbidden fruit has gripped the modern mentality and the most significant part of the thing is that the forbidding comes from within oneself, not from any authority outside—it is self-forbidden. We are reminded here of the Kantian moral absolute—the categorical imperative. This is a gospel based upon the Christian and Semitic tradition, polished by the Greek (that is, Socratic) touch, quickened and sharpened by the intellectual and social stress of European Culture. India admitted no such moral absolute or mental categorical imperative. The urge of her spiritual consciousness was always to go beyond, beyond the dualities, beyond the trinities (the three gunas)—all mental or scriptural rules and regulations. For her there is only one absolute—the transcendent, the Supreme Divine himself—the Brahman, nothing else, netaram.

I Credo quia impossibile is actually a phrase of Tertullian vide his *De Came Christi*, V—though often ascribed to St. Augustine

The Indian spiritual consciousness considers the secular distinction of good and evil as otiose: both are maya, there must neither be attachment to the Good, nor repulsion from Evil, the two, *dwandwas*, belong to the same category of relativity, that is, unreality.

Indian artists and poets were steeped in that tradition, wholly inspired by that spirit. Orthodox morality often wonders, is even shocked at the frankness, the daring nonchalance in Indian art creations,—a familiar prudery would call it shamelessness and even vulgarity, but to the Indian view, 'the Brahmin and the cow and the elephant' are of equal value and merit. The movement conventional morality calls 'libidinous' has a nobler name in Indian tradition: it is *adirasa*, the first or primary delight of existence. As I have said, the modern consciousness finds it a horror and is therefore all the more fascinated by it and dives into it head foremost.

To cure the modern malady we have to go back again to something of the ancient mentality. We have to cultivate a consciousness, now forgotten and alienated but once natural to the human mind, the consciousness and status of a transcendence built with the sense of absolute calm, an equality, all serene and all englobing, that is God's consciousness.

# *The World is One*

WE say not only that India is one and indivisible (and for that matter, Bengal too is one and indivisible, since we have to repeat axiomatic truths that have fallen on evil days and on evil tongues) but that also the whole world is one and indivisible. They who seek to drive in a wedge anywhere, who are busy laying some kind of cordon sanitaire across countries and nations or cultures and civilisations, in the name of a bigoted ideology, are, to say the least, doing a disservice to humanity, indeed they are inviting a disaster and catastrophe to the world and equally to themselves. For that is an attempt to stem the high tide of Nature's swell towards a global unity that shall brook no resistance.

The distinctions and differences that held good in other times and climes can have no sense or value in the world of today. Race or religion can divide man no longer; even nation-hood has lost much of its original force and meaning. It is strange—perhaps it is inevitable in the secret process of Nature's working—that when everything in conditions and circumstances obviously demands and points to an obliteration of all frontiers of division and separation—economically and politically too—and all drives towards a closer co-operation and intermingling, it is precisely then that the contrary spirit and impulse raises its head and seems even to gather added strength and violence. The fact may have two explanations. First of all, it may mean a defence gesture in Nature, that is to say, certain forces or formations have a permanent place in Nature's economy and when they apprehend that they are being ousted and neglected, when there is a one-pointed drive for their exclusion, naturally they surge up and demand recognition with a vengeance: for things forgotten or left aside that form indissolubly part of Nature's fabric and pattern, one has to retrace one's steps in order to pick them up again. But also the

phenomenon may mean a simple case of atavism: for we must know that there are certain old-world aboriginal habits and movements that have to go and have no place in the higher scheme of Nature and these too come up off and on, especially when the demand is there for their final liquidation. They have to be recognised as such and treated as such. Radical and . religious (including ideological) egoisms seem to us to belong to this category.

In the higher scheme of Nature, the next evolutionary status that is being forged, it is unity, harmony that is insisted upon, for that is the very basis of the new creation: whatever militates against that, whatever creates division and disruption must be banned and ruthlessly eschewed. In the reality of things, in the actual life that man lives, it will be found that on the whole, things that separate are less numerous and insistent than those which unite, man and man and nation and nation, if each one simply lives and lets live: on the contrary, it is the points of Concordance and mutuality that abound. A certain knot or twist in the mind makes all the difference: it brings in the ignorance, selfishness, blind passion—a possession by the dark forces of atavism that makes the mischief.

We ask for freedom, liberty of the individual, self-determination—well and good. But that does not mean the licence to do as one pleases, impelled by one's irrational idiosyncrasies. The individual must be truly individual, not a fractional being, the self must be the real self, not a shadow or surface formulation in order to have the full right to unfettered movement. Liberty, yes; but that means liberty for all which means again the other two terms of the great trinity, equality and fraternity. Individuality, yes; that means every individuality, in other words, solidarity. The two sides of the equation must be given equal value and equal emphasis. If the stress upon one leads to Nazism, Fascism or Stalinism, steam-rollered uniformity or streamlined regimentation, the death of the individual, the other emphasis leads to disintegration and disruption, to the same end in a different way. But in the world of today, after the victory in the last war over the Nazi conception of humanity, it seems as though the spirit of disruption has gone abroad, human consciousness has been atom-bombed into flying fragments; so we have the spectacle of all manner of parochialism pullulating on the earth, 'regional and ideological —imperial blocs, nations, groups, parties have chequered ad infinitum, have balkanised human commonalty.

We badly needed a United Nations Organisation, but we are facing

the utmost possible disunity. The lesson is that politics alone will not save us, nor even economics. The word, has gone forth: what is required is a change of heart. The leaders of humanity must have a new heart grafted in place of the old. That is the surgical operation imperative at the moment. That heart will declare in its beats that the cosmos is not atomic but one and indivisible, *ekam sat, neha nanasti kincana*.

# *Humanism and Humanism*

A GOOD many European scholars and philosophers have found Indian spirituality and Indian culture, at bottom, lacking in what is called "humanism."<sup>8</sup> So our scholars and philosophers on their side have been at pains to rebut the charge and demonstrate the humanistic element in our tradition. It may be asked however, if such a vindication is at all necessary, or if it is proper to apply a European standard of excellence to things Indian, India may have other measures, other terms of valuation. Even if it is proved that humanism as denned and understood in the West is an unknown thing in India, yet that need not necessarily be taken as a sign of inferiority or deficiency.

But first of all we must know what exactly is meant by humanism. It is, of course, not a doctrine or dogma; it is an attitude, an outlook—the attitude, the outlook that views and weighs the worth of man as man. The essential formula was succinctly given by the Latin poet when he said that nothing human he considered foreign to him.<sup>9</sup> It is the characteristic of humanism to be interested in man as man and in all things that interest man as man. To this however an important corollary is to be added, that it does not concern itself with things that do not concern man's humanity. The original father of humanism was perhaps Socrates whose mission it was, as he said, to bring down philosophy from heaven to live among men. More precisely, the genesis should be ascribed rather to the Aristotelian tradition of Socratic teaching.

Humanism proper was born—or reborn—with the Renaissance. It

<sup>8</sup> *Only the other day I found a critic in The Manchester Guardian referring to The Gita as something frigid (and confused)!*

<sup>9</sup> *Humoni nihil a me alienum puto.*—Terence.

was as strongly and vehemently negative and protestant in its nature as it was positive and affirmative. For its fundamental character—that which gave it its very name—was a protest against, a turning away from whatever concerned itself with the supra-human, with God or Self, with heaven or other worlds, with abstract or transcendental realities. The movement was humanistic precisely because it stood against the theological and theocratical mediaeval age.

The Graeco-Latin culture was essentially and predominantly humanistic. Even so, the mediaeval culture also, in spite of its theological stress, had a strong basis in humanism. For the religion itself, as has been pointed out, is deeply humanistic, in the sense that it brought salvation and heaven close to the level of human frailty—through the miracle of Grace and the humanity of Christ—and that it envisaged a kingdom of heaven or city of God—the body of Christ—formed of the brotherhood of the human race in its solidarity.

The Indian outlook, it is said, is at a double remove from this type of humanism. It has not the pagan Graeco-Roman humanism, nor has it the religious humanism of Christianity. Its spirit can be rendered in the vigorous imagery of Blake: it surrounds itself with cold floods of abstraction and the forests of solitude.

The religious or Christian humanism of the West is in its essential nature the pagan and profane humanism itself, at least an extension of the same. The sympathy that a St. Francis feels for his leprous brother is, after all, a human feeling, a feeling that man has for man; and even his love for the bird, or an inanimate object is also a very human feeling, transferred to another receptacle and flowing in another direction. It is a play of the human heart, only refined and widened; there is no change in kind.

It goes without saying that in the East too there is no lack of such sympathy or fellow-feeling either in the saint or in the man of the world. Still there is a difference. And the critics have felt it, if not understood it rightly. The Indian bhutadaya and Christian charity do not spring from the same source—I do not speak of the actual popular thing but of the ideal—even when their manner of expression is similar or the same, the spirit and the significance are different. In the East the liberated man or the man aiming at liberation may work for the good and welfare of the world or he may not; and when he does work, the spirit is not that of benevolence or philanthropy.

The Indian sage is not and cannot be human in the human way.

For the end of his whole spiritual effort is to transcend the human way and establish himself in the divine way, in the way of the Spirit. The feeling he has towards his fellow beings— men. and animals, the sentient or the insentient, the entire creation in fact—is one of identity in the One Self. And there-fore he does not need to embrace physically his brother, like the Christian saint, to express or justify the perfect inner union or unity. The basis of his relation with the world and its objects is not the human heart, however purified and widened, but something behind it and hidden by it, the secret soul and self. It was Vivekananda who very often stressed the point that the distinctive characteristic of the Vedantist was that he did not look upon created beings as his brethren but as himself, as the one and the same self. The profound teaching of the Upanishadic Rishi is—what may appear very egoistic and inadmissible to the Christian saint—that one loves the wife or the son or anybody or anything in the world not for the sake of the wife or the son or that body or thing but for the sake of the self, for the sake of oneself that is in the object which one seems to love.

The pragmatic man requires an outward gesture, an external emotion to express and demonstrate his kinship with creation. Indeed the more concrete and tangible the expression the more human it is considered to be and all the more worthy for it. There are not a few who think that giving alms to the poor is more nobly human than, say, the abstract feeling of a wide commonalty, experienced solely in imagination or contemplation in the Wordsworthian way.

There is indeed a gradation in the humanistic attitude that rises from grosser and more concrete forms to those that are less and less so. At the lowest rung and the most obvious in form and nature is what is called altruism, or philanthrope, that is to say, doing good to others, some good that is tangible and apparent, that is esteemed and valued by the world generally. In altruism refined and sublimated, when it is no longer a matter chiefly of doing but of feeling, from a more or Less physical and material give and take we rise into a vital and psychological sympathy and intercommunion, we have what is humanism proper. Humanism is transfigured into something still higher and finer when from the domain of personal or individual feeling and sympathy we ascend to cosmic feeling, to self-identification with the All, the One that is Many. This is the experience that seems to be behind the Buddhistic compassion, karuna.

And yet there can be a status even beyond. For beyond the cosmic

reality, lies the transcendent reality. It is the Absolute, *neti, neti*, into which individual and cosmos, all disappear and Vanish. In compassion, the cosmic communion, there is a trace and an echo of humanism—it is perhaps one of the reasons why Europeans generally are attracted to Buddhism and find it more congenial than Hinduism with its dizzy Vedantic heights; but in the status of the transcendent Selfhood humanism is totally transcended and transmuted, one dwells then in the Bliss that passeth all feeling.

The Upanishadic summit is not suffused with humanism or touched by it, because it is supra-human, not because there is a lack or want or deficiency in the human feeling, but because there is a heightening and a transcendence in the consciousness and being. To man, to human valuation, the *Boddhisattwa* may appear to be greater than the Buddha; even so to the sick a physician or a nurse may seem to be a diviner angel than any saint or sage or perhaps God Himself—but that is an inferior viewpoint, that of particular or local interest.

It is sometimes said that to turn away from the things of human concern, to seek liberation and annihilation in the Self and the Beyond is selfishness, egoism; on the contrary, to sacrifice the personal delight of losing oneself in the Impersonal so that one may live and even suffer in the company of ordinary humanity in order to succour and serve it is the nobler aim. But we may ask if it is egoism and selfishness to seek delight in one's own salvation beyond, would it be less selfish and egoistic to enjoy the pleasure of living on a level with humanity with the idea of aiding and uplifting it? Indeed, in either case, the truth discovered by *Yajnavalkya*, to which we have already referred, stands always justified, that it is not for the sake of this or that that one loves this or that but for the sake of the self that one loves this or that.

The fact of the matter is that here we enter a domain in which the notion of egoism or selfishness has no *raison d'être*. It is only when one has transcended not only selfishness but egoism and sense of individuality that one becomes ready to enter the glory and beatitude of the Self, or Brahman or *Shunyam*. One may actually and irrevocably pass beyond, or one may return from there (or from the brink of it) to work in and on the world—out of compassion or in obedience to a special call or a higher Will or because of some other thing; but this second course does not mean that one has attained a higher status of being. We may consider it more human, but it is not necessarily a superior realisation. It is a matter of choice of vocation only, to use a mundane phraseology. The Personal and the Impersonal are two co-

ordinates of the same supreme Reality—some choose (or are chosen by) the one and others choose (or are chosen by) the other, perhaps as the integral Play or the inscrutable Plan demands and determines, but neither is intrinsically superior to the other—although, as I have already said, from an interested human standpoint, one may seem more immediately profitable or nearer than the other; but from that standpoint there may be other truths that are still more practically useful, still closer to the earthly texture of humanity.

The humanism, known to Europe generally, both in its profane and religious aspects, is all "human—too human" as Nietzsche pronounced it; it was for this reason that the Promethean prophet conjured man to transcend his humanity anyhow, and rise to a superior status of culture and civilisation, of being and consciousness as we would say.

Indian spirituality precisely envisages such a transcendence. According to it, the liberated soul, one who lives in and with the Brahman or the Supreme Divine is he who has discarded the inferior human nature and has taken up the superior divine nature. He has conquered the evil of the lower nature, certainly; but also he has gone beyond the good of that nature. The liberated man is seated above the play of the three Gunas that constitute the *apara prakrti*. Human intelligence, human feeling, human sentiment, human motive do not move him. Humanism generally has no meaning for him. He is no longer human, but supra-human; his being and becoming are the spontaneous expression of a universal and transcendent consciousness. He does not always live and move externally in the non-human way; but even when he appears human in his life and action, his motives are not humanistic, his consciousness lies anchored somewhere else, in the Divine Will that makes him be and do whatever it chooses, human or not.

There is, however, a type of humanism that is specially known in India—it is not human humanism, but, as it is called, divine humanism. That is to say, the human formula is maintained, but a new significance, a transcendent connotation is put into it. The general contour of the instrumentation is preserved, but the substance is transmuted. The brain, the heart and the physical consciousness not only change their direction, but their very nature and character. And the Divine himself is conceived of as such a Human Person—for the norm of the human personality is an eternal verity in the divine consciousness.

Esoteric Christianity also has given us the conception of the Human

Divine; but it is somewhat different from the Vaishnava revelation which has found rather the Divine Human. In other words, as I have already said, one has brought down the divinity nearer to the human appreciation and has humanised it; in the other the human has been uplifted and made into an archetypal reality where the human terms have been more or less symbols and figures having not merely human but a supra-human significance. The entire Vaishnava Lila passes not on this earth at all, but eternally in the eternal world of consciousness—cinmaya—behind all earthly (and human) manifestation and expression.

It is the cult of the Divine Human which enunciates the v mystic truth that man is greater than all and surpasses the Vedic Law (which aims usually at the impersonal Absolute). But Man here is to be understood as the Divine Person in his human norm, not at all the human man, as modern humanists of our country would like” to have. It does not mean the glorification of man’s human attributes and movements, even if they be most sattwic and idealistic; it refers rather to the divinised type, the archetype that is eternal in the super consciousness. And when such a Man lives and acts upon earth he does so in manner and measure that do not belong to this plane.

# *The Eternal East and West*

THE East and the West are two recognised wings of humanity. Only the relation between them is somewhat in dispute. According to one view the two are quite separate and irreconcilable entities, because they embody two outlooks that are contradictory to each other. The other view is that they are not contradictory, however distinct they may be; they are complementary or supplementary to each other. The interaction between the two across the centuries recorded in history has been admitted and studied; it considerably influenced the growth and development of each in its line. Only the influence exerted some view with favour, others with disfavour. For some consider the mixture of influence, like that of blood, as a necessary condition of progress and creativity: others again are keen on maintaining the purity of stock, the particular type of culture to which each is attached and any intrusion of a foreign vein they consider as a lowering, a degeneration of the type.

We all know the great difference between the East and the West that has been pointed out and accepted generally as true is that of the spiritual East and the worldly or materialist West. Crudely and categorically formulated the truth remains no longer true. There is a very large amount of worldliness in the East, on the one hand, and on the other, mystics and spiritual seekers or leaders are not a rare phenomenon in the West. However, it can be said and admitted as a fact that there is in the East an atmosphere that is predominantly spiritual and one can more easily come in contact with it; whereas in the West it is the mental and material culture that predominates and the approach to it is nearer and closer to man. The science of the Spirit has received greater attention in the East; it has been studied, experimented, organised, almost consummated there in a supreme

manner. Even as the science of Matter has reached its apotheosis in the West.

Recognising the difference, the momentous question confronting us is what should be our next move: must we accept the one and reject the other for the sake of human progress and fulfilment, or that a harmony and synthesis is possible and is demanded ?

For it is not unoften asserted that the so-called spiritual outlook of the East is only a mediaeval outlook. All people in the world, including even the West, were once upon a time predominantly religious and spiritual; that was a certain stage in man's evolution. Europe has passed that stage of myth and imagination, has brought upon the earth and is living the higher illumination that Science reveals. The East did not or could not march with Time and continues the old world with its backward glance; it stands arrested in its growth.

This view finds its justification because of a particular out-look on spirituality and non-spirituality. If the Spirit and things spiritual are taken to mean something transcending and rejecting the world and the things of the world, something exclusive of life and its fulfilment here on earth, if on the other hand, the world and its life are given only their face value emptying them of their deeper and transcendent contents—in the manner of the great Laplace who could find no place for God in his map of the world which seemed to be quite complete in itself, if this trenchant division is made in the very definition of the terms, in our primary axioms and postulates, then, of course, we cannot avoid a scission and an eternal struggle. If you consider the Spirit as only pure spirit, an absolute without any relation, as an ever-fixed and static entity and if we view Matter as purely material and the law of mechanics as supreme and inviolable, then there cannot be a reconciliation or even a meeting between the two. There are some who have a great goodwill, who wish to avoid clash and quarrel and are for concord and harmony. They have tried the reconciliation, but failed. The two positions being fundamentally exclusive of each other can, at best, be juxtaposed, but not unified or fused together.

And yet mankind has always sought for an integral, an all-comprehending fulfilment, a truth and a realisation that would go round his entire existence. Man has always aspired, in the midst of the transience and imperfection that the world is, for something stable and perfect, in the heart of disharmony for some core of perfect harmony. He termed it God, Atman, Summum Bonum and he sought it sometimes, as he thought necessary, even at the cost of the world and the

life, if it is to be found elsewhere. Man aspired also always to find this habitation of his made somewhat better. Dissatisfied with his present state, he sought to mould it, remake it, put into it something which his aspiration and inspiration called the True, the Beautiful, the Good. There was always this double aspiration in man, one of ascent and the other of descent, one vertical and the other horizontal, one leading up and beyond—totally beyond, in its extreme urge—the other probing into the mystery locked up there below, releasing the power to reform or recreate the world, although he was not always sure whether it was a power of mind or of matter.

This double aspiration has found its expression and symbol in the East and the West, each concentrating on one line, sometimes even to the neglect or denial of the other. But this division or incompatibility need not be there and must not be there. A new conception of the Spirit and a new conception of Matter are gaining ground more and more, moving towards a true synthesis of the two, making for the creation of a new world and a new human type.

The East is no longer the traditional East of the poet who viewed it as eternally static and meditative, drowned in an "eyeless muse" away and aloof from earth and world. Even if it had and has still in its essential nature a nostalgia for the transcendence, yet it seeks today more and more for a hold upon the physical realities: it seems to remember again what the Upanishadic Rishi sought—the Rishi being asked whether he came for the mundane wealth of a thousand heads of cattle, with golden rings round their horns, or for the knowledge of the Transcendent Reality, replied that he had come for both. And the hidebound materialist West, the positivist scientific West, finds this day many fissures and loopholes in the solid Laplacian scheme; as it dives down and enters into the secrecies of even the most material things, curious mysteries surge up and its eyes demand another look and another vision than those to which the mere senses have accustomed them. Physical Scientists bending towards or being compelled to bend towards metaphysics and even mysticism are no longer an anomaly in the scientific world.

The Spirit is not the static transcendent absolute entity only. It is dynamic Force, creative conscious Energy. The spiritual is not mere silence and status, it is expression and movement also. Any silence and any status are not the silence and the status of the Spirit—the silence and status of death, for example; so too any expression and movement are not of the Spirit either—but this does not mean that the Spirit

cannot have its own expression and movement. God too likewise is not a mere supracosmic being—a somewhat aggrandised human being—treating and dominating man and the world as something foreign and essentially antagonistic to his nature. God himself has made himself all creatures and all worlds. He is That and He is This fundamentally and integrally. Again, at the other end. Matter is not mere dead mechanical matter. It is vibrant energy, but energy that conceals within it life and consciousness. Besides, the whirl and motion of energies is not all, something inherently static looms large behind: you call it ether, field, space or substratum—it is being, one would like to say, infused with a secret consciousness and will.

We say then, symbolically at least, if not literally, that the West is looking to the East for this revelation towards which it is groping or moving in its own way: the secret spirit-consciousness that is alive in and through the material cosmos, that alone gives its total sense and significance. And the secret spirit must embody itself here below in material life, the status must be made supremely dynamic—the transcendent consciousness, even while maintaining its transcendence, has to deploy its immanence in things of the earth and earthly existence. That is what the West brings to the East; that is what the Scientific and materialist look and labour offer to be integrated into the aspiration and realisation of the East.

So then we say that the East starts from the summit and Surveys reality from above downwards, while the West starts from below and works upward. The two complementary movements can be described in several other graphic terms. Instead of a movement from the summit to the base and of another from the base to the apex, that is to say, a movement of ascent and of descent, we can speak of a movement from within outward and of that from outside inward, that is to say, from the centre to the periphery and from the periphery to the centre; we can speak also of a movement of contraction, withdrawal or concentration and a movement of expansion and expression and diffusion. Again, we can refer to a vertical movement and a horizontal movement. All however express the same truth. We postulate one reality, take our stand upon that and work our way towards the other; the two together form the total reality and together can they give the integral life fulfilment.

As I have said, the history of mankind, as a matter of fact, the whole history of creation gives a graphic picture of the interaction of this double movement. There are ages and countries in which one or the

other of the two takes precedence and special or exclusive emphasis. But the inner story is always a converging movement.

Parallel lines meet at infinity, each overpasses its own limit and touches and coalesces with the other.

The marriage of Heaven and Earth, of even Heaven and Hell, is a very ancient dream. It is an aspiration ingrained in existence. It is a prophecy that shall be fulfilled and is being worked out every moment.

## II

For an integral vision of human achievement and perfection we may consider another interesting contrast between the East and the West. We usually attach the word "freedom" or "liberty" to Western culture and civilisation as expressing its essential character: similarly it is bondage, submission, suppression of the individual and individuality that come up in our mind when we think of Eastern culture and civilisation. The judgment is not without truth, so far as it goes; but looked at from a different angle, a deeper standpoint, the true judgment should be, curious to say, just the contrary.

The East does not consider the individual in his social behaviour in terms of freedom and liberty but of service and obligation, not in terms of rights but of duties. The Indian term for right and duty is the same—*adhikara*. The word originally and usually meant duty, one's sphere of work or service, capacity: the meaning of "right" was secondary and only latterly, probably as a result of the impact from the West, has gained predominance. The West measures human progress by the amount of rights gained for the individual or for the group. It does not seem to have any other standard: submission, obedience, any diminution of the sense of separate individuality meant slavery and loss of human value and dignity. It was the Greek perhaps, with Socrates as the great pioneer, who first declared the supremacy of the individual reason- (although he himself obeyed in all things his guardian angel, the *Daemon*). In India, generally in the East, the value of the individual is estimated in another way. So long as he is in the society, the individual is bound by its demands: he has to serve it according to his best capacity. That is the *dharma*—the Law—that one has to observe conscientiously. But if he chooses, he can break the bonds forthwith, come out, come out of the society altogether and be free absolutely—that is the only meaning of freedom. In the West the individual is taught to remain in the world and with the society,

maintain his individuality and independence and gradually enlarge them in and through the natural fetters and bondages that a collective life and efficient organisation demands and inevitably imposes. The East, on the contrary, asks the individual never to protest and assert his individuality, which is in their view only another name for Ignorant egoism, but to know his position in the social scheme and fulfil the duties and obligations of that position. But the individual has the freedom not to enter into the social frame at all. If he chooses freedom as his ideal, it is the supreme freedom that he must choose, out of the chain of a terrestrial life. He can become the spiritual "outlaw", the sannyasi; the word means one who has abandoned everything totally and absolutely.

The contrast points to a synthesis parallel to or an extension of the one we spoke of earlier. The first thing to note is that the individual is the source of all progress; the individual has the right, as it is also his duty to maintain himself and fulfil himself, grow to his largest and highest dimensions. Secondly, the individual has to take cognisance of the others, the whole humanity, in fact, even for the sake of his own progress. The individual is not an isolated entity, a freak product in Nature, but is integrated into it, a part and parcel of its texture and composition. Indeed the individual has a double role to perform, first to increase himself and secondly to increase others. Using the terms which the Sartrian view of existence has put into vogue, we can say, the individual *en soi* (in himself) is the individual in commonalty with others, living and moving in and through every other person; and then there is the individual *pour soi* (for himself), that is to say, existing for himself, apart and away from others, in his own inner absolute autonomy. The individual is individualised, i.e. raises and lifts himself and then becomes the spearhead breaking through the level where Nature stands fixed, leading others to follow and raise themselves. The individual is the power of organised self-consciousness; the growth of the individual means the growth of this power of organised consciousness. And growth means ascension or evolution from level to level. The individual starts from the organic cell, that is the lower end, it progresses through various gradations of the vital and mental worlds till he reaches the culmination of its growth in the Spirit as *atman*. But this vertical growth must be reflected in a horizontal growth too. There is a solidarity among the individuals forming the collective 'humanity' so that the progress of one means the progress of others in the same direction, at least a chance and possibility opened for an advance. On the other hand, it may be noted

that unless the collectivity rises to a certain level the individual too cannot go very far from it. A higher lift in the individual presupposes a corresponding or some minimum lift in others. There cannot or should not be too great a rift between the individual and the collective.

As I said, the East usually ignores this correspondence and posits an exclusive either-or relation between the two terms. The individual, according to it, can reach its true individuality by only dissolving it—in the Infinite. Of course, I am referring to an extreme position which is general in the East and symptomatic of its fundamental character. The West does not concern itself with these higher lines of individual growth and fulfilment, it limits the individual within the social frame and his mundane or profane life; but what we learn from this outlook is the necessity of the collective growth through which only can the individual thrive and grow. It is however a growth in extension, rather than in intensity i.e. depth and height. This outlook errs in the limitation put upon individuality, precisely identifying it more or less with the "egoism" to which the spirituality of the East objects. This normal individual in its normal development cannot go very far, nor can he lead the others, the society or humanity, to a perfect and supreme fulfilment. The ego-bound normal individuality must transcend itself—exactly the thing that the East teaches; only this transcendence need not mean an abolition of all individuality, but a transformation, a higher integration in a spiritualised, a universalised and divinised individuality.

Such an individual will not be like the blind leading the blind, one ego, in its half-light, with its small narrow mental formation imposing its ignorant and ineffective will upon others in the same state of consciousness, but, as I have said, a universalised individual, who has identified himself with all and everyone in his being and consciousness, who has also at the same time transcended himself and others and attained a supreme unitary consciousness and being. It is such a person who is called the leader of human or terrestrial evolution and they who are of the same make are the pioneers who shall build heaven upon earth.

Towards that consummation, these two great world currents, East and West, are moving carrying each its own truth and contributing to the realisation of the integral truth that is to take body here below.

*Part III*

EDUCATION

# *The Immortal Person*

THE whole purpose of man's life upon earth, it may be said, is to make an individuality of himself and to grow in that individuality and organise it perfectly.

An ordinary man is a most disorganised entity and possesses no individual character. His mind is a conglomeration of thoughts and ideas which do not particularly belong to him, but to everybody, being elements of the world-mind in general. His vital being too is a medley of desires, impulses, energies that are not personal in any sense, but pass through him or take a long or short-term asylum in him from the universal vital force. The body, being a definitely delimited object, is perhaps the only thing that appears to be personal—the chief, if not the only source and sign of personal identity; and with the loss of the body, the whole personality seems to crumble down and disappear in the world-existence—the body particles get mixed into the world of matter, the life elements disperse in the vital world, the mental components disintegrate into the world of mind. In fact, this is what happens to the human person after death or would happen normally.

Thus man, the ordinary or "natural" man, has no personality, no real individuality. It is just like a wave-formation out of universal nature, moving in and being moved by the total swell and heave, being formed and being destroyed every moment—as the poet says:

They take birth in you and they dissolve in you like the  
waves in the sea.

And yet the building up of an abiding individual is the secret urge of Nature's evolution: it is the hidden spring of human aspiration

and the purpose of God's creation. Not mere disparate particles—of substance or energy or consciousness—breaking up constantly and scattering and finally dissolving into the void (the great law of Running Down or as the Veda figures it, *tucchyena abwapihitam* absorbed by the infinitesimal) —but a gathering of elements, integrating them into organic wholes, moulding definite forces into definite forms—such is the secret plan behind. Indeed, ego is the first formation, the original instrument which Nature fashioned to carry out this object others.

Ego means a hardened core that is not easily broken by the impact of forces. It delimits, cuts out, endeavours to maintain its formation by a strong violent self-assertion. Ego is a helper, but also it is a bar. It assists the 'first formation but delays and obstructs the true and final formation. For the ego is a formation, an individual formation, but on the level of universal Nature: it is of a piece with the normal cosmic movement, only bounded by a peripheral line. In the general expanse it puts up enclosures and preserves and fencings; the constituting elements remaining the same in substance and quality. Even the delimitation is illusory in reality, it is something like the membrane in the body separating the different functional organs, rigid yet allowing interaction and inter- penetration. That is why, when death removes the outward fencing, the individuality also cannot long maintain itself and merges into the general. We may look upon egoism as a kind of artificial or experimental individuality, a laboratory formation, as it were, tried and developed under given conditions. In fact, however, egoism is a shadow or an echo upon this side of our nature of the true individuality which lies and comes from elsewhere.

And that is the soul of the man. We have spoken of the body, the life and the mind of the individual, but beside and beyond these elements which are only instruments there is this secret master and overlord. It is the particle of divinity in each, the developing consciousness—the spark of Fire, the ray of Light—"the immortal in the mortal no bigger than one's thumb." The soul is an individual, an individual formation of the divine reality: it is a godhead formulating an aspect or function of God. We may thus say that the whole purpose of earthly evolution is the evolution of this soul-formation, that is to say, its growing individualisation in light and power, in the expression of the godhead. This growth is first in itself and of itself, its inherent being and consciousness; then, the growth is that of its instrumentation, in other words, the development and organisation of the mind, the life and the body.

So the individualisation and growth of the soul means a growth and individualisation of the mental being, the vital being and also of the physical being. Normally the purpose of intellectual culture is the growth and individualisation of the mind, the purpose of moral culture is the growth and individualisation of the vital being and the true purpose of physical culture too should be a well-balanced and well-developed physical body, not only in a general sense, but in a very individualised mode. But all these varieties and modes of culture can be truly individualised and not merely ordered or organised, more or less on the surface, only when they obey and subserve the culture of the soul. The mind, the vital and the physical each has to grow its individuality in the growing individuality of the soul. The soul, otherwise called the psychic being, is man's spiritual being: the growth of the spiritual being means the advent and establishment of the true personality.

There is, of course, a spiritual path that turns the soul away from its instruments and demands that it should concentrate exclusively upon itself, upon its essential essence, upon its transcendent existence; but that is not our path and, according to us, that is only a temporary phase, an intermediate necessity for some persons and at certain stages.

The individualisation of the mind, its organisation as a Special formation, as a vehicle of the true light, the light of the Psychic consciousness is comparatively easy for a man. Mind is the first member of the lower sphere that is taken up and dealt with by the soul; for it is the highest and the most characteristic element in man and less dense and less subject to the darkness inherent in human nature. The mental individual persists the longest after the dissolution of the body, it survives and may survive very long the disruption of the vital being. This vital being is next in the rung to be taken up, organised and individualised by and around the psychic being.

The organisation of the vital being in view of a particular object or aim in ordinary life is common enough: the purpose is limited, the scope restricted. Great men of action have done it and one has to do it more or less to be successful in life. This, however, may be called organisation; it is not individualisation in the true sense, much less personalisation. A limb is individualised, personalised only when it is an instrument and formation of the soul consciousness, the psychic being. And the vital is not easily amenable to such a role. For, it is the dynamic element, the effective power of life and

it has acquired a strong nature and a definite function in its earthly relations. Naturally, there is a secret drive and an occult inspiration behind over-riding or guiding all immediate and apparent forces and happenings: in and through these the shape of things to come is being built up. In the meanwhile, however, actually the vital is an executive agent of the lower consciousness: it is an anonymous force of universal nature canalised in to a temporary figure that is the normal individual man. The individualisation of the vital being would mean an immortal formulation of an immortal soul as energy consciousness with a specific role for the Divine to play. It maintains its identity, its personality independent of the vicissitudes of the physical body: it continues to function as a divine being, a godhead, to work for mankind and the world. The popular legend has imaged this phenomenon in the mystic figure of an immortal Aswatthama and Vibhishana still wandering in earth's atmosphere.

Finally, it is the turn of the body to become individualised, personalised, that is to say, when it takes up the disposition and configuration of the psychic person and individual. The first stage is that of a subtle body individualised, a radiant form of etherealised elements consisting of the concentrated light particles of the divine consciousness of the Psyche. This too is an immortalisation of the personal identity which can be achieved and is achieved by the gnostic man who is to come, who will wholly psychicise and divinise his personality. The second stage is the reorganisation and individualisation of the material sheath itself. The very cells of the body are impregnated with the radiant substance of the supreme spiritual consciousness; they live the life of the spiritual individual, the personal divine embodied in the individual. When the whole process is gone through and the work done, the individual body, physically too, shares in and attains the immortality of the soul. The body is firm enough to maintain its physical identity and yet plastic enough to change in the manner and to the degree demanded of it at any time.

In the process of making the body personal and divine and immortal, death or what appears as such may be a needed operation. It is no longer an ineluctable destiny forced upon you, but an instrument which you use consciously for a definite purpose. It is a mystic or occult work (kriya) which we can try to understand by an analogy. The evolution of the ideal or divine man, the assumption of the mortal by the immortal involves a twofold operation: rejection and integration. Rejection means throwing out the elements that belong exclusively to the lower grade and cannot be taken up and incorporated into the

higher;

while integration means taking up and absorbing utilisable elements of the lower into the higher. This double process goes on on all the levels, on the mental, on the vital, on the subtle physical and even on the physical level. At a certain stage or in a concentrated process of alchemy the process of rejection may demand a mode of reshuffling and redistribution which physically appears like death, but it is inevitably followed or accompanied by the process of integration or recreation.

Perhaps this supreme and dangerous gesture only the Master can make—as the pioneer and pathfinder—and he has made it.

# *The Nature of Perfection*

PERFECTION is often understood to mean the highest or the utmost possible development, even if it be in one particular line or direction. That, however, can better be called success or achievement. True perfection is not an extreme growth, however great or commendable it may be: it is the harmony of an all-round growth, the expression of the unified total being. And yet this does not involve a stultification of any limb or a forced diminution of any capacity. Perfection does not consist either in the harmonisation of the utmost possible development of each and every capacity, attribute or power of being. First of all, it is not a possible ideal, given the conditions of existence and manifestation. Secondly, it is not necessary: perfection can be realised even otherwise.

How is the harmony to be brought about in the human system composed of so many different and discordant factors, forms and forces of consciousness? It is not possible if one tries to make them accommodate each other, tone down the individual acuties and angularities, blunt or cut out the extreme expressions and effect some sort of a compromise or a pact of goodwill. It is not the Greek ideal of the golden mean nor is it akin to the modern democratic ideal which lays down that each element is free—to grow and possess—to the extent that it allows the same freedom to every other element. No, for true harmony one has to go behind and beyond the apparent divergences to a secret being or status of consciousness, the bed-rock of existence where all divergences are resolved and find their inherent and inalienable unity, their single origin and basis. If one gets there and takes one's stand upon that absolute oneness, then and then only the perfect harmony of all the diversities that naturally rise out of it as

its self-expression becomes possible, not only possible but inevitable.

That bed-rock is one's inmost spiritual being, the divine Consciousness which is at once an individual centre, a cosmic or universal field of existence and a transcendent truth and reality. With that as the nucleus and around it the whole system has to be arranged and organised: according to the demand of the will and vision composing that consciousness, life has to manifest itself and play out its appointed role. Its configuration or disposition will be wholly determined by the Divine Purpose working in and through it; its fullness will be the fullness of the Divine Presence and intention. The mind will be wholly illumined, the vital with it will become the pure energy of Consciousness and the physical body will be made out of the substance of the divine being: our humanity will be the home and sanctuary of the Divine.

## *The Relative Best*

WHATEVER happens is for the best—under the circumstances, it must be added, for the best is the resultant of many forces pulling in all directions for and against and sideways. The best means whatever leads to the goal, to the ultimate good, the final reality, the Supreme, the Divine. The universe is so arranged, the divine dispensation acts in such a way that every event, every circumstance, whatever its appearance, always leads to the Supreme Goal. So it is said the way, whatever it is, straight or crooked, always guides you to your final realisation.

Only, in the progressive march, the best can always be bettered and must be bettered. In the earlier stages, when one is in ignorance and darkness lies about, the path is sure to be tortuous with ups and downs, aberrations and retrogressions, but as one advances and the consciousness grows the obscurity dissipates, gradually the path to be straightens itself, becomes smooth and kindly. That is how the best at one moment, which may appear to the superficial consciousness, very bad or even the worst, is bettered—betterment means precisely this that one rises into a clearer consciousness, one moves along a straighter path, one takes a shorter and happier course to the Goal. This is true as much of the individual as of the world as a whole, for the world too, like the individual, moves inevitably towards its high destiny—the same as or parallel to that of the individual.

It is the best that happens always for nothing else can happen but it is a relative best, relative to the situation that the consciousness according to its status creates around. As the consciousness advances the nature of the best is also transformed.

There is an absolute best but that can happen only when the con-

consciousness has arrived at, attained union with the Supreme Consciousness. In fact there is then no longer any path to traverse, the path has lapsed or merged into the goal, the path and the goal have become one. This does not mean that dangers and difficulties and pitfalls have to be accepted and welcomed but that they have to be faced in the right spirit as aids and helps necessary and inevitable at certain points of the journey. One must grow into the consciousness that will be able to see them as such, find their use and turn them into the good that lies behind or ahead.

# *Mind and the Mental World*

THE world of the mind is a vast field, even vaster it seems than the physical world. The physical world extends, science tells us, to millions of light-years. We may say practically, it is an infinite extension and mind is a thing which surrounds, envelops this measureless extension. Mind surpasses the physical on another count, that is to say, in respect of speed. A material body at its best travels at the speed of light, that is to say, in a second it goes about 200,000 miles (a little less). But thought does not meet any obstruction in respect of distance; whatever the distance, it reaches its goal immediately, it does not take account of time.

Perhaps because of its expansiveness and its speed, a Vedic Rishi sends up a prayer to it not to be so elusive, not to go away too far but to return and dwell in its home. Evidently the Rishi speaks of gathering and collecting together the dispersed uncontrolled thoughts and settling them in an ordered way in his consciousness. We must note, however, that mind and matter are two different categories and have different dimensions. Material space is not the same as mental space and the speed of light and the speed of thought are not commensurable.

The mental world, the world of thoughts, is a world in itself. It is autonomous. It moves in its own way with its own laws. We human beings, we believe that it is we who think, that is, produce or create our thoughts. We are the makers of our notions and ideas. But in reality it is not so. Thoughts, ideas, notions, all movements of the mind are self-existent realities. They go about or flow on like the waves of a vast sea. Human beings are mere instruments, receptacles that capture or seize some undulations of this vast ocean. Man is man, that is to say,

a mental being, because in him the brain has developed to such an extent and in such a manner that it serves as antennae or as an aerial to receive vibrations from the mental world. Indeed the ordinary human mind is a sort of crossroads where all kinds of thoughts from all places meet, cross one another and make an ideal market place. In fact, an individual does not possess any thought-movement which can be called his own. He only catches a contagion. And like a contagion thought-movements pass from one person to another although one may think or feel that the movement is one's own.

In order to have one's own thought, in order to think by oneself, a long process of education and training is necessary. A growing personal individual consciousness is the first requisite and for that one must do what the Vedic Rishi I spoke of sought to do, gather the thoughts that one has, collect them, sift them and try to have a control over them. One must develop the habit of admitting certain thoughts and rejecting others. Thoughts that are useful, that carry light and peacefulness and happiness, are naturally those that are worth accepting. Those that are of a contrary nature should be pushed out. This is an exercise that develops the individual consciousness and the individual will.

Furthermore, one may try to recognise thoughts that are of a different category, that do not seem to belong to the accustomed level of consciousness but carry a vibration that is of elsewhere, in other words, thought-movements that filter through and come down from higher ranges of consciousness. It means an elevation of consciousness, your being rises into higher realities.

The true individual, the being who is capable of living and creating independently, is formed of a stuff that lies in these higher regions.

It is only when one has found one's individual self seated in the Divine centre secret behind, organised around the centre all lesser movements, marshalled them according to an inner law, that one becomes master of one's environment and creative in the true sense of the word.

Mind is a force, thought and energy but that can be truly and fully effective when it is organised, directed, that is to say, it becomes then a guided missile. In an ordinary mind the thoughts are, as I have said, dispersed, they go about in all directions, to all objectives and therefore their efficacy is at its minimum. It is like light. Light-energy becomes immensely, incredibly powerful when it is concentrated,

gathered towards one point. It is in this way the light-ray nowadays is trying to replace the surgeon's knife.

Usually when we think of a person or a thing, our thought-vibration reaches its object but because the vibration is diffuse —not polarised— it touches or just brushes its object very faintly without almost any reaction from it. An organised, truly individualised consciousness has its thought-movements too, so organised and controlled and directed that it moves with a clear and forceful momentum. A mental vibration, a thought-movement becomes fully dynamic, totally effective, however, when it gets its support from the vital. The vital too in an organised and individualised personality loses its capriciousness and lends its support to the directing consciousness.

# *Education is Organisation*

EDUCATION is organisation. Mind's education means organisation of mental faculties. Organisation naturally involves development. The faculties in the normal and natural state are an undeveloped disorganised lot, a confused mass,—unformed, ill-formed ideas, notions, thoughts, form a jumble. They have no purpose, no direction, no common impulse or end, each runs in its own way. The mind's faculties such for example as attention, memory, discrimination, reasoning, cogent thinking have to be clear and efficient and learn how to work harmoniously for a common objective. In the process and for that purpose they have to be developed, that is to say each of them has to be strong, able, ample, concentrated. They have to present a united front and function towards an ever-increasing consciousness and knowledge.

As for the mental faculties so for the faculties of the vital. The normal vital being in man is in a greater and perhaps more dangerous chaos. The impulses, emotions, upsurges that belong to this domain have not so much to be developed or increased as to be purified, made conscious, yoked together in a common drive towards a harmonious dynamic realisation in life and life's achievements. And lastly the organisation in the physical body. The limbs of the body have not even growth, they do not move together in a balanced and rhythmic way. Some are unhealthy, some do not work, some others are overworked. These too have to be co-ordinated, each set in its place and made to function in unison with others. That is physical education and that too means perfect organisation.

We have said that organisation means working for a common end and common purpose. That comes from an opening into a deeper

and higher level of being. We name it the soul.

The soul's purpose, the soul's destiny has to be achieved and

# *The Spirit of Tapasya*

TAPASYA (Asceticism) is usually understood to mean the capacity to undergo physical discomfort and suffering. We are familiar with various types of Tapasya: sitting in summer with blazing fire all around and the fiery noonday sun overhead (Panchagnivrata), exposing one's bare limbs to the cold biting blasts among the eternal snows, lying down on a bed of sharp nails, betaking oneself to sack-cloth and ashes, fasting even to the point of death: there is no end to the variety of ways and means which man's ingenuity has invented to torture himself. Somehow the feeling has grown among spiritual, religious and even moral aspirants as well that the body is the devil that has to be curbed and controlled with bit and bridle and whip. Indeed the popular view measures the greatness of a saint by the amount of his physical privations.

One seems not to know that the devil cannot be so easily checkmated or beguiled. For, indeed, it is easy for the body to take punishment, to submit to all kinds of rigours, yet feel as if it was making ample amends and atonement in that way rather than really give up its aboriginal instincts and impulses. Often one deceives oneself, succeeds in hiding, in secretly preserving one's unsaintliness behind a smoke-screen of the utmost physical tapasya.

Real Tapasya, however, is not in relation to the body and its comforts and discomforts; it is in relation to the inner being, the consciousness and its directives and movements. Tapasya, austerity, consists in reacting to the downward pull of the ordinary consciousness, turning and attuning it to the rhythm of higher levels. To oppose the force of gravitation, to move ceaselessly towards purer and luminous heights of being and consciousness, that is Tapasya, Askesis, true asceticism.

Virgil, the great poet-of a diviner order in human life, expressed the idea most beautifully and aptly in those well- known lines, one of the characteristic passages showing his genius at its best:

... superasque evadere ad auras,  
Hoc opus, hic labor est.<sup>10</sup>

...to move out into the higher spaces,  
This is work, here is labour.

Heroism consists in this untiring march upward to more and more rarefied heights. That means the growth of consciousness, its uplifting and expansion, freeing it from the limitations of the ignorant egoistic movements, pressing it forward to the domains of higher illuminations, towards spiritual consciousness and soul-knowledge, towards communion with the Divine, the cosmic and the transcendent Reality. That is the real work and labour. Bodily suffering is nothing: it is neither a sign nor a test of the ardours of consciousness thus seeking to uplift itself. Indeed, Tapas, the word from which tapasya is derived, means energy of consciousness, and Tapasya is the exercise, the utilisation of that energy for the ascent and expansion of the consciousness. It is this inner athleticism that is the thing needful, not its vain physical simulacrum—not the one which is commonly worshipped.

<sup>10</sup> *Virgil: Aeneid, VI. 128*

# *Brahmacharya*

BRAHMACHARYA means the storage of energy in the body and its sublimation. The energy in view is mainly physico-vital energy, the vital energy based upon and imbedded in the physical body. Brahmacharya naturally meant a strict observance of certain rules and regulations involving a strenuous discipline.

Brahmacharya was the very basis of education in ancient India: indeed, it was the basic education upon which Indian culture, Indian civilization, Indian life was based and built up. Without it there was no entry into the business of life.

Modern education means storage of information, knowledge of things—as much knowledge of as many things as it is possible for the brain to contain. The older ideal, however, was not so much knowledge, that is to say, packet of knowings, but capacity, first capacity in a general way, and then as its application, the capacity of knowledge. The problem was to locate, that is to say, find out the source of energy then master it, increase it, harness it and utilise it. The physico-vital energy is the most elementary and elemental energy that is nearest to us and most easily available. It is the basic energy; man starts his life with that, a child possesses it abundantly. The first problem is how to store it; evidently it is most liable to be thrown or frittered away. The first form of the discipline in the preparatory stage of early life is regularity in habits, methodical physical exercises; even a fixed routine sometimes helps much. Next comes self-control, continence, physical purity. This is Brahmacharya proper. It means the exercise of conscious will.

We do not speak of Brahmacharya in relation to a child. The discipline can be taken up only when the body and the consciousness

have attained a certain degree of growth and development. A child grows in the full free play of its life movements: the care or attention of others should weigh upon it as lightly as possible, maintaining only an atmosphere of happy influence and protection. The transition from the stage of free play to conscious control is marked in Indian society by the ceremony of upanayana, the first approach or initiation: it is the beginning of the life of Brahmacharya.

It must be understood that this discipline is not merely for those who wish to follow a religious or spiritual life, but for all without exception. Brahmacharya is the first ashrama, order or stage of life with which one begins one's organisation of life; one has to pass through it to others leading to greater and higher degrees of fulfilment. It forms the foundation, prepares the necessary ground upon which the life structure can safely be raised and maintained. It is the secret fund of strength, the source of pure energies that vitalises life, enhances its values, makes it worth living.

The energy that one stores by continence, regular habits and self-discipline increases also in that way. Sometimes special methods—kriya—are adopted to help the process, Asana or Pranayama, for example. But an inner and a more psychological procedure is needed, a concentration of will and consciousness—a kind of dhyana, in other words—in order to be able to take the next step in discipline. For after the storage and increase of energy comes the sublimation of energy, that is to say, the physico-vital energy transmuted into the energy of mental substance, medha. Sublimation means also the increase of brain-power, an enhancement in the degree and quality of its capacity. This has nothing to do with the volume of knowledge enclosed (the mass of information to which we referred before) the growth is with regard to the very stuff of the mind from within, the natural strength of intelligence that can be applied to any field of knowledge with equal success and felicity.

The basis and the immediate aim of education according to the ancient system was to develop this fundamental mental capacity: the brain's power to think clearly, consistently and deeply, to undergo labour without tiring easily and also a general strength and steadiness in the nerves. The transference of nervous energy into brain energy is also a secret of the process of sublimation. It is precisely this aspect of education that has been most neglected in modern times. We give no thought to this fundamental: we leave the brain to develop as it may (or may not), it is made to grow under pressure—more to inflate

than to grow—by forcing into it masses of information. The result at best is that it is sharpened, made acute superficially or is overgrown in a certain portion of it in respect of a narrow and very specialised function, losing thereby a healthy harmony and homogeneity in the total movement. The intellectual's nervous instability is a very common phenomenon among us.

In recent times, however, we have begun to view children's education in a different light. It is being more and more realised that things are not to be instilled into the child from outside, but that the child should be allowed to grow and imbibe naturally. The teacher is only a companion and a guide: he is to let the child move according to its own inclinations, follow its own line of curiosity; he can open up and present new vistas of curiosity, seek to evoke new interests. Sympathy and encouragement on his side giving scope to freedom and autonomous development for the child—this is the watchword and motto for the ideal teacher.

This new approach has rectified much of the wrong handling of the problem of education to which we have been accustomed. Even this new orientation, however, is not sufficient: along with freedom and autonomy, the element of discipline and order has also to be brought in, if not quite in the old way at least in a new manner. It will not do to say simply that it must be self-discipline and self-order, but the question is how it is to be practically carried out. In ancient times it was done by living the life of an aspirant, not merely by studying and going to school, being only a student—but living in the hours of the teacher, in the atmosphere of his direct presence and influence: the teacher too was not a machine issuing mechanical instruction, but a Person who loved and whom one loved, a warm embodiment of the ideal.

In our days there has been this unhappy division between the student and the aspirant. In the student life, life and study are things apart. One may be a good student, study very seriously and attain considerable eminence in intellectual achievement, and yet in life one may remain quite the ordinary man with very normal reactions. Along with the brain we do not endeavour to educate the life instincts and body impulses. This portion of our nature we leave all alone and do not dare or care to handle it consciously. Sometimes we call that freedom; but it is more slavery than freedom, slavery to our commonplace animal nature. Because one follows one's impulses and instincts freely, without let or hindrance one feels as if he were

free. Far from it.

This hiatus in our nature, the separation between intellectual culture and life movement has to be healed up; human personality must be made a unified whole. The training given under Brahmacharya will be of immense help in that direction. The deeper purpose, however, of this discipline is not merely a unification of the personality, but a heightening also, lifting it to a level of consciousness from where it can envisage its spiritual destiny and seek to realise it.

# *Education as the Growth of Consciousness*

ALL knowledge is within you. Information you get from outside, but the understanding of it ? It is from within. The information from outside gives you dead matter. What puts life into it, light into it is your own inner light.

All education, all culture means drawing this inner light to the front. Indeed the word 'education' literally means, 'to bring out.' Plato also pointed to the same truth when he said that education is remembrance. You remember what is imbedded or secreted within, you bring to the light, the light of your physical mind, what you have within, what you already possess in your being and inner consciousness. Acquisition is not education. Indeed a miser is not a rich man, rich is he who knows how to utilise his wealth, even so a possessor of much information is only a carrier of loads.

True education is growth of consciousness. It is consciousness that carries the light and the power of the light. We are born upon earth with this consciousness at the centre of our being. And a growing child is nothing but a growing consciousness. Growth of consciousness means an increasing intensity and an increasing amplitude or wideness of the light. Unfortunately, placed as we are under the circumstances of life as it is, this light of consciousness is not allowed to grow in its natural arid normal way. The external demands of life and the world put a pressure upon it which turns it away from its straight path. Things are demanded of this light or consciousness which do not belong to its nature, which are not an expression of its nature. As though it is twisted, tortured or smothered under utilitarian

necessities.

The brain should be a flowering of this consciousness, a developing vehicle for the expression of the increasing consciousness.

For that a guidance is needed so that one may always turn within and look for that consciousness, feel it growing, and with one's will and thought and act help its growth and development. A brain is not developed by the mass of information that may be pressed into it. Informations are necessary but they should be presented in such a way that they serve as fuel, helpful fuel to the mounting fire; they must not be merely piled up upon and around the fire or be as so many wet faggots crushing it down with their weight. A true learner is one who seeks sincerely this inner consciousness which is one's own; the true teacher is one who knows how to lead the learner towards this inner light.

# *Consciousness as Freedom*

CONSCIOUSNESS is liberty, unconsciousness is slavery. When you are unconscious you are a prey to all kinds of forces and beings outside yourself and over which you have no control. You are a plaything in the hands of any power or influence that seeks to possess you and when you are in such a state it is the undesirable powers that seek and secure hospitality in you. It is only when you become conscious that you begin to react to the outside forces that try to control you or utilise you.

In the lower creation it is always a play of divergent forces and the individual being is only a field, a passive field for the play of cosmic or collective forces. It is in man, with the awakening of an individual consciousness in him, that a movement of self-assertion, of willed reaction has started in nature, that is to say, one is no more content with playing the role of a slave executing helplessly what is demanded of him by an external agent but is now making his own terms and propositions. That is how man is man because he is creating his own self and his own environment.

Consciousness, however, is not mere consciousness, that is to say, awareness; it is also power, power for organisation and execution. It is unconsciousness that is or invariably leads to disorderliness, disorganisation and confusion. It is the light of consciousness that brings order out of chaos, gives an organised direction to forces moving at random and with no purpose. Man has started organising his life since he acquired the light of consciousness. He has been doing the yoga of the intelligent will (Gita's buddhi-yoga) since his advent upon earth. But even in man this force of light, the energy of consciousness not fully operative- because man is not fully conscious, he is only partially

so. His mind is conscious and has developed into intelligence (a little strayed into intellectuality); but there are large domains in him that are wholly unconscious, that is to say, move in mechanical rounds, a passive slave of external impacts. I am referring to his vital being and his physical being. Even like the mind these too must admit into themselves the light of the consciousness in order to free themselves from the influence of other external forces and attain the sense of their own truth and self-fulfilment.

Indeed each part, even each constituent element of our being has an individuality of its own, a personal being and consciousness. And it is because it is not aware of that inner reality, because it has fallen unconscious, therefore it has entered into this life of bondage and slavery and mechanical existence. When life becomes conscious, the life-energy becomes luminous, the vital being gradually gains self-control and self-direction. Instead of being moved about by irresponsible and irrepressible desires and impulses it attains a clarity as to what it should desire and what it should effectuate; and along with that light secures the strength also to act up to the directions of that light.

The body too similarly can be filled with light and light-energy; instead of being wholly at the mercy of the physical environment, the natural conditions around or even subject to its own innate or atavistic suggestions, it can be aware of its true reality, its inner nature, its higher potentialities.

I have spoken of the light in the mind, the consciousness that has awakened there and has organised its activities as an autonomous unit. But we must not forget that it is only partially so. The autonomy is very limited, for a good part of the human mind is far from being conscious, there is a part half-conscious and a part almost wholly unconscious. This hemisphere so to say is under the influence of the vital and the physical being with their unconscious and ill-organised influence. The true light comes from elsewhere, the mind in so far as it receives the light becomes conscious and proportionately autonomous. The light is always the spiritual light, the consciousness of the spirit which is above and beyond mind. Not only the mind but the vital too, and the physical too in order to be consciously organised and free and autonomous must know how to take in that light beyond the mind and bathe in its liberating influence.

In fact, education means precisely this instilling of the consciousness into the part that is sought to be educated. Usually the thing is

done in a different way which is wrong, at least an inefficient way. By education we usually mean exercising, that is teaching some exercises mostly of memory on some subject in which one seeks education. It is more or less an exercise of mechanical repetition. Whether it is of the mind or of the body the procedure is the same. As the muscles of the body are sought to be strengthened and developed through repetitive exercises, the mental faculties too are put under a training that consists of similar repetitive exercises. To store the mind with as many kinds of information as possible, hammer all ingredients of knowledge into the brain cells learning by rote as it is termed, this is what education normally means; but as I said, it is consciousness that is to be evoked in the mind and it is not done by mere mechanical exercises. Even the body does not reach its true perfection unless the exercises are attended with consciousness, awareness, a play of light into the movements of the body, into the limbs that participate in the play of the exercises. Naturally the vital does not need any exercise for its development, it is naturally exercised, much exercised. It has to be not exercised but exorcised, that is to say, purified and controlled. And that means the introduction of the pure light of consciousness into it.

I have laid stress on consciousness, but consciousness has three facets or steps. The first is simple consciousness, the next is self-consciousness and the last supra-consciousness. First you become conscious of a thing, next you become conscious that you are conscious of the thing, last something else is conscious in and through your consciousness.

# *A True Professor*

THE Mother says a professor, a true professor, must be truly a yogi. That is to say, a teacher, even a schoolteacher, one imparting what is called secular education, has to be nothing less than a yogi. The Indian term for teacher is 'guru' and 'guru' meant a teacher both spiritual and secular. This distinction of the two words is made by the modern spirit, it did not belong to the ancient culture. The secular knowledge was also considered a necessary part of the spiritual knowledge, that which prepared for it and led towards it. The 'aparavidya' or the 'vedangas' were but limbs of the supreme knowledge 'para vidya' and 'veda'.

A teacher has to be a yogi does not mean that he is to be a paragon of moral qualities, following, for example, the ten commandments scrupulously. Not to tell a lie, not to lose temper, to be patient, impartial, to be honest and unselfish, all these more or less social qualities have their values but something else is needed for the true teacher, something of another category and quality. I said social qualities, I might say also mental qualities. The consciousness of the teacher has to be other than mental, something deeper, more abiding, more constant, less relative, something absolute. Do we then prescribe the supreme Brahma-consciousness for the teacher? Not quite. We mean the consciousness of a soul, the living light that is within every aspiring human being. It is a glad luminousness in the heart that can exist with or without the brilliant riches of a cultivated brain. And one need not go so far as the vedantic Sachchidananda consciousness.

That is the first and primary necessity. When the teacher approaches the pupil, he must know how to do it in and through that inner intimate consciousness. It means a fundamental attitude, a

mode of being of the whole nature rather than a scientific procedure: all the manuals of education will not be able to procure you this treasure. It is an acquisition that develops or manifests spontaneously through an earnest desire, that is to say, aspiration for it. It is this that establishes a strange contact with the pupil, radiates or infuses the knowledge, even the learning that the teacher possesses, infallibly and naturally into the mind and brain of the pupil.

Books and programmes are of secondary importance, they are only a scaffolding, the building within is made of a different kind of bricks. A happy luminous consciousness within is the teacher's asset, with that he achieves all; without it he fails always.

If the teacher is to be a yogi, the pupil on his side must be at least an aspirant. But I suppose a pupil, so long as he is a child, is a born aspirant. For, as the Mother says, a child's consciousness retains generally something of the pure inner consciousness for sometime at least until it is overshadowed by the development of the body and the mind in the ordinary normal way. Something of this, we know, has been expressed in the famous lines of the visionary English poet:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar..  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy..<sup>11</sup>

But if the right teacher is found, that pure flame in the child's consciousness can be kept burning, can even be made to burn brighter and higher. A teacher too on his side in the presence of a pure child-flame in his pupil may profit by its warm touch; for the two by their intimate interaction grow together towards a greater fulfilment in both.

When we speak or think of education and consider the relation of the teacher and the pupil, we generally confine ourselves to the mental domain, that is to say, aim wholly or mainly at the intellectual

<sup>11</sup> *Wordsworth: Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.*

acquisition and attainment, and only sometimes as per Necessity as it were we turn at most to the moral domain, that is to say, we look for the growth of character, of good manners and behaviour—social values as we have said. Here we have tried to bring into the educationist's view a more important, a much more important and interesting domain—a new dimension of consciousness.

*Part IV*

SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

# *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 judgment 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 effacing 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 firma* 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 inquiries and observations have established beyond doubt certain facts of extra-sensory, suprarational perception—of clairvoyance and clairaudience, 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, super-natural power? 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— *mirabile 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 meme* (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 forms the equation  $1 \cdot 2 = 1$  (we might as well 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 Jagadis-chandra 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 layout 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 imbedded 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 it 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 mesalliance, 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.

# *The Observer and the Observed*

SCIENCE means objectivity, that is to say, elimination of the personal element—truth as pure fact without being distorted or coloured by the feelings and impressions and notions of the observer. It is the very opposite of the philosopher's standpoint who says that a thing exists because (and so long as) it is perceived. The scientist swears that a thing exists whether you perceive it or not, perception is possible because it exists, not the other way. And yet Descartes is considered not only as the father of modern philosophy, but also as the founder of modern mathematical science. But more of that anon. The scientific observer observes as a witness impartial and aloof: he is nothing more than a recording machine, a sort of passive mirror reflecting accurately and faithfully what is presented to it. This is indeed the great revolution brought about by Science in the world of human inquiry and in human consciousness, viz; the isolation of the observer from the observed.

In the old world, before Science was born, sufficient distinction or discrimination was not made between the observer and the observed. The observer mixed himself up or identified himself with what he observed and the result was not a scientific statement but a poetic description. Personal feelings, ideas, judgments entered into the presentation of facts and the whole mass passed as truth, the process often being given the high-sounding name of Intuition, Vision or Revelation but whose real name is fancy. And if there happened to be truth of fact somewhere, it was almost by chance; Once we thought of the eclipse being due to the greed of a demon, and pestilence due to the evil eye of a wicked goddess. The universe was born out of an egg, the cosmos consisted of concentric circles of worlds that were meant to reward the virtuous and punish the sinner in graded degrees.

These are some of the very well-known instances of pathetic fallacy, that is to say, introducing the element of personal sentiment in our appreciation of events and objects. Even today Nazi race history and Soviet Genetics carry that unscientific prescientific tradition.

Science was born the day when the observer cut himself aloof from the observed. Not only so, not only he is to stand aside, outside the field of observation and be a bare recorder, but that he must let the observed record itself, that is, be its' own observer. Modern Science means not so much the observer narrating the story of the observed but the observed telling its own story. The first step is well exemplified in the story of Galileo. When hot discussion was going on and people insisted on saying—as Aristotle decided and common sense declared—that heavier bodies most naturally fall quicker from a height, it was this prince of experimenters who straightaway took two different weights, went up the tower of Pisa and let them drop and astounded the people by showing that both travel with equal speed and fall to the ground at the same time.

Science also declared that it is not the observation of one person, however qualified, that determines the truth or otherwise of a fact, but the observation of many persons and the possibility of observations of all persons converging, coinciding, corroborating. It is only when observation has thus been tested and checked that one can be sure that the personal element has been eliminated. Indeed the ideal condition would be if the observer, the scientist himself, could act as part of the machine for observation: at the most he should be a mere assembler of the parts of the machine that would record itself, impersonally, automatically. The rocket instruments that are sent high up in the sky to record the temperature, pressure or other weather condition in the stratosphere or the deep-sea recording machines are ingenious inventions in that line. The wizard Jagadish Chandra Bose showed his genius precisely in the way he made the plant itself declare its life-story: it is not what the scientist thinks or feels about the plant, but what the plant has to say of its own accord, as it were—its own tale of growth and decay, of suffering, spasm, swoon, suffocation or death under given conditions. This is the second step that Science took in the direction of impersonal and objective inquiry.

It was thought' for long a very easy matter—at least not extraordinarily difficult—to eliminate the observer and keep only to the observed. It was always known how the view of the observer, that is to say, his observation changed in, respect of the observed fact with his

change of position. The sun rises and sets to the observer on earth: to an observer on Mars, for example, the sun would rise and set, no doubt, but earth too along with, in the same way as Mars and sun appear to us now, while to an observer on the sun, the sun would seem fixed while the planets would be seen moving round. Again, we all know the observer in a moving train sees things outside the train moving past and himself at stand-still; the same observer would see another train moving alongside in the same direction and with the same speed as stuck to it and at stand-still, but as moving with double the speed if going in a contrary direction: and so on.

The method proposed for eliminating the observer was observation, more and more observation, and experiment, testing the observation under given conditions. I observe and record a series of facts and when I have found a sufficient number of them I see I am, able to put them all together under a general title, a law of the occurrence or pattern of the objects observed. Further it is not I alone who can do it in any peculiar way personal to me, but that everybody else can do the same thing and arrive at the same series of facts leading to the same conclusion. I note, for example, the sun's path from day to day in the sky; soon we find that the curves described by the sun are shifted along the curve of an ellipse (that is to say, their locus is an ellipse). The ecliptic is thus found to be an ellipse which means that the earth moves round the sun in an ellipse.

But in the end a difficulty arose in the operation of observation. It proved to be not a simple process. The scientific observer requires for his observation the yard-stick and the time-piece. Now, we have been pushed to admit a queer phenomenon (partly by observation and partly by a compelling deduction) that these two measuring units are not constant; they change with the change of system, that is to say, according to the velocity of the system. In other words, each observer has his own unit of space and time measure. So the elimination of the personal element of the observer has become a complicated mathematical problem, even if one is sure of it finally.

There is still something more. The matter of calculating and measuring objectively was comparatively easy when the object in view was of medium size, neither too big nor too small. But in the field of the infinite and the infinitesimal, when from the domain of mechanical forces we enter into the region of electric and radiant energy, we find our normal measuring apparatus almost breaks down. Here accurate observation can- not be made because of the very presence of the ob-

server, because of the very fact of observation. The ultimates that are observed are trails of light particles: now when the observer directs his eye (or the beam of light replacing the eye) upon the light particle, its direction and velocity are interfered with: the photon is such a tiny infinitesimal -that a ray from the observer's eye is sufficient to deflect and modify its movement. And there is no way of determining or eliminating this element of deflection or interference. The old Science knew certainly that a thermometer dipped in the water whose temperature it is to measure itself changes the initial temperature. But that was something calculable and objective. Here the position of the observer is something like a "possession", imbedded, ingrained, involved in the observed itself.

The crux of the difficulty is this. We say the observing eye or whatever mechanism is made to function for it, disturbs the process of observation. Now to calculate that degree or measure of disturbance one has to fall back upon another observing eye, and this again has to depend upon yet another behind. Thus there is an infinite regress and no final solution. So, it has been declared, in the ultimate analysis, scientific calculation gives us only the average result, and it is only average calculations that are possible.

Now we come to the sanctum, the Shekinah, of the problem. For there is a still deeper mystery. And pre-eminently it is an Einsteinian discovery. It is not merely the measuring ray of light, not merely the beam in the eye of the observer that is the cause of interference: the very mind behind the eye is involved in a strange manner. The mind is not a tabula rasa, it comes into the field with certain presuppositions—axioms and postulates, as it calls them—due to its angle of vision and perhaps to the influence upon it of immediate sense perception. It takes for granted, for example, that light travels in a straight line, that parallels do not meet, indeed all the theorems and deductions of Euclidean geometry. There is a strong inclination in the mind to view things as arranged according to that pattern. Einstein has suggested that the spherical scheme can serve as well or even better our observations. Riemann's non-Euclidean geometry has assumed momentous importance in contemporary scientific enquiry. It is through that scheme that Einstein proposes to find the equation that will subsume the largest number of actual and possible or potential facts and bring about the reconciliation of such irreconcilables as wave and particle, gravitation and electricity.

In any case, at the end of all our peregrinations we seem to circle

back to our original Cartesian-cum-Berkeleyean position; we discover that it is not easy to extricate the observed from the observer: the observer is so deep set in the observed, part and parcel of it that there are scientists who consider their whole scientific scheme of the world as only a mental set-up, we may replace it very soon by another scheme equally cogent, subjective all the same. The subject has entered into all objects and any definition of the object must necessarily depend upon the particular poise of the subject. That is the cosmic immanence of the Purusha spoken of in the Upanishads—the one Purusha become many and installed in the heart of each and every object. There is indeed a status of the Subject in which the subject and the object are gathered into or form one reality. The observer and the observed are the two ends, the polarisation of a single entity: and all are realise at that level. But the scientific observer is only the mental purusha and in his observation the absolute objectivisation is not possible. The Einsteinian equations that purport to rule out all local view-points can hardly be said to have transcended the co-ordinates of the subject. That is possible only to the consciousness of the cosmic Purusha.

## 2

Is it then to say that science is no longer science, it has now been converted into philosophy, even into idealistic philosophy ?

In spite of Russell and Eddington who may be considered in this respect as counsellors of despair, the objective reality of the scientific field stands, it is asserted, although somewhat changed.

Now, there are four positions possible with regard to the world and reality, depending on the relation between the observer and the observed, the subject and the object. They are: (1) subjective, (2) objective, (3) subjective objective and (4) objective subjective. The first two are extreme positions, one holding the subject as the sole or absolute reality, the object being a pure fabrication of its will and idea, an illusion, and the other considering the object as the true reality, the subject being an outcome, an epiphenomenon of the object itself, an illusion after all. The first leads to radical or as it is called monistic spirituality the type of which is Mayavada: the second is the highway of materialism, the various avatars of which are Marxism, Pragmatism, Behaviourism etc. In between lie the other two intermediate positions according to the stress or value given to either of the two extremes. The first of the intermediates is the position held generally by the idealists, by many schools of spirituality: it is a major Vedantic

position. It says that the outside world, the object, is not an illusion, a mere fabrication of the mind or consciousness of the subject, but that it exists and is as real as the subject: it is dovetailed into the subject which is a kind of linchpin, holding together and even energising the object. The object can further be considered as an expression or embodiment of the subject. Both the subject and the object are made of the same stuff of consciousness—the ultimate reality being consciousness. The subject is the consciousness turned on itself and the object is consciousness turned outside or going abroad. This is pre-eminently the Upanishadic position. In Europe, Kant holds a key position in this line: and on the whole, idealists from Plato to Bradley and Bosanquet can be said more or less to belong to this category. The second intermediate position views the subject as imbedded into the object, not the object into the subject as in the first one: the subject itself is part of the object something like its self-regarding or self-recording function. In Europe apart possibly from some of the early Greek thinkers (Anaxagoras or Democritus, for example), coming to more recent times, we can say that line runs fairly well-represented from Leibnitz to Bergson. In India the Sankhyas and the Vaisheshikas move towards and approach the position; the Tantriks make a still more near approach.

Once again, to repeat in other terms the distinction which may sometimes appear to carry no difference. First, the subjective objective in which the subject assumes the preponderant position, not denying or minimising the reality of the object. The external world, in this view, is a movement in and of the consciousness of a universal subject. It is subjective in the sense that it is essentially a function of the subject and does not exist apart from it or outside it; it is objective in the sense that it exists really and is not a figment or imaginative construction of any individual consciousness, although it exists in and through the individual consciousness in so far as that consciousness is universalised, is one with the universal consciousness (or the transcendental, the two can be taken together in the present connection). Instead of the Kantian transcendental idealism we can name it transcendental realism.

In the other case the world exists here below in its own reality, outside all apprehending subject; even the universal subject is in a sense part of it, immanent in it—it embraces the subject in its comprehending consciousness and posits it as part of itself or a function of its apprehension. The many Purushas (conscious beings or subjects) are imbedded in the universal Nature, say the Sankhyas. Kali, Divine

Nature, is the manifest omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent reality holding within her the transcendent divine Purusha who supports, sanctions and inspires secretly, yet is dependent on the Mahashakti and without her is nothing, sunyam. That is how the Tantriks put it. We may mention here, among European philosophers, the rather interesting conclusion of Leibnitz (to which Russell draws our attention): space is subjective to the view of each monad (subject unit) separately, it is objective when it consists of the assemblage of the view-points of all the monads.

The scientific outlook was a protest against the extreme subjective view: it started with the extreme objective stand-point and that remained the fundamental note till the other day, till the fissure of the nucleus .opened new horizons to our somewhat bewildered mentality. We seem to have entered into a region where we still hold to the objective, no doubt, but not absolutely free from an insistent presence of the subjective. It is the second of the intermediate positions we have tried to describe. Science has yet to decide the implications of that position; whether it will try to entrench itself as much as possible on this side of the subjective or whether it can yield further and go over to or link itself with the deeper subjective position.

The distinction between the two may after all be found to be a matter of stress only, involving no fundamental difference, especially as there are sure to be gradations from the one to the other. The most important landmark, however, the most revolutionary step in modern science would be the discovery of the eternal observer or some sign or image of his seated within the observed phenomena of moving things—*purusah prakritistho hi*, as the Gita says.

# *The Mystery of the Five Senses*

THE senses are the doors opening out on the external world for the consciousness to act and range abroad. That is the usual outward movement which is generally so much condemned by spiritual seekers. The doors and windows of the senses, whatever they are, all openings should be closed, shut up, hermetically sealed. One should then return within away from them, if one is to come into contact with the true consciousness, the true reality. Even the Gita says, the conscious being is seated in tranquillity within, closing all the nine gates of the city, himself doing nothing nor causing anything to be done.

Well, that is one way of procedure in dealing with the senses. When you consider that the senses always pull you out, they always entice you to run after the sweet perishable goods of the world, invite you to the enjoyment of pleasure and pain, to all the dualities of a life of ignorance normally lived upon earth, then indeed the senses become terribly suspect. But this need not be so. The senses instead of being tempters leading you out into the ignorance may verily be inspirers calling you, guiding you inward. Instead of opening out on the world of maya they may open out on the world of light and truth. .

How can that happen? The clue is given in one of the Upanishads. The Kena Upanishad says: This eye does not really see, there is an eye behind that sees, and so on with the other senses. Even this mind does not know, there is a mind of the mind that knows. That is the crucial point. With the eye of the eye one must see, with the hearing of an inner ear one must hear, and one must know by the mind of the mind. Instead of opening these windows and doors outward they should be opened inward, turned round about as it were

like the flare of a lighthouse. Then instead of being instruments of illusory knowledge or maya as now, they become instruments of real knowledge, receptacles or transmitters of the truth and reality behind and above.

Indeed we say habitually, when speaking of spiritual realisation, that one sees the truth, one has to see the truth: to know the truth, to know the reality is taken to mean to see the truth, to see the reality, and what does this signify? It signifies what one sees is the light, the light that emanates from truth, the form that the Truth takes, the radiant substance that is the Truth. This then is the special character or gift of this organ, the organ of sight, the eye. One sees the physical light, of course, but one sees also the supraphysical light. It is, as the Upanishad says, the eye of the eye, the third eye in the language of the occultists. What we say about the eye may be equally said in respect of the other sense-organs. Take hearing, for example. By the ear we hear the noises of the world, its deafening cries and no doubt at times also some earthly music. But when the ear is turned inward, we listen to unearthly things. Indeed we know how stone-deaf Beethoven heard some of those harmonies of supreme beauty that are now the cherished possessions of humanity. This inner ear is able to take you by a process of regression to the very source of all sound and utterance, from where springs the anahata vak, the undictated voice, the nada-brahman, the original sound-seed, the primary vibration. So the ear gives that hearing which reveals to you a special aspect of the Divine; the vibratory rhythm of the being, that matrix of all utterance, of all speech that mark the material expression of consciousness. Next we come to the third sense, that of smell. Well, the nose is not a despicable organ, in any way; it is as important as any other more aristocratic sense-organ, as the eye or the ear. It is the gate to the perfumed atmosphere of the reality: Even like a flower, as a lotus for example, the truth is colourful, beautiful, shapely, radiant to the eye; to the nostrils it is exhilarating perfume, it distils all around a divine scent that sanctifies, elevates the whole being. After the third sense we come to the fourth, the tongue. The mouth gives you the taste of the truth and you find that the Truth is sweetness, the delicious nectar of the gods: for the truth is also soma, the supreme rasa, amrta, immortality itself. Here is Aswapathy's experience of the thing in Savitri:

In the nostrils quivered celestial fragrances,

On the tongue lingered the honey of paradise. <sup>12</sup>

Finally we come to the sense of touch. It is the last. But in another way, it is the first and the foremost—psychologically and chronologically—it is the most primary and primitive among the senses, as the eye comes last as the final stage in the course of the sensory evolution. The eye is the manifestation of a developed consciousness; perfectly developed eyes as in man represent a perfectly developed consciousness. But touch is the organ with which an organism starts its life-course. It is the only organ a living cell is given when it begins its forward journey. Plants are endowed with that organ and faculty and that only. It is the most generalised, the least specific, and the most sensitive of the organs. Touch gives a closer, more intimate, even more direct perception of the object, it is contact, it means identification, it means becoming and being. And it is through the touch, the sublimated and most intense physical contact, that you have the direct contact with the substance of the Supreme, his very body. For what is Sat up there is Annam here, both are the same identical thing in a dual aspect.

Continuing farther, if we go beyond the five senses, we have still another sense, it is mind, the sixth sense as the orthodox Indian view states. In this field too the same law we have been expounding holds good. Mind here is the chief instrument of knowledge: it is in and through the mind that man has knowledge; it is in and through the mind that the other five senses distil their perceptions allowing a coordinated picture of the sense-experiences. Now, to attain, to realise, to possess the Truth means, first of all, to know the Truth: for, knowing as we know, is the function of the mind. It is said, however, that the mind knows only the outward form of things, its knowledge is the knowledge of an outside world, elements of which are supplied by the senses. It is a Knowledge of or in Ignorance. The true knowledge is not attained by the mind or through the mind. For the true knowledge, it is declared, the mind is to be expunged altogether or silenced at least. One must get away, one must withdraw from that play of activity and be far from it. True knowledge comes through revelations. It descends from above, it does not enter by a level side-door and it comes only when the mind is not there. But this also, as in the other cases, as in respect of the other senses, is an extreme view. Like the other senses the mind too can be turned inward or upward, made a

<sup>12</sup> *Sri Aurobindo: Savitri, Book 1, Canto III*

receptive organ or instrument.

When turned round, when it is the Mind of the mind, then there begins to appear the true knowledge. Then even this physical mind remains no more ignorant or obscure, it becomes transparent and luminous: it is able to bring its own gift, it can serve with its own contribution to the real knowledge; for it is the mind that gives a form and shape, a local habitation and a name to the higher truth, to the real light, to the true knowledge. It is the surupa (beautiful and perfect form) chanted by the Vedic Rishis that the purified mind models for the Gods to inhabit—it is what the poets and prophets always aspire for in their creative consciousness.

But these separate senses with their separate qualities are not really separate. In the final account of things, the account held in the Supreme Consciousness, at the highest height, these diverse elements or movements are diverse but not exclusive of one another. When they find themselves in the supreme consciousness, they do not, like the rivers of which the Upanishads speak, move and merge into the sea giving up their separate individual name and function. These senses do maintain their identity, each its own, even when they together are all of them part and parcel of the Supreme Universal Consciousness. Only, they become supple and malleable, they intertwine, mix together, even one doing another's work. Also, as things exist at present, modern knowledge has found out that a blind man can see, literally see, through some part of his body; the sense of hearing is capable of bringing to you the vision of colours. And the olfactory organ can reveal to you the taste of things. Indeed it has been found that not only at the sight of good food, but in contemplating an extraordinarily beautiful scenery or while listening to an exquisite piece of music, the mouth waters. It is curious to note that Indra, the Lord of the gods, the Vedic lord of the mind and the senses, is said to have transformed the pores of his skin into so many eyes, so that he could see all things around at once, globally: it is why he was called Sahasralochana or Sahasraksha, one with a thousand eyes. The truth is that all the different senses are only extensions of one unitary sensibility and the variation depends on a particular mode or stress on the generalised sensibility.

This is what the Rishis meant when they named and represented even the senses as gods. The gods are many, each has his own attribute and function, but they form one indivisible unity.

The senses therefore are not merely externalisers but they are also internalisers. They are modes and movements that work separately

and conjointly and present aspects of the Supreme Reality. These aspects are there in the very essence and the constitution of the One Truth, also they are projected outwards to manifest and embody those very elements in the material manifestation and incarnation of the Supreme Divine:

A magical accord quickened and attuned  
To ethereal symphonies the old earthy strings;  
... it made  
The body's means the spirit's acolytes.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Sri Aurobindo, Savitri Book1 Canto III*

# *Physics or Philosophy*

WHAT is the world that we see really like? Is it mental, is it material? This is a question, we know, philosophers are familiar with, and they have answered and are still answering, each in his own way, taking up one side or other of the antinomy. There is nothing new or uncommon in that. The extraordinary novelty comes in when we see today even scientists forced to tackle the problem, give an answer to it,— scientists who used to smile at philosophers, because they seemed to assault seriously the windmills of abstract notions and airy concepts, instead of reposing on the terra firma of reality. The tables are turned now. The scientists have had to start the same business—the terra firma on which they stood as on the securest rock of ages is slipping away under their feet and fast vanishing into smoke and thin air. Not only that, it is discovered today that the scientist has always been a philosopher, without his knowledge—a crypto-philosopher,— only he has become conscious of it at last. And further— *mirabile dictu!*—many a scientist is busy demonstrating that the scientist is, in his essence, a philosopher of the Idealist school!

Physical Science in the nineteenth century did indeed develop or presuppose a philosophy of its own; it had, that is to say, a definite outlook on the fundamental quality of things and the nature of the universe. Those were the days of its youthful self-confidence and unbending assurance. The view was, as is well-known, materialistic and deterministic. That is to say, all observation and experiment, according to it demonstrated and posited:

First, that this universe is made up of particles that push and pull each other, the particles having certain constant values, such as in respect of mass and volume.

Secondly, that the laws governing the relations among the particles, in other words, their push and pull, are laws of simple mechanics; they are fixed and definite and give us determinable and measurable quantities called co-ordinates— by which one can ascertain the pattern or configuration of things at a given moment and deduce from that the pattern or configuration of things at any other moment: the chain that hangs things together is fixed and uniform and continuous and is not broken anywhere.

The scientific view of things thus discovered or affirmed certain universal and immutable facts—axiomatic truths— which were called constants of Nature. These were the very basic foundations upon which the whole edifice of scientific knowledge was erected. The chief among them were: (1) conservation of matter, (2) conservation of energy, (3) uniformity of nature and (4) the chain of causality and continuity. Above all, there was the fundamental implication of an independent—an absolute—time and space in which all things existed and moved and had their being.

The whole business of experimental science was just to find the absolutes of Nature, that is to say, facts and laws governing facts that do not depend for their existence upon anything but themselves. The purely objective world without any taint of an intruding subject was the field of its inquiry. In fact, the old-world or Mediaeval Science— there was a Science even then—could not develop properly, did not strike the right line of growth, precisely because it had a strong subjective bias: the human factor, the personal element of the observer or experimenter was unconsciously (at times even deliberately) introduced into the facts and explanations of Nature. The new departure of Modern Science consisted exactly in the elimination of this personal element and making observation and experiment absolutely impersonal and thoroughly objective.

Well, the old-world spirit has had its revenge complete and absolute in a strange manner. We are coming to that presently. Now, the constants or absolutes of which we spoke, which were the bed-rock of Modern Science, were gradually found to be rather shaky—very inconstant and relative. Take, for example, the principle of conservation of matter. The principle posited that in a given system the quantity of matter is constant in and through all transformations. Modern Science has found out that this law holds good only in respect of gross matter belonging to man-size Nature. But as soon as we enter into the domain of the ultimate constituents of matter, the units of

electric charges, the infinitesimals, we find that matter is destroyed and is or can be recreated: material particles are dematerialised into light waves or quanta, and light quanta are precipitated back again into electric particles of matter. Similarly, the law of conservation of energy—that every=  $mv^2$  (m being mass, v velocity)—does not hold good in respect of particles that move with the speed of light: mass is not a constant as in Newtonian mechanics, but varies with velocity. Again, in classical mechanics, position and velocity are two absolute determinates for alt scientific measurement, and Science after all is nothing if not a system of measurements. Now, in the normal size world, the two are easily determined; but in the sub-atomic world things are quite different; only one can be determined accurately; the more accurate the one, the less so the other; and if both are to be determined, it can be only approximatively, the closer the approximation, the hazier the measure, and the farther the approximation, the more definite the measure. That is to say, here we find not the exact measures of things, but only the probable measures. Indeed, not fixity and accuracy, but probability has become the central theme of modern physical calculation.

The principle of indeterminacy carries two revolutionary implications. First, that it is not possible to determine the movement of the ultimate particles of matter individually and severally, it is not possible even theoretically to follow up the chain of modulations of an electron from its birth to its dissolution (if such is the curve of its destiny), as Laplace considered it quite possible for his super-mathematician. One cannot trace the complete evolution of each and every or even one particular particle, not because of a limitation in the human capacity, but because of an inherent impossibility in the nature of things. In radioactive substances, for example, there is no ground or data from which one can determine which particle will go off or not, whether it will go off the next moment or wait for a million years. It is mere chance that seems to reign here. In radiation too, there is no formula, and no formula can be framed for determining the course of a photon in relation to a half-reflecting surface, whether it will pass through or be reflected. In this field of infinitesimals what we know is the total behaviour of an assemblage of particles, and the laws of nature are only laws of average computation. Statistics has ousted the more exact and rigid arithmetics. And statistics, we know, is a precarious science: the knowledge it gives is contingent, contingent upon the particular way of arranging and classifying the data. However, the certainty of classical mechanistic knowledge is

gone, gone too the principle of uniformity of nature.

The second element brought in in the indeterminacy picture is the restoration of the "subject" to its honoured or even more than the honoured place it had in the Mediaeval Ages, and from which it was pulled down by young arrogant Science. A fundamental question is now raised in the very methodology of the scientific apparatus. For Science, needless to say, is first and foremost observation. Now it is observed that the very fact of observation affects and changes the observed fact. The path of an electron, for example, has to be observed; one has then to throw a ray of light—hurl a photon—upon it: the impact is sufficient to deflect the electron from the original path. If it is suggested that by correction and computation, by a backward calculation we can deduce the previous position, that too is not possible. For we cannot fix any position or point that is not vitiated by the observer's interference. How to feel or note the consistency of a thing, if the touch itself, the temperature of the finger, were sufficient to change the consistency? The trouble is, as the popular Indian saying goes, the very amulet that is to exorcise the ghost is possessed by the ghost itself.

So the scientists of today are waking up to this disconcerting fact. And some have put the question very boldly and frankly: do not all laws of Nature contain this original sin of the observer's interference, indeed may not the laws be nothing else but that? Thus Science has landed into the very heart—the bog and quagmire, if you like—of abstruse metaphysics. Eddington says, there is no other go for Science today but to admit and declare that its scheme and pattern of things, as described by what is called laws of Nature, is only a mental construct of the Scientist. The "wonderful" discoveries are nothing but jugglery and legerdemain of the mind—what it puts out of itself unconsciously into the outside world, it recovers again and is astonished at the miracle. A scientific law is a pure deduction from the mind's own disposition. Eddington goes so far as to say that if a scientist is sufficiently introspective he can trace out from within his brain each and every law of Nature which he took so much pains to fish out from Nature by observation and experiment. Eddington gives an analogy to explain the nature of scientific law and scientific discovery. Suppose you have a fishing net of a particular size and with interstices of a particular dimension; you throw it into the sea and pull out with fishes in it. Now you count and assort the fishes, and according to the data thus obtained, you declare that the entire sea consists of so many varieties of fish and of such sizes. The only error

is that you could not take into account the smaller fishes that escaped through the interstices and the bigger ones that did not at all fall into the net. Scientific statistics is something of this kind. Our mind is the net, and the pattern of Nature is determined by the mind's own pattern.

Eddington gives us absolutely no hope for any knowledge of an objective world apart from the objectification of mind's own constructs. This is a position which a scientist, qua scientist, finds it difficult to maintain. Remedies and loop-holes have been suggested with what result we shall presently see.

Einstein's was, perhaps, the most radical and revolutionary solution ever proposed. Indeed, it meant the reversal of the whole scientific outlook, but something of the kind was an imperative need in order to save Science from inconsistencies that seemed to be inherent in it. The scientific outlook was vitiated, Einstein said, because we started from wrong premises; two assumptions mainly were responsible for the bankruptcy which befell latter-day Science. First, it was assumed that a push and pull—a force (a gravitational or, more generally, a causal force) existed and that acted upon isolated and independent particles strewn about; and secondly, they were strewn about in an independently existing time and an independently existing space. Einstein has demonstrated, it seems, successfully that there is no Time and no Space actually, but times and spaces (this reminds one of a parallel conception in Sankhya and Patanjali), that time is not independent of space (nor space of time) but that time is another coordinate or dimension necessary for all observation in addition to the three usual co-ordinates (or dimensions). This was the explanation he found of the famous Michelson-Morley experiment which failed to detect any difference in the velocity of light whether it moved with or against a moving object, which is an inconsistency according to the mechanistic view.<sup>1</sup> The absolute dependence of time and space upon each other was further demonstrated by the fact that it was absolutely impossible to synchronise two distant clocks (moving with different speeds and thus forming different systems) with perfect accuracy, or determine exactly whether two events happened simultaneously or not. In the final account of things, this relative element that varies according to varying particulars had to be eliminated, sublated. In order to make a law applicable to all fields—from the astronomical through the normal down to the microscopic or sub-atomic—in an equally valid manner, the law had to divest itself of all local colour. Thus, a scientific law became a sheer mathematical formula; it was

no longer an objective law that governed the behaviour of things, but merely a mental rule or mnemonics to string together as many diverse things as possible in order to be able; to memorise them easily.

Again, the generalised law of relativity (that is to say, laws governing all motions, even accelerated motion and not merely uniform motion) that sought to replace the laws of gravitation did away also with the concepts of force and causality: it stated that things moved not because they were pulled or pushed but because they followed the natural curve of space (they describe geodesies, i.e., move in the line of least distance). Space is not a plain surface, smooth and uniform,

1 The constancy of the velocity of light, it must be noted, is not altogether an objective fact: it is a supposition by which Einstein tried to explain certain anomalies in previous theories. It is really, as some have pointed out (e.g. Hans Reichenbach—*Atom and Cosmos*—p. 136), a mental formula, part of a built-in structure, arbitrary to a certain extent which is so arranged that the speed becomes constant and equal for systems in different states of motion. but full of dimples and hollows, these occurring in the vicinity of masses of matter, the sun, for instance, (although one does not see how or why a mass of matter should roll down the inclined plane of a curved surface without some kind of push and pull—the problem is not solved but merely shifted and put off). All this means to say that the pattern of the universe is absolutely geometrical and science in the end resolves itself into geometry: the laws of Nature are nothing but theorems or corollaries deduced and deducible from a few initial postulates. Once again, on this line of enquiry also the universe is dissolved into abstract and psychological factors.

Apart from the standpoint of theoretical physics developed by Einstein, the more practical aspect as brought out in Wave Mechanics leads us into no less an abstract and theoretical domain. The Newtonian particle-picture, it is true, has been maintained in the first phase of modern physics which specialised in what is called Quantum Mechanics. But waves or particles—although the question as to their relative validity and verity still remains open—do not make much difference in the fundamental outlook. For in either view, the individual unit is beyond the ken of the scientist. A wave is not a wave but just the probability of a wave: it is not even a probable wave but a probability wave. Thus the pattern that Wave Mechanics weaves to show the texture of the ultimate reality is nothing more than a calculus of probabilities. By whichever way we proceed we seem to

arrive always at the same inevitable conclusion.

So it is frankly admitted that what Science gives is not a faithful description of actuality, not a representation of material existence, but certain conventions or convenient signs to put together, to make a mental picture of our sensations and experiences. That, does not give any clue to what the objective reality may or may not be like. Scientific laws are mental rules imposed upon Nature. It may be asked why does Nature yield to such imposition? There must be then some sort of parallelism or commensurability between Nature and the observing Mind, between the pattern of Nature and the Mind's scheme or replica of it. If we successfully read into Nature things of the Mind, that means that there must be something very common between the two. Mind's readings are not mere figments, hanging in the air; for they are justified by their applicability, by their factual translation. This is arguing in a circle, a thorough-going mentalist like Eddington would say. What are facts ? What is life ? Anything more than what the senses and the mind have built up for us?

Jeans himself is on the horns of a dilemma.<sup>14</sup> Being a scientist, and not primarily a mathematician like Eddington, he cannot very well acquiesce in the liquidation of the material world; nor can he refute successfully the facts and arguments that Science itself has brought forward in favour of mentalism. He wishes to keep the question open for further light and surer grounds. In the meanwhile, however, he is reconciled to a modified form of mentalism. The laws of Nature, he says, are surely subjective in the sense that astronomical or geographical concepts, for example, such as the system of latitudes, longitudes, equator and axis, ellipse and quadrant and sextant, are subjective. These lines and figures are not drawn physically upon the earth or in space: they are mental constructs, they are pointers or notations, but they note and point to the existence and the manner of existence of real objects in a real world.

In other words, one tries to come back more or less to the common-sense view of things. One does not argue about what is naturally given as objective reality; whatever the mental gloss over it, it is there all the same. One accepts it, takes it on trust, if you like—one can admit even that it is an act of faith, as Russell and the Neo-Realists would maintain.

But Jeans' position is remarkable and very significant in one respect.

<sup>14</sup> *Physics and Philosophy*, by Sir James Jeans.

When cornered in the process of argument, feeling that the world is inexorably dematerialised and mentalised, he suggests an issue which is natural to a philosopher, a mystic philosopher alone. Well, let him state his position in his own words, the passage, I repeat, is so remarkable and significant:

”When we view ourselves in space and time, our consciousnesses are obviously the separate individuals of a particle-picture, but when we pass beyond space and time, they may perhaps form ingredients of a single continuous stream of life. As it is with light and electricity, so it may be with life; the phenomena may be individuals carrying on separate existence in space and time, while in the deeper reality beyond space and time we may all be members of one body. In brief, modern physics is not altogether antagonistic to an objective idealism like that of Hegel.” (p. 204)<sup>1</sup>

A la bonne heure! That runs close to Upanishadic knowledge. It means that the world is objective—it is not the figment of an individual observer; but it is not material either, it is consciousness in vibration. (Note the word ”consciousness” is Jeans’ own, not mine).

Jeans is not alone to have such a revolutionary and unorthodox view. He seems to take courage from Dirac also. Dirac too cannot admit an annihilation of the material world. His proposal to save and salvage it follows a parallel line. He says that the world presented or pictured by physical science may not be and is not the actual world, but it posits a substratum of reality to which it conforms: the pattern presented by subjective laws is so composed because of a pressure, an impact from an analogous substratum. There is no chain of causal relation in the pattern itself, the relation of causality is between the substratum reality and the pattern that it bodies forth. Here again we find ourselves at the end of physical inquiry driving straight into the tenuous spaces of spiritual metaphysics. We have one more example of how a modern physicist is metamorphosed into a mystic. What Dirac says is tantamount to the very well-known spiritual experience that the world as it appears to us is a vesture or symbol of an inner order of reality out of which it has been broadcast—sah paryagat—and the true causes of things are not on the surface, the so-called antecedents, but behind in the subtler world called therefore the causal world, *karana jagat*.

Even Eddington is not so absurd or impossible as it may seem to some. He says, as we have seen, that all so-called laws of Nature can be discovered from within the mind itself, can be deduced logically

from psychologically given premises: no empirical observation or objective experimentation is necessary to arrive at them: they are found a priori in the subject. Now, mystic experience always lays stress on extra-sensory knowledge: it declares that such a knowledge is not only possible, but that this alone is the right and correct knowledge. All things—matter and mind and life and all—being but vibrations of consciousness, even as the colours of a spectrum are vibrations, electro-magnetic waves of different frequency, mystic discipline enables one to enter into that condition in which one's consciousness mingles with all consciousness or with another particular consciousness (Patanjali's term is *samyama*), and one can have all knowledge that one wishes to have by this inner contact or concentration or identification, one discovers the knowledge within oneself, no external means of sense observation and experimental testing, no empirical inductive process is needed. We do not say that Eddington had in view anything of this kind, but that his attitude points in this direction.

That seems to be the burden, the underlying preoccupation of modern physical science: it has been forced to grope towards some kind of mystic perception; at least, it has been put into a frame of mind, due to the crumbling of the very fundamentals of the past structure, which is less obstructive to other sources and spheres and ways of knowledge. Certainly, we must admit that we have moved very far from Laplace when we hear today a hard-boiled rationalist like De Broglie declare:

*The idealisations more or less schematic that our mind builds up are capable of representing certain facets of things, but they have inherent limitations and cannot contain within their frames all the richness of the reality.*<sup>15</sup>

The difficulty that modern Science encounters is not, however, at all a difficulty: it may be so to the philosopher, but not to the mystic, the difficulty, that is to say, of positing a real 'objective world when all that we know or seize of it seems to be our own mental constructions that we impose upon it. Science has come to such a pass that it can do no more than take an *i.*: objective world on trust.

Things need not, however, be so dismal looking. The difficulty arises because of a fundamental attitude—the attitude of a purely reasoning being. But Reason or Mind is only one layer or vein of the reality, and to see and understand and explain that reality through

<sup>15</sup> *La Physique Nouvelle et les Quanta*, by Louis de Broglie, p. 12.

one single track of approach will naturally bias the view, it will present only what is real or immediate to it, and all the rest will appear as secondary or a formation of it. That is, of course, a truth that has been clearly brought out by the anti-intellectualist. But the vitalist's view is also likewise vitiated by a similar bias, as he contacts reality only through this prism of vital force. It is the old story of the Upanishad in which the seeker takes the Body, the Life and the Mind one after another and declares each in its turn to be the only and ultimate reality, the Brahman.

The truth of the matter is that the integral reality is to be seized by an integral organon. To an integralised consciousness the integral reality is directly and immediately presented, each aspect is apprehended in and through its own truth and substance. The synthesis or integration is reached by a consciousness which is the basis and continent of all, collectively and severally, and of which all are various formations and expressions on various levels and degrees. This is the knowledge and experience given by the supreme spiritual consciousness.

# *Cosmonautics*

MODERN science, modern applied science, has brought about and is bringing about more and more a big change in the earth atmosphere. It is not merely the dust and smoke, gases and fumes thrown out by the modern machineries from the earth into the sky that have been increasing ominously in volume, but the less patent vibrations that have been released by advanced scientific projects and experiments and that have been encircling the earth more and more in a tight embrace. A quiet and clean air was such a treasure for human beings; men have always longed for it as a necessity and also as a diversion, and it was so readily available. The saints and sages went up to mountain-tops and into deep forests and far away into open meadows for a full-breath draught of that heavenly element.

But now physically, materially, we know that the radiowaves and innumerable other cosmic waves have been constantly, ceaselessly hammering, churning the earth-atmosphere all around us. Human bodies are immersed in a real turmoil. They are bathed in a whirlwind constantly. The nerves and tissues are being shaken from within to their very roots through-out one's life, day and night. There is no peace, no tranquillity upon earth; physical and material repose has altogether disappeared. The high hill-tops or mountain-sides do not help any more nor the ocean depths nor any African jungle nor even the Sahara desert.

The incidence of illness, of disequilibrium among human beings, is a pronounced phenomenon in modern age. Stability, steadiness, measure, all the qualities that made for a balanced sober life in the past are on the decline, have almost disappeared.

Ill-health, malaise, imbalance, physical and mental, are reigning

supreme. And the million doctors upon earth are finding it difficult to heal their patients or even themselves.

Is that the reason why man has now become so eager to quit earthly atmosphere and soar up into starry spaces? In any case, the human body is now, at least by way of experiment, being shifted to other atmospheres, other modes of living. The important, the most significant thing however is not so much the discovery of new regions of the universe but new dimensions of the human body itself. No doubt this is just the beginning, but there are indications, pointers towards un-thinkable possibilities in the future. Men are now training themselves to be inhabitants not of earth only but of distant places. It is a demonstration of developments on unusual lines for the body. At present to dwell or even to stay in unearthly regions, the earthly body has to be protected, buttressed, propped up, with much care and skill by a mechanical outfit — crude scaffolding after all. In the future, other simpler and natural ways will surely be found.

As we know, Nature has pushed up its secret consciousness to the human level and is still pushing it up, upward to levels of the higher man, towards the Superman. She has moulded the body for the jelly-fish and moved up through all the intermediaries to the human body. Man's body like his consciousness has to be remoulded in such a way as to be able to enclose ' and express the superman-consciousness. The rigid natural laws that bind down the body—the so-called natural laws of temperature and pressure, of respiration and circulation, of assimilation and rejection—have to be turned, obviated, neutralised so that man may be actually, physically a citizen of the world.

Now, the discipline that the physical body is made to undergo at present, in order to accustom itself to high flying, may one day point to the way for a new adaptation and disposition for the body. As it is, the disruption that has been made in the earth atmosphere because of Science's new adventure is also a way to acclimatising the human body to new conditions. The new conditions are becoming even more and more new and the body is being forced to follow suit. At the beginning the result is a rupture but that is the way towards a new disposition, a new dispensation.

(2)

Showers, torrential streams of tiny infinitesimal particles — waves of invisible light, charges of electricity, all kinds of ultimate units of matter, are pouring down upon earth shrouding it, overwhelming it,

drowning it, stifling it as it were. It is not merely a discovery of what has already been there, a static reality since time immemorial, but that they have been coming, arriving, adding ceaselessly to the volume already there, and continuing to do so more and more as time advances. For it is said that these particles, cosmic rays, radio-waves, have been on their journey for such a long time from the very beginning of time that they are arriving only now into the earth atmosphere. And always there are others that are arriving, are continuing to arrive at every instant from farther and farther distances. The density and volume and the force of impact of this additional quantity of matter are ever on the increase and one does not know when and what will be the end. Not only so, not only the old existing particles but new particles, none can gainsay the probability, are also being created continuously, in the process. And suppose even some are destroyed, the loss is more than compensated by the creation of new ones, may be, of a different variety, with prospects of a new and novel development.

Thus the burden upon earth has been increasing—and the nature also of the burden is changing. The change is not perhaps very obvious today but the body has already been feeling it and expressing its reactions in the instability of the balance so long enjoyed by man. That is to say, the modern man physically lives or soon will have to live under a new set of circumstances and his physical body has to undergo a change commensurate with its habitat or it will have to disappear.

The cosmonauts are teaching us at least the possibility of a new, almost a revolutionary acclimatisation of the body, the capability of the human organs to follow a different rhythm of life in place of the old normal way. We know from the past history of the evolutionary stages of life that the advent of a new species is signalled by a change in the conditions of living, and the change in the habitat involves a change in the form, the organs and functions of the body: that is what is meant by the appearance of a new type of creature adapted to the new conditions. Even so today cosmic travels are forcing the human body to adapt itself to new conditions and it is a very conscious discipline. The change in the body of living beings in the previous stages is due to an unconscious pressure brought to bear upon it by an unconscious Nature. But now the situation is different: man is attempting consciously to surpass himself, he has begun to do it in the physical field with remarkable results and a great promise. True, there is another factor, indeed the major factor behind, within the inner consciousness of man and within the inner regions of the world.

As I have said, it is a revolutionary change there that is forcing itself upon the outside and the surface of existence.

Thus there is a twofold process for the new man to establish himself here. First, of course, there is the psychological or inner change and reorganisation: man's attempt to reach a new status of being and consciousness not in the category of the mere mental but a supra-mental status. Its nature and character and formation is being probed into by the new spiritual seekers and aspirants. That work is being done from within outward, and from above downward. This however is supplemented, supported, effectuated or materialised by the other attempt from below going upward and from outside going inward. That is the way of science, of the pragmatic man. The one we may say somewhat philosophically, is the Purusha, the conscious being coming down; the other, Prakriti, pushing up, Nature driving upward or inward.

It is true the process of acclimatisation that Nature follows is a slow one and gradual though somewhat crude, in spite of scientific refinements and subtleties; yet it is a help and has an accumulated effect. We may just record the progress achieved in the mere outward mechanisation from Lindberg's transatlantic crossing to Borman-company's journey to the moon.

Just at present the appearances are slender but the cumulative effect of these slender forerunners in the long run, or, who knows may be in the short run, is sure to be tremendously obvious. It is expected that the human body itself will acquire new dispositions forced by outer circumstances, the newly developing environment and impelled by the inner stress of the descending consciousness with its formative power. The power and action of the descending consciousness is outside our ken, it is easily overlooked—unknown and invisible to the normal mind. But in fact it is a great deal due to this element and thanks to it, that man's phenomenal discoveries of today and miraculous successes have been and are being achieved in the physical field in such a quick and revolutionary manner. The Mother has plainly declared that the new world is already there built and ready and is pressing down upon the material cover and sooner rather than later will force it open and manifest itself.

## *Darshana and Philosophy*

THERE is a mental approach to spiritual truths and there is a direct and immediate approach or rather contact. The mind sees as though through a mist, a darkling glass, a more or less opaque veil, and the thing envisaged presents a blurred and not unoften a deformed appearance. The mind has its own predispositions—its own categories and terms, its own forms and figures—which it has to use when it seeks to express that which is beyond it. Naturally the object, the truth as it is, it cannot apprehend or represent; it gives as it were the reverse side of an embroidery work. It goes round about the thing, has to take recourse to all kinds of contortions and gymnastics and grimaces to ape the natural gesture of the truth. But mind acts in this way, as a veil rather than a medium, when one is stationed in it or below it and strains to look at what is above and beyond. On the other hand, if the consciousness is stationed above the mind, that is to say, if it has direct access or contact with the truth, the spiritual reality, in that case, mind need not act as a veil, it too can be made transparent, and suffused with the higher light, it too can translate faithfully, present and embody the reality beyond somewhat as it acutally is, in its native rhythm and figure and not diffracted and diffused through a hazy atmosphere.

European thought, European philosophy particularly, moves under the aegis of the Mind. It takes its stand within the Mind and from there tries to reach out to truths and realities; and therefore, however far it goes, its highest flights of perception, its most intimate contacts with spirit-truths are 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought'. The Indian standpoint, on the contrary, is first to contact the truth by a direct realisation—through meditation, concentration, an uplifting

and a deepening of the consciousness, through Yoga, spiritual discipline, and then endeavour to express the truth thus realised, directly intuited or revealed, through mental terms, to make it familiar and communicable to the normal intelligence. Mind, so subordinated and keyed to a new rhythm, becomes, as far as it is possible for it, a channel, a vehicle and not a veil. All the main systems of Indian philosophy have this characteristic as their background. Each stands on a definite experience, a spiritual realisation, a direct contact with an aspect of truth and in and through that seeks to give a world-view, building up an intellectual system, marshalling rational conclusions that are natural to it or derive inevitably from it. In the Upanishads, which preceded the Darshanās, the spiritual realisations were not yet mentally systematised or logically buttressed: truths were delivered there as self-evident statements, as certitudes luminous in their own authenticity. We accept them without question and take them into our consciousness as forming its fundamental norms, structuring its most intimate inscape. This is *darsana*, seeing, as philosophy is named in India. One sees the truth or reality and describes it as it is seen, its limbs and gestures, its constituents and functions. Philosophy here is fundamentally a recording of one's vision and a translation or presentation of it in mental terms.

The procedure of European philosophy is different. There the reason or the mental light is the starting-point. That light is cast about: one collects facts, one observes things and happenings and then proceeds to find out a general truth—a law, a hypothesis—justified by such observations. But as a matter of fact this is the ostensible method: it is only a make-believe. For mind and reason are not normally so neutral and impersonal, a *tabula rasa*. The observer already comes into the field with a definite observational angle, and a settled viewpoint. The precise sciences of today have almost foundered on this question of the observer entering inextricably into his observations and vitiating them. So in philosophy too as it is practised in Europe, on a closer observation, if the observer is carefully observed, one finds not unoften a core of suppositions, major premises taken for granted hidden behind the logical apparatus. In other words, even a hardened philosopher cherishes at the back of his mind a priori judgments and his whole philosophy is only a rationalisation of an inner prejudgment, almost a window-dressing of a perception that came to him direct and in other secret ways. That was what Kant meant when he made the famous distinction between the Pure and the Practical Reason and their categories. Only the direct perceptions,

the spiritual realisations are so much imbedded behind, covered so much with the mist of mind's struggle and tension and imaginative construction that it is not always easy to disengage the pure metal from the ore.

We shall take the case of one such philosopher and try to illustrate our point. We are thinking of Whitehead. The character of European philosophical mind is well exemplified in this remarkable modern philosopher. The anxiety to put the inferences into a strict logical frame makes a naturally abstruse and abstract procedure more abstruse and abstract. The effort to present suprarational truths in terms of reason and syllogism clouds the issues more than it clarifies them. The fundamental perception, the living intuition that is behind his entire philosophy and world outlook' is that of an Immanent God, a dynamic evolving Power working out the growth and redemption of mankind and the world (the apotheosis of the World, as he puts it). It is the theme which comes last in the development of his system, as the culminating conclusion of his philosophy, but it is the basic presupposition, the first principle that inspires his whole outlook, all the rest is woven and extended around this central nucleus. The other perception intimate to this basic original perception and inseparable from it is a synthetic view in which things that are usually supposed to be contraries find their harmony and union, viz; God and the World, Permanence and Flux, Unity and Multiplicity, the Universal and the Individual. The equal reality of the two poles of an integral truth is characteristic of many of the modern philosophical systems. In this respect Whitehead echoes a fundamental conclusion of Sri Aurobindo.

There is another concept in Whitehead which seems to be moulded after a parallel concept in Sri Aurobindo: it is with regard to the working out of the process of creation, the mechanism of its dynamism. It is almost a glimpse into the occult functioning of the world forces. Whitehead speaks of two principles that guide the world process, first, the principle of limitation, and second, the principle of ingress. The first one Sri Aurobindo calls the principle of concentration (and of exclusive concentration) by which the infinite and the eternal limits himself, makes himself finite and temporal and infinitesimal, the universal transforms itself into the individual and the particular. The second is the principle of descent, which is almost the corner-stone in Sri Aurobindo's system.

There are layers of reality: the higher forces and formulations

enter into the lower, work upon it and bring about a change and transformation, purification and redemption. All progress and evolution is due to this influx of the higher, the deeper into the lower and superficial plane of existence.

There is one concept in Whitehead which seems rather strange to us; it is surely a product of the brain-mind. God, according to him, is not the creator: he is only the Redeemer, he is a shaper but not the source and origin of things. That is because he thinks that if God is made the creator of the world, he would be held responsible for the evil there. This difficulty comes when one thinks of God too much in the popular anthropomorphic way, like someone seated above the world and passing judgment upon a world which is not his doing. God is perhaps a lover of the world, but not its Master—a certain Christian outlook says. According to Sri Aurobindo, God is a triple reality in his transcendental, cosmic and individual aspect. In creating the world, God creates, that is to say, manifests himself. And. Evil is an evolute in the process of God's self-creation through self-limitation: it proceeds to self-annihilation and even self-transmutation in a farther process of God's self-unfoldment in world and Nature.

To return to our main theme, we should point out, however, that in Europe too at one time (during the whole Middle Age, the Age of Scholasticism) philosophy was considered only as a handmaid of Religion, it had to echo and amplify and reason out the dogmas (which were sometimes real spiritual experiences or revelations); but the New Illumination came and philosophy declared her autonomy, only that autonomy did not last long. For today in Europe, Philosophy has become the handmaid of Science. It was natural, since Reason is not a self-sufficient faculty, it is mediatory and must be ancillary either to something above it or something below it—either to Revelation or to sense-perception.

# *The Philosopher as an Artist and Philosophy as an Art*

I WONDER why Philosophy has never been considered as a variety of Art. Philosophy is admired for the depth and height of its substance, for its endeavour to discover the ultimate Truth, for its one-pointed adherence to the supremely Real; but precisely because it does so it is set in opposition to Art which is reputed as the domain of the ideal, the imaginative or the fictitious. Indeed it is the antagonism between the two that has always been emphasised and upheld as an axiomatic truth and an indisputable fact. Of course, old Milton (he was young, however, when he wrote these lines) says that philosophy is divine and charming:

Not harsh, and crabbed as dull fools suppose,  
But musical as is Apollo's lute. <sup>16</sup>

Well, I am not sure if the poet was anything more than being metaphorically rhapsodical, at the most he had only a poetic perception, he did not give us the scientific truth of the matter.

In the face of established opinion and tradition (and in the wake of the prophetic poet) I propose to demonstrate that Philosophy has as much claim to be called an art, as any other orthodox art, painting or sculpture or music or architecture. I do not refer to the element of philosophy—perhaps the very large element of philosophy—that is imbedded and ingrained in every Art; I speak of Philosophy by itself

<sup>16</sup> *Camus, I, 477-8*

as a distinct type of authentic art. I mean that Philosophy is composed or created in the same way as any other art and the philosopher is moved and driven by the inspiration and impulsion of a genuine artist. Now, what is Art ? Please do not be perturbed by the question. I am not trying to enter into the philosophy—the metaphysics— of it, but only into the science—the physics—of it. Whatever else it may be, the *sine qua non*, the minimum requisite of art is that it must be a thing of beauty, that is to say, it must possess a beautiful form. Even the Vedic Rishi says that the poet by his poetic power created a heavenly form—*kaviḥ kavitva divi rupam asajat*. As a matter of fact, a supreme beauty of form has often marked the very apex of artistic creation. Now, what does the Philosopher do? The sculptor hews beautiful forms out of marble, the poet fashions beautiful forms out of words, the musician shapes beautiful forms out of sounds. And the philosopher ? The philosopher, I submit, builds beautiful forms out of thoughts and concepts. Thoughts and concepts are the raw materials out of which the artist philosopher creates mosaics and patterns and designs architectonic edifices. For what else are philosophic systems ? A system -means, above all, a form of beauty, symmetrical and harmonious, a unified whole, rounded and polished and firmly holding together. Even as in Art, truth, bare sheer truth is not the object of philosophical inquiry either. Has it not been considered sufficient for a truth to be philosophically true, if it is consistent, if it does not involve self-contradiction? The equation runs: Truth=Self-consistency; Error =Self-contradiction. To discover the absolute truth is not the philosopher's task—it is an ambitious enterprise as futile and as much of a *maya* as the pursuit of absolute space, absolute time or absolute motion in Science. Philosophy has nothing more to do—and nothing less—than to evolve or build up a system, in other words, a self-consistent whole (of concepts, in this case). Art also does exactly the same thing. Self-contradiction means at bottom, want of harmony, balance, symmetry, unity, and self-consistency means the contrary of these things—the two terms used by philosophy are only the logical formulation of an essentially aesthetic value.

Take, for example, the philosophical system of Kant or of Hegel or of our own Shankara. What a beautiful edifice of thought each one has reared! How cogent and compact, organised and poised and finely modelled! Shankara's reminds me of a tower, strong and slender, mounting straight and tapering into a vanishing point among the clouds; it has the characteristic linear movement of Indian melody.

On the other hand, the march of the Kantian Critiques or of the Hegelian Dialectic has a broader base and involves a composite strain, a balancing of contraries, a blending of diverse notes: there is something here of the amplitude and comprehensiveness of harmonic architecture (without perhaps a corresponding degree of altitude).

All these systems, commonly called philosophical, appear to me supremely artistic. The logical intellect has worked here exactly like a chisel or a brush in the hands of the artist. It did not care for truth per se, its prime preoccupation was arrangement, disposition; the problem it set before itself was how best to present a consistent and unified, that is to say, a beautiful whole.

But the philosopher's stone is not, after all, a myth, as is being proved by modern science. Even so, the philosopher's truth—the truth, that is to say, in the noumenal sense, to which he aspires in his heart of hearts—is also existent. There is a reality apart from and beyond all relativities and contingencies: truth is not mere self-consistence, it is self-existence. Art and philosophy as an art may not comprehend it, but they circuit round it and even have glimpses of it and touch it, though the vision they have more often aberrates, distorting a rope into a snake.

It is a grain of this truth that is the substance and the core of all true art and philosophy. Philosophy works upon this secret strand by its logic, art by imagination—although logic and imagination may not be so incommensurable as they are commonly thought to be; even so, both art and philosophy arrive at the same result, viz., the building of a beautiful superstructure.

This golden core of truth comes from elsewhere—it is beyond the mayic circle of art and philosophy. To have access to it, a lid overhead is to be broken through—rather, as it is said, it is that that breaks through of its own accord and reveals its identity.

Plato would not tolerate the poets in his ideal society since they care too much for beauty and very little for the true and good. He wanted it all to be a kingdom of philosophers. I am afraid Plato's philosopher is not true to type, the type set up by his great disciple. Plato's philosopher is no longer an artist, he has become a mystic—a Rishi in our language.

For we must remember that Plato himself was really more of a poet than a philosopher. Very few among the great representative souls of humanity surpassed him in the true poetic afflatus. The

poet and the mystic—Kavi and Rishi—are the same in our ancient lore. However these two, Plato and Aristotle, the mystic and the philosopher, the master and the disciple, combine to form one of these dual personalities which Nature seems to like and throws up from time to time in her evolutionary march—not as a mere study in contrast, a token of her dialectical process, but rather as a movement of polarity making for a greater comprehensiveness and richer values. They may be taken as the symbol of a great synthesis that humanity needs and is preparing. The role of the mystic is to envisage and unveil the truth, the supernal reality which the mind cannot grasp nor all the critical apparatus of human reason demonstrate and to bring it down and present it to the understanding and apprehending consciousness. The philosopher comes at this stage: he receives and gathers all that is given to him, arranges and systematises, puts the whole thing in a frame as it were.

The poet-philosopher or the philosopher-poet, whichever way we may put it, is a new formation of the human consciousness that is coming upon us. A wide and rationalising (not rationalistic) intelligence deploying and marshalling out a deep intuitive and direct Knowledge—that is the pattern of human mind developing in the new age. Bergson's was a harbinger, a definite landmark on the way. Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* arrives and opens the very portals of the marvellous temple city of a dynamic integral knowledge.

*Part V*

POETRY AND MYSTICISM

# *Savitri*

SAVITRI, the poem, the word of Sri Aurobindo is the cosmic Answer to the cosmic Question. And Savitri, the person, the Godhead, the Divine Woman is the Divine's response to the human aspiration. The world is a great question mark. It is a riddle, eternal and ever-recurring. Man has faced the riddle and sought to arrive at a solution since he has been given a mind to seek and interrogate.

What is this universe? From where has it come? Whither is it going? What is the purpose of it all? Why is man here? What is the object of his existence?

Such is the mode of human aspiration. And Ashwapati in his quest begins to explore the world and see what it is, the way it is built up. He observes it rising tier upon tier, level upon level of consciousness. He mounts these stairs, takes cognisance of the modes and functions of each and passes on enriched by the experiences that each contributes to his developing consciousness. The ascent he finds is from ignorance to knowledge. The human being starts from the darkest bed of ignorance, the solid basis of rock as it were, the body, the material existence. Ignorance here is absolute inconscience. Out of the total absence of consciousness, the being begins to awake and rise to a gradually developing—widening, deepening and heightening—consciousness. That is how Ashwapati advances, ascends from a purely bodily life and consciousness, to the next rung of the ladder, the first appearance and expression of life-force, the vital consciousness—energies and forms of the small lower vital. He moves on, moves upward, there is a growing light in and mixed with the obscurity; ignorance begins to shed its hard and dark coatings one by one and gives place to directed and motivated energies. He meets beings and creatures

appropriate to those levels crawling and stirring and climbing, moved by the laws governing the respective regions. In this way Ashwapati passes on into the higher vital, into the border of the mental.

Ashwapati now observes with a clear vividness that all these worlds and the beings and forces that inhabit them are stricken as it were with a bar sinister branded upon their bodies. In spite of an inherent urge of ascension the way is not a straight road but devious and crooked breaking into by-lanes and blind alleys. There is a great corruption and perversion of natural movements towards Truth: falsehoods and pretensions, arrogance of blindness reign here in various degrees. Ashwapati sought to know the wherefore of it all. So he goes behind, dives down and comes into a region that seems to be the source and basis of all ignorance and obscurity and falsehood. He comes into the very heart of the Night, the abyss of consciousness. He meets there the Mother of Evil and the sons of darkness. He stands before

.. the gate of a false Infinite,  
An eternity of disastrous absolutes,<sup>17</sup>

Here are the forces that pull down and lure away to perdition all that man's aspirations and the world's urge seek to express and build of Divine things. It is the world in which the forces of the original inconscience find their primitive play. They are dark and dangerous: they prey upon earth's creatures who are not content with being vassals of darkness but try to move to the Light.

Dangerous is this passage for the celestial aspirant:

Where the red Wolf waits by the fordless stream  
And Death's black eagles scream to the precipice..<sup>18</sup>

He must be absolutely vigilant, absolutely on his guard, absolutely sincere.

Here must the traveller of the upward way—  
For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route—  
Pause or pass slowly through that perilous space,  
A prayer upon his lips and the great Name.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Sri Aurobindo: Savitri, Book II: Canto 8:p. 250.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid. Book II: Canto 8:p. 260.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid. Book II: Canto 7:p. 238.*

But there is no escape. The divine traveller has to pass through this region. For it lies athwart his path to the goal. Not only so, it is necessary to go through this Night. For Ashwapati

Knew death for a cellar of the house of life,  
In destruction felt creation's hasty pace,  
Knew loss as the price of a celestial gain  
And hell as a short cut to heaven's gates.<sup>20</sup>

Ashwapati now passes into the higher luminous regions. He enters regions of larger, breath and wider movement—the higher vital and then into the yet more luminous region of the higher mind. He reaches the heavens where immortal sages and the divinities and the gods themselves dwell. Even these Ashwapati finds to be only partial truths, various aspects, true but limited, of the One Reality beyond. Thus he leaves all behind and reaches into the single sole Reality, the transcendent Truth of things, the status vast and infinite and eternal, immutable existence and consciousness and bliss.

A Vastness brooded free from sense of Space,  
An Everlastingness cut off from Time. .  
"A stillness absolute, incommunicable. ."<sup>21</sup>

Here seems to be the end of the quest, and one would fain stay there ever and ever in that status

. . occult, impenetrable,—  
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.<sup>22</sup>

Ashwapati was perhaps about to be lured into that Bliss but suddenly a doubt enters into him—there is a hesitation, a questioning; he hears a voice:

<sup>20</sup> *Op.cit. Book II: Canto 8:p. 262.*

<sup>21</sup> *Op.cit. Book III: Canto 1-2:pp 349;351.*

<sup>22</sup> *Op.cit. Book III: Canto 1:p. 350.*

The ego is dead; we are free from being and care,  
We have done with birth and death and work and fate.  
O soul, it is too early to rejoice!  
Thou hast reached the boundless silence of the Self,  
Thou hast leaped into a glad divine abyss;  
But where hast thou thrown self's mission and self's power  
?  
On what dead bank on the Eternal's road?<sup>23</sup>

Ashwapati veers round. A new perception, a new consciousness begins to open within him. A new urge moves him. He has to start on a new journey, a new quest and achievement. The world exists neither as a Truth nor as an illusion in itself. It exists in and through the Mother of the worlds. There is a motive in its existence and it is her will that is being worked out in that existence. The world moves for the fulfilment of a purpose that is being evolved through earth-life and human- life. The ignorant incomplete human life upon earth is not the be-all and end-all of the life here. That life has to evolve into a life of light and love and joy perfect here below. Nature as it is now will be transmuted into a new pure and radiant substance. Ashwapati is filled with this new urge and inspired by this new vision. He sees and understands now the truth of his life, the goal that has to be achieved, the great dream that has to be realised here upon earth in and through matter. He sees how nature has been labouring ceaselessly and tirelessly through aeons through eternity onward. He is now almost impatient to see the consummation here and now. The divine Voice however shows him the wisdom of working patiently, hastening slowly. The Voice admonishes him:

I ask thee not to merge thy heart of flame  
In the Immobile's wide uncaring bliss..  
Thy soul was born to share the' laden Force;  
Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate:  
Accept the difficulty and godlike toil,  
For the slow-paced omniscient purpose live. .  
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour.<sup>24</sup>

But the human flame once kindled is hard to put down. It seeks

<sup>23</sup> *Op.cit. Book III: Canto 2: p. 351.*

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit. Book III: Canto 4: pp. 380;386.*

an immediate result. It does not understand the fullness of time. So Ashwapati cries out:

Heavy and long are the years our labour counts  
And still the seals are firm upon man's soul,  
And weary is the ancient Mother's heart..  
Linger not long with thy transmuting hand  
Pressed vainly on one golden bar of Time..  
Let a great word be spoken from the heights  
And one great act unlock the doors of Fate."<sup>25</sup>

This great cry of the human soul moved the Divine Mother and she granted at last its prayer. She answered by bestowing of her motherly comfort on the yearning thirsty soul:

O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.  
One shall descend and break the iron Law..  
A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,  
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;  
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;  
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will."<sup>26</sup>

And She herself came down upon earth as Ashwapati's daughter to undertake the human labour and accomplish the Divine work.

(2)

The Divine Mother is upon earth as a human creature. She is to change the mortal earth into an immortal paradise. Earth at present is a bundle of material inconscience. The Supreme Consciousness has manifested itself as supreme unconsciousness.

The Divine has lost itself in pulverising itself, scattering itself abroad. Immortality is thus entombed here below in death. The task of the incarnate Supreme Consciousness is to revive the death-bound divinity, to free the human consciousness in its earthly life from the obscurity of the material unconsciousness, re-install it in its original radiant status of the Divine Consciousness.

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.* Book III: Canto 4: pp. 390-391.

<sup>26</sup> *Op. cit.* Book III: Canto 4: pp. 391-392.

Such is Savitri's mission. This mission has two sessions or periods. The first, that of preparation; the second, that of fulfilment. Savitri, the human embodiment was given only twelve months out of her earthly life and in that short space of time she had to do all the preparation. She knew her work from her very birth, she was conscious of her nature and the mission she was entrusted with. Now she is facing the crisis. Death is there standing in front. What is to be done, how is she to proceed ? She was told she is to conquer Death, she is to establish immortal life upon mortal earth. The Divine Voice rings out:

Arise, soul, and vanquish Time and Death.<sup>27</sup>

Yes, she is ready to do it, but not for herself, but for her Love, the being who was the life other life. Savitri is the Divine Consciousness but here in the mortal body she is clothed in the human consciousness; it is the human consciousness that she is to lead upward and beyond and it is in and through the human consciousness that the Divine Realisation has to be expressed and established. The human Savitri declares: If Death is conquered, it is for the sake of Satyavan living eternally with her. She seems to say: What I wish to see is the living Satyavan and I united with him for ever. I do not need an earthly life without him; with him I prefer to be in another world if necessary away from the obscurity and turmoil of this earth here.

My strength is taken from me and given to Death,  
Why should I lift my hands to the shut heavens..  
Why should I strive with earth's unyielding laws  
Or stave off death's inevitable hour ?  
This surely is best to pactise with my fate  
And follow close behind my lover's step  
And pass through night from twilight to the sun.<sup>28</sup>

But a thunderous voice descends from above shaking Savitri to the very basis of her existence.

"And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows  
The work was left undone for which it came?"<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit. Book VII: Canto 2: p. 539.*

<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit. Book VII: Canto 2: p. 539.*

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit. Book VII: Canto 2: p. 540.*

Thus a crisis very similar to that which Ashwapati had to face now confronts Savitri also. Both of them were at the crossroads away from the earth in the pure delights of the heavens or in the world labouring on earth's soil. Savitri's soul was now revealed to her in its fullness. She viewed the mighty destiny for which she had come down and the great work she had to achieve here upon earth, not any personal or individual human satisfaction or achievement but a cosmic fulfilment, a global human realisation. The godhead in Savitri is now fully awake, established in its plenitude—the Divinity incarnate in the human frame. All the godheads, all the goddess-emanations now entered into her and moulded the totality of her mighty stature.

Here begins then the second stage of her mission,—her work and achievement, the conquest of Death. Only the Divine human being can conquer Death. Savitri follows Death step by step revealing gradually the mystery of death, his personality and his true mission, although the dark God thinks that it is he who is taking away Satyavan and Savitri along with him, to his own home, his black annihilation. For Death is that in its first appearance, it is utter destruction, nothingness, non-existence. So the mighty Godhead declares in an imperious tone to the mortal woman Savitri:

This is my silent dark immensity,  
 This is the home of everlasting Night,  
 This is the secrecy of Nothingness  
 Entombing the vanity of life's desires..  
 Hopest thou still always to last and love ?<sup>30</sup>

Indeed Death is not merely a destruction of the body, it is in reality nothingness, non-being. The moment being, existence, reality manifested itself, established itself as a material fact, simultaneously there came out and stood against it, its opposite non-being, non-existence, non-reality; against an everlasting 'yes' there was posited an everlasting 'no'. And in 'fact, this everlasting No proves to be a greater effective reality, it has wound itself around every constituent atom of the universe. That is what has expressed itself in the material domain as the irreversible degradation of energy and in the mortal world it is denial and doubt and falsehood—it is that which brings about failure in life, and frustration, misery and grief. But then Savitri's vision penetrated beyond and she saw, Death is a way of achieving the end more swiftly

<sup>30</sup> *Op. cit.* Book IX: Canto 2: p. 661.

and more completely. The negation is an apparent obstacle in order to increase, to purify and intensify the speed of the process by which the world and humanity is being remodelled and recreated. This terrible Godhead pursues the human endeavour till the end; until he finds that nothing more is to be done; then his mission too is fulfilled<sup>31</sup> So a last. cry, the cry of a desperate dying Death, pierces the universe and throws the final challenge to Savitri:

O human claimant to immortality,  
Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit's force,  
Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.  
Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,  
Show me her face that I may worship her;  
Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death..<sup>32</sup>

Death's desire, his prayer too is fulfilled. He faces Savitri but this is not the Savitri against whom he fought. Whose is this voice ?

I hail thee almighty and victorious Death,  
Thou grandiose Darkness of the Infinite..  
I have given thee thy awful shape of dread  
And thy sharp sword of terror and grief and pain  
To force the soul of man to struggle for light. <sup>33</sup>

What happens thereafter is something strange and tremendous and miraculous. Light flashed all around, a leaping tongue of fire spread out and the dark form of Death was burnt—not to ashes but to. blazing sparks of light:

His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *We are reminded here of a parallelism in Goethe's conception of the role of Satan (the Negative Principle) in human affairs. Satan is not merely a destroying devil, he is a constructive angel. For it is he*

*Who must goad and tease  
And toil to serve creation.*

*whenever*

*Man's efforts sink below his proper level.*

<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit. Book X: Canto 4: p. 745.*

<sup>33</sup> *Op. cit. Book X: Canto 4: p. 747.*

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit. Book X: Canto 4: p. 749.*

Thus Death came to his death—not to death in reality but to a new incarnation. Death returned to his original divine Reality, an emanation of the Divine Mother.

A secret splendour rose revealed to sight  
Where once the vast embodied Void had stood.  
Night the dim mask had grown a wonderful face.<sup>35</sup>

In that domain of pure transcendent light stood face to face the human Savitri and the transformed Satyavan.

(3)

SAVITRI has entered into the deathless luminous world where there is only faultless beauty, stainless delight and an unmeasured self-gathered strength. Savitri heard the melodious voice of the Divine:

You have now left earth's miseries and its impossible conditions, you have reached the domain of unalloyed felicity and you need not go back to the old turbulent life: dwell here both of you and enjoy eternal bliss.

But Savitri answered firm and moveless:

I climb not to thy everlasting Day,  
Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night..  
Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;  
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield..  
Thy servitudes on earth are greater, king,  
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.<sup>36</sup>

Once more Savitri, even like Ashwapati, has to make a choice between two destinies, two soul-movements—although the choice is already made even before it is offered to her. Ashwapati had to abandon, we know, the silent immutable transcendent status of pure light in order to bathe in this lower earthly light. Savitri too as the prototype of human consciousness chose and turned to this light of the earth.

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit. Book XI: Canto 1: p. 762.*

<sup>36</sup> *Op. cit. Book XI: Canto 1: p. 770.*

The Rishi of the Upanishad declared: they who worship only Ignorance enter into darkness, but they who worship knowledge alone enter into a still darker darkness. This world of absolute light which Savitri names 'everlasting day' is what the Upanishadic Rishi sees and describes as the golden lid upon the face of the Sun. The Sun is the complete integral-light of the Truth in its fullness. The golden covering has to be removed if one is to see the Sun itself—to live the integral life, one has to possess the integral truth.

So it is that Savitri comes down upon earth and standing upon its welcoming soil speaks to Satyavan as though consoling him for having abandoned their own abode in heaven to dwell among mortal men:

Heaven's touch fulfils but cancels not our earth..  
Still am I she who came to thee mid the murmur  
Of sunlit leaves upon this forest verge..  
All that I was before, I am to thee still. <sup>37</sup>

Voicing Satyavan's thought and feeling, all humanity, the whole world in joy and gratefulness, utters this mantra of thanksgiving:

If this is she of whom the world has heard,  
Wonder no more at any happy change.<sup>38</sup>

(4)

IN her Prayers and Meditations the Mother says:

*Comme l'homme n'a pas voulu du repas que j'avais prepare avec  
tant d'amour et de soin, alors j'ai invite le Dieu a le prendre.  
Et mon Dieu, Tu as accepte mon invitation et Tu es venu T'asseoir  
a ma table; et en change de ma pauvre et humble offrande  
Tu m'as octroye la finale liberation.* <sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.* Book XII: Canto: p. 808.

<sup>38</sup> *Book XII:* p. 812.

<sup>39</sup> "Since the man refused the meal I had prepared with so much love and care, I invoked the God to take it.

*My God, Thou hast accepted my invitation, Thou hast come to sit at my table, and in exchange for my poor and humble offering Thou hast granted to me the last liberation."*

What is this banquet that she prepared for man and which man refused ? It is nothing else than the Life Divine here below —the life of the Gods enjoying immortality, full of the supreme light and power, love and delight. Man refused because for him it is something too high, too great. Being a creature earth- bound and of small dimensions he can seize and appreciate only small things, little specks of a material world. He refused, first of all, because of his ignorance, he does not know, nor is he capable of conceiving that there are such things as immortal life, divinity, unobscured light, griefless love, or a radiant, tranquil, invisible energy. He does not know and yet he is arrogant, arrogant in his little knowledge, his petty power, in his blind self-sufficiency. Furthermore, besides ignorance and arrogance there is an element of revolt in him, for in his half- wakefulness with his rudimentary consciousness, if ever he came in contact with something that is above and beyond him, if a shadow of another world happens to cross his threshold, he is not at peace, does not want to recognise but denies and even curses it.

The Divine Mother brings solace and salvation. For the Grace it is such a small and easy thing, it is a wonder how even such a simple, natural, inconspicuous thing could be refused by anybody.

If man finds no use for the gift she has brought down for him, naturally she will take it back and return it to Him to whom it belongs, for all things belong to the Supreme Lord, even She belongs to Him, as She is one with Him. The Gita says: there is nothing else than the Brahman in the creation—the doer, the doing and the deed, all are essentially He. In the sacrifice that is this moving, acting universe, the offerer, the offering and the offered, each and every element is the Brahman —brahmarpanam brahma havih.

This gesture of the Divine Mother teaches us also what should be the approach and attitude of human beings in all their activities. In all our movements we should always remember Him, refer to Him, consider that in the last analysis each and every movement comes from Him and we must always offer them to Him, return them to the parent-source from where they come, therein lies freedom, the divine detachment which the individual must possess always in order to be one with Him, feel one's identity with Him.

(5)

MAN'S refusal of the Divine Grace has been depicted very beautifully

and graphically in a perfect dramatic form by Sri Aurobindo in Savitri. The refusal comes one by one from the three constituent parts of the human being. First of all man is a material being, a bodily creature, as such he is a being of ignorance and misery, of brutish blindness. He does not know that there is something other than his present state of misfortune and dark fate. He is not even aware that there may be anything higher or nobler than the ugliness he is steeped in. He lives on earth-life with an earth-consciousness, moves mechanically and helplessly through vicissitudes over which he has no control. Even so the material life is not a mere despicable thing; behind its darkness, behind its sadness, behind all its infirmities, the Divine Mother is there upholding it and infusing into it her grace and beauty. Indeed, she is one with this world of sorrows, she has in effect become it in her infinite pity and love so that this material body of hers may become conscious of its divine substance and manifest her true form. But the human being individualised and separated in egoistic consciousness has lost the sense of its inner reality and is vocal only in regard to its outward formulation. It is natural for physical man therefore to reject and deny the physical Godhead in him, he even curses it and wants to continue as he is. He yells therefore .in ignorance and anguish:

I am the Man of Sorrows, I am he  
 Who is nailed on the wide cross of the Universe..  
 I toil like the animal, like the animal die.  
 I am man the rebel, man the helpless serf..  
 I know my fate will ever be the same,  
 It is my Nature's work that cannot change..  
 I was made for evil, evil is my lot;  
 Evil I must be and by evil live;  
 Naught other can I do, but be myself;  
 What Nature made, that I must remain.<sup>40</sup>

The Divine glory manifests itself for a moment to the earthly consciousness but man refuses to be pulled out of its pigsty. The Grace with draws but in its Supreme Consciousness of unity and love consoles the fallen creature and gives it the assurance:

One day I will return, a bringer of strength..  
 Misery shall pass abolished from the earth;

<sup>40</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: pp. 574-6.*

The world shall be freed from the anger of the Beast..

41

The basic status or foundation of Man, in fact of creation, is earth, the material organisation. After the body, next comes the life and Life-power. Here man attains a larger dynamic being of energy and creative activity. Here too, on this level, what man is or what he achieves is only a reflection, a shadow, but mostly a misshapen resemblance, an aberration of the divine reality that hides behind, and yet half-reveals itself. That Godhead is the Mother's form of Might, we name it variously, Kali and Durga and Lakshmi, for it is Her Grace that is ultimately expressed and fulfilled in this world of vital power. It is because of this realising power of the Mother that

Slowly the Light grows greater in the East,  
 Slowly the world progresses on God's road.  
 His seal is on my task, it cannot fail;  
 I shall hear the silver swing of heaven's gates  
 When God comes out to meet the soul of the world.<sup>42</sup>

But man in the strength of his ignorance and arrogance does not recognise this Goddess. Human power, we have said, is a reflection, a shadow of the Divine Power but most often it is a deformed, a perverted Divine Power. Man is full of his egoistic vital self-confidence: he believes it is his own will that is realising all, all which is achieved here; whatever he has created, it is through the might of his own merit and whatever new creations will be done in the future will be through the Grace of his own genius. A mighty vital selfhood obscures his consciousness and he sees nothing else, understands nothing else beyond the reach of that limited vision. This is the Rakshasa, this is the Asura in man. Here is his philosophy of life:

I climb, a claimant to the throne of heaven.  
 The last born of the earth, I stand the first..  
 I am God still unevolved in human form;  
 Even if he is not, he becomes in me..  
 No magic can surpass my magic's skill.  
 There is no miracle I shall not achieve.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: p. 576.*

<sup>42</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: p. 579.*

<sup>43</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: pp. 580-2.*

So this vital being in man in his Rakshasic hunger and Asuric self-conceit rejects the Divine Power that is in fact behind him too, supporting him. The Goddess, in the wake of her predecessor, goes back from where she came, leaving however a, consoling word, assuring that one day she will return; she will bide her time. For one day,

The cry of the ego shall be hushed within,  
Its lion-roar that claims the world as food,  
All shall be might and bliss and happy force.<sup>44</sup>

In his body man is the beast, in the vital he is the Rakshasa and the Asura, he rises now into the mind. And in the mind he is the human being proper, he has attained his own humanity. Here he has received the light of knowledge, a wider and deeper consciousness, he has unveiled the secret mysteries of Nature, brought to play hidden forces that were unknown and untapped. All these achievements have been possible for man because it is the Mother of Light that is behind and has come forward to shed something of her luminous presence around. But man has no inkling of the presence of this luminous Deity, his own light has been a screen in front of the inner divine light. It is not possible for the human mind to seize the higher light: his consciousness, his knowledge is too narrow, too superficial, too dull to comprehend what is beyond. This Divine Light is also a thing of delight, the consciousness it possesses is also the very essence of Joy and Felicity. But all that is occult to the human knowledge. Man considers Truth is his property, whatever truth is there his understanding can grasp it and bring it to play: Truth and Reality are commensurate with his own consciousness, his mental comprehension. What others speak of as realities of the spirit, truths transcendental, are an illusion and delusion. This is what is usually known as the scientific mind, the rational consciousness. An orthodox scientific mentality is in the first instance a thing of overweening self-confidence, of arrogant self-assertion. It declares in its formidable pride:

I have seized the cosmic energies for my use.  
I have pored on her infinitesimal elements  
And her invisible atoms have unmasked. .  
If God is at work his secrets I have found.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: p. 583.*

<sup>45</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: p. 589.*

This imperiousness in man seems however to be a sheer imperviousness: it is a mask, a hollow appearance; for with all his knowledge, at the end he has attained no certainty, no absoluteness. There is something behind, all the outer bravado he flourishes has a sense of helplessness, at times almost as pitiable as that of a child; for he finds at last

All is a speculation or a dream:  
In the end the world itself becomes a doubt.<sup>46</sup>

It is true his survey of the universe, his knowledge of boundless Nature and the inexhaustible multiplicities of creation have given him a sense of the endless and the infinite but he has not the necessary light or capacity to follow those lines of infinity, on the contrary, there is a shrinking in him at the touch of such vastnesses; his small humanity makes him desperately earth-bound, his aspiration follows the lines of least resistance:

Our smallness saves us from the Infinite.  
In a frozen grandeur lone and desolate  
Call me not to die the great eternal Death..  
Human I am, human let me remain  
Till in the Inconscient I fall dumb and sleep.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, this Goddess too, is rejected like her previous comrades, the Mother of Light, the Deity who is properly the guide and ruler of man's own destiny. Even she is refused but hers is not to complain, in tranquil quietness she brings comfort and hope to the troubled human mind and says she goes to come back in the fullness of her incarnation. She utters divinely:

One day I shall return, His hands in mine,  
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.  
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,  
Then shall the divine family be born.<sup>48</sup>

(6)

<sup>46</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: p. 589,*

<sup>47</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: p. 590.*

<sup>48</sup> *Book VII: Canto 4: p. 591.*

To the inconscient and ignorant human nature, Savitri, the Divine's delegate presents the powers and personalities that are behind man's present infirmities—these broken images of true realities lying scattered about in the front of existence. Man will be made conscious, he is being made conscious step by step precisely by such relations from time to time. The Vedic image is that of the eternal succession of dawns whose beginning no one knows, nor the end, that creation proceeds from light to light, from consciousness to higher reaches of consciousness.

From the material life through the vital and the mental life he first reaches the spiritual life and finally the Life Divine. From the animal he rises to manhood, and in the end to Godhood.

But there are intermediaries. The fullness of the realisation depends on the fullness of the incarnation. The Evil in the body, the Evil in the vital, the Evil in the mind are, whatever their virulence and intransigence, subsidiary agents, for they serve only a mightier Lord. The first original Sin is Death, the God of Denial, of non-existence. That is the very source— fons et origo—the fount and origin of all the misfortune, the fate that terrestrial life involves. This demon, this anti-Divine has to be tracked and destroyed or dissolved into its original origin. This is the Nihil that negates the Divine—Asat that seeks to nullify Sat and that has created this world of ignorance and misery, that is to say, in its outward pragmatic form. So Savitri sees the one source and knows the remedy. Therefore she pursues death, pursues him to the end, that is, to the end of death. The luminous energy of the Supreme faces now its own shadow and blazes it up. The flaming Light corrodes into the substance of the darkness and makes of it her own transfigured substance. This then is the gift that Savitri brings to man, the Divine's own immortality, transfusing the mortality that reigns now upon earth.

In view of the necessity of the age, for the crucial, critical and, in a way, final consummation of Nature's evolutionary urge, the Divine Himself has to come down in the fullness of His divinity; for only then can the earth be radically changed and wholly transformed. In the beginning the Divine once came down, but by sacrificing Himself, being pulverised, scattered and lost in the infinitesimals of a universal, material, unconsciousness. Once again He has to come down, but this time in the supreme glory of His victorious Luminosity.

This then is the occult, the symbolic sense of the Mother's gesture turning away from man with her gifts and returning to the Divine

Himself, and inviting Him as the chief guest of honour upon this earth. Or, in the Vedic image. He is to come as the flaming front and leader of the journeying sacrifice that is this universal existence.

# *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*

THE Prayers and Meditations of the Mother. It is Life Divine in song, it is Life Divine set to music—made sweet and lovely, near and dear to us—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

To some the ideal has appeared aloof and afar, cold and forbidding. The ascent is difficult involving immense pains and tiresome efforts. It is meant for the high-souled ascetic, not for the weak earth-bound mortals. But here in the voice of the Mother we hear not the call for a hazardous climb to the bare cold wind-swept peak of the Himalayas but a warm invitation for a happy trek back to our own hearth and home. The voice of the Divine is the loving Mother's voice.

The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother are a music, a music of the lyre—I say lyre, because there is a lyric beauty and poignancy in these utterances. And true lyricism means a direct and spontaneous out flowing of the soul's intimate experiences.

This wonder-lyre has three strings, giving out a triple note or strain: there is a strain of philosophy, there is a strain Or yoga and there is a strain of poetry. We may also call them values and say there is a philosophical, a yogic and a poetic value in these contemplations. The philosophical strain or value means that the things said are presented, explained to the intellect so that the human mind can seize them, understand them. The principles underlying the ideal, the fundamental ideas are elaborated in terms of reason and logical comprehension, although the subject-matter treated is in the last analysis beyond reason and logic. For example, here is true philosophy expressed in a philosophic manner as neatly as possible.

*A quoi servirait L'homme s'il n'était pas fait pour jeter un pont entre Ce qui est éternellement, mais qui n'est pas manifeste, et ce qui est manifeste, entre toutes les transcendances, toutes les splendeurs de la vie divine et toute l'obscur et douloureuse ignorance du monde matériel? L'homme est le lien entre ce qui doit être et ce qui est; il est la passerelle jetée sur l'abîme, il est le grand X en croix, le trait d'union quaternaire. Son domicile véritable, le siège effectif de sa conscience doit être dans le monde intermédiaire au point de jonction des quatre bras de la croix, là où tout l'infini de l'impensable vient prendre forme précise pour être projeté dans l'innombrable manifestation.<sup>49</sup>*

Or again

*Que de degrés différents dans la conscience! Il faudrait réserver ce mot pour ce qui, dans un être, est illuminé par Ta présence, s'est identifié à Toi et participe à Ta Conscience absolue, ce qui est "parfaitement éveillé", comme ait le Bouddha.<sup>50</sup> En dehors de cet état, il y a des degrés infinis de conscience descendant jusqu'à l'obscurité complète, la véritable inconscience qui peut être un domaine pas encore touché par la lumière de ton amour (ce qui paraît improbable dans la substance physique), ou bien ce qui est, pour une raison d'ignorance quelconque, hors de notre région individuelle de perception.<sup>51</sup>*

However, we note that the philosophical strain merges into the yogic, rather the yogic strain is already involved in the philosophical. Here is an obvious and clear expression of this strain:

*Il faudrait que chaque jour, chaque instant, soit l'occasion d'une consécration nouvelle et plus complète; et non pas une de ces consécration*

<sup>49</sup> *Of what use would be man if he was not made to throw a bridge between That which eternally is, but is not manifested, and that which is manifested; between all the transcendences, all the splendours of the divine life and all the obscure and sorrowful ignorance of the material world? Man is the intermediary between that which has to be and that which is; he is a bridge thrown over the abyss, he is the great X in the cross, the quaternary link. His true abode, the effective seat of his consciousness, should be in the intermediate world at the joining point of the four arms of the cross, where all the infinity of the Unknowable comes to take precise form for being projected into the multitudinous manifestation..*

<sup>50</sup> *How many and different are the degrees of consciousness! This word should be reserved for that which, in a being, is illumined by Thy Presence, identifies itself with Thee and participates in Thy absolute Consciousness, for that which has knowledge, which is "perfectly awakened" as says the Buddha.*

<sup>51</sup> *Outside this state, there are infinite degrees of consciousness descending down to the complete darkness, the véritable inconscience which may be a domain not yet touched by the light of Thy divine love (but that appears improbable in physical substance), or which is by reason of some ignorance, outside our individual region of perception.*

*enthousiastes et trepidantes, suractives, pleine de l'illusion de l'oeuvre, mats une consecration profonde et silencieuse qui n'est pas forcement apparence, mais qui penetre et transfigure toute action II faudrait que notre esprit paisible et solitaire repose toujours en Toi, et que de ce pur sommet il ait la perception exacte des realites, de la Realite unique et eternelle, derriere les instables et fugitives apparences.*<sup>52</sup>

We are given all the disciplines necessary for the growth of the spiritual life: the processes, the procedures that have to be followed—object-lessons are given even for the uninitiated and for the very beginner, as well as instructions for those who aim at the highest heights thus:

*II est toujours bon de regarder de temps en temps en soi et de voir qu'on n'est et ne peut rien, mais il faut en suite tourner son regard vers Toi en sachant que Tu es tout et que Tu peux tout. Tu es la vie de notre vie et la lumiere de notre etre, Tu es le mattre de nos destinees.*<sup>53</sup>

Indeed philosophy and yoga go hand in hand. Yoga is applied philosophy. What is at first mentally perceived and recognised, what is accepted by the reason is made active and dynamic in life. The character embodies the abstract and general principles, the vital energy executes them, that is yoga. Philosophy brings in the light of consciousness, yoga the energy of consciousness. Here we have an expression of what may be called "yogic philosophy".

*II faut a chaque moment secouer le passe comme une poussiere qui tombe, afin qu'elle ne salisse pas le chemin vierge qui, a chaque moment aussi,*

<sup>52</sup> *Each day, each moment, must be an occasion for a new and completer consecration; and not one of those enthusiastic and trepidant consecrations, over-active, full of the illusion of the work, but a profound and silent consecration which need not be apparent, but which penetrates and transfigures every action. Our mind, solitary and at peace, must rest always in Thee, and from this pure summit it must have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality, behind unstable fugitive appearances.*

<sup>53</sup> *It is always good to look within ourselves from time to time and see that we are nothing and can do nothing, but we must then turn our look towards Thee, knowing that Thou art all and that Thou canst do all.*

*Thou art the life of our life and  
the light of our being,  
Thou art the master of our destiny.*

*s'ouvre devant nous.*<sup>54</sup>

Once again we see emerging the third note, the note of poetry. In fact the Prayers and Meditations abound in the most beautiful poetry, what can be more beautiful, even more poetically beautiful than these cadences!

*Ta voix est si modeste, si impartiale, si sublime de patience et de miséricorde qu'elle ne se fait entendre avec aucune autorité, aucune puissance de volonté, mais comme une brise fraîche, douce et pure, comme un murmure cristallin qui donne la note d'harmonie dans le concert discordant. Seulement, pour celui qui sait écouter la note, respirer la brise, elle contient de tels trésors de beauté, un tel parfum de pure sérénité et de noble grandeur, que toutes les folles illusions s'évanouissent ou se transforment dans une joyeuse acceptation de la merveilleuse vérité entrevue.*<sup>55</sup>

Or more beautiful than the beautiful simplicity of these lines!

*Comme me flamme qui brûle silencieusement, comme un parfum qui monte tout droit, sans vaciller, mon amour va vers Toi.* <sup>56</sup>

If one asks for a classical perfection, here is a line that is on a par with a Racinean verse—

*Mon cœur s'est endormi jusqu'au trefonds de l'être.* <sup>\*57</sup>

And here is a line flowing with all the milk and honey of the Romantic muse—

*Et les heures s'évanouissent comme des rêves invocés.*<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> We must at each moment shake off the past like falling dust, so that it may not soil the virgin path which, also at each moment, opens before us.

<sup>55</sup> Thy voice is so modest, impartial, sublime in its patience and its mercy that it does not make itself heard with any authority, any potency of will; it is like a cool, soft and pure breeze; it is like a crystalline murmur that imparts a note of harmony to a discordant concert. Only for him who knows how to listen to that note, how to breathe that breeze, it contains such a treasure of beauty and such, a perfume of pure serenity and noble grandeur, that all extravagant illusions vanish or are transformed into a joyful acceptance of the marvellous truth that has been glimpsed.

<sup>56</sup> Like a flame that burns in silence, like a perfume that rises straight upward without wavering, my love goes to Thee.

<sup>57</sup> My heart has fallen asleep, down to the very depths of my being.

<sup>58</sup> And the hours pass like dreams un-lived..

which possesses furthermore the magic of an indefinable mysticism so rare in the French language. The mystic element gives a special grace and flavour, a transcendent significance serving as an enveloping aura to the whole body of these Prayers and Meditations.

One cannot, for example, but be bewitched by the mystic grandeur of this image:—

*O Conscience immobile et sereine, Tu veilles aux confins du monde comme un sphinx d'éternité. Et pourtant à certains Tu livres Ton secret.*<sup>59</sup>

In fact three notes blend together indissolubly and form what we call 'mantra'—even like the triple mystic syllable AUM.

Once, in connection with Shakespeare, I said that a poet's language, which is in truth the poet himself, may be considered as consisting of unit vocables, syllables, that are as it were fundamental particles, even like the nuclear particles, each poet having his own type of particle, with its own charge and spin and vibrations. Shakespeare's, I said, is a particle of Life-energy, a packet of living blood-vibration, pulsating as it were, with real heart-beat. Likewise in Dante one feels it to be a packet of Tapas—of ascetic energy, a bare clear concentrated flame-wave of consciousness, of thought-force. In the Prayers and Meditations the fundamental unit of expression seems to be a packet of gracious light—one seems to touch the very hem of Mahalakshmi.

The voice in the Prayers and Meditations is Krishna's flute calling the souls imprisoned in their worldly household to come out into the wide green expanses of infinity, in the midst of the glorious herds of light, to play and enjoy in the company of the Lord of Delight.

(2)

We have spoken of the three notes or strains in the *Prayers and Meditations*. Apart from this triple theme which after all means mode or modulation in expression, there is a triplicity in depth. Along with the strains, there are strands. Besides the value or quality of the things, the thing itself is a composite reality containing different levels. It is not a single, unilateral, one-dimensional world, but it is

<sup>59</sup> *O serene and immobile Consciousness, Thou watchest on the boundaries of the world like a sphinx of eternity. And yet to some Thou givest out Thy secret.*

multi-dimensional consisting of many worlds, one within another, all telescoped as it were, to form a single indivisible whole.

Now these prayers—who prays? And to whom? These meditations—who meditates? And who is the object of the meditation? First of all there is the apparent obvious meaning, that is on the very surface. It is the Mother's own prayers offered to her own beloved Lord. It is her own personal aspiration, the preoccupation of the individual human being that she is. It is the secret story, the inner history of all that she desires, asks for, questions, all that she has experienced and realised and the farther more that she is to achieve, the revelations of a terrestrial creature of the particular name and form that she happens to possess. Thus for example, the very opening passage of these prayers:

*Quoique tout mon être Te soit théoriquement consacré, o Maître Sublime, qui est la vie, la lumière et l'amour de toute chose j'ai peine encore à appliquer cette consécration dans les détails. Il m'a fallu plusieurs semaines pour savoir que la raison de cette méditation écrite, sa légitimation, réside dans le fait de Te l'adresser quotidiennement. Ainsi je matérialiserai chaque jour un peu de la conversation que j'ai si fréquemment avec Toi; je Te ferai de mon mieux ma confession.*<sup>60</sup>

But we notice immediately that these are not exclusively personal, absolutely individual assertions. While speaking of herself, spontaneously she seems to be speaking on behalf of all men. The words that she utters come as it were, from the lips of all mankind. She is the representative human being. She gives expression to all that man feels or might feel but is notable or does not know how to express and articulate. Here is how she describes her function as a representative person—so beautifully, so poignantly:

*Alors j'ai pensé à tous ceux qui veillaient sur le bateau pour assurer et protéger notre route, et avec reconnaissance, dans leur cœur, j'ai voulu faire naître et vivre Ta Paix; puis j'ai pensé à tous ceux qui, constants et sans souci, dormaient du sommeil de l'inconscience, et avec sollicitude pour leurs*

<sup>60</sup> *Although my whole being is in theory consecrated to Thee, O Sublime Master, who art the life, the light and the love in all things, I still find it hard to carry out this consecration in detail. It has taken me several weeks to learn that the reason for this written meditation, its justification lies in the very fact of addressing it daily to Thee. In this way I shall put into material shape each day a little of the conversation I have so often with Thee; I shall make my confession to Thee as well as it may be..*

*miseres, pitie pour leur souffrance latente s'veillant en eux en meme temps que leur reveil, j'ai voulu - qu'un peu de Ta Paix habite leur coer, et fasse naitre en eux la vie de l'esprit, la lumiere dissipant l'ignorance. Puis j'ai pense a tous les habitants de cette vaste mer, les visibles et les invisibles, et j'ai voulu que sur eux s'etende Ta Paix. Puis j'ai pense a ceux que nous avions laisse au loin et dont l'affection nous accompagne, et avec une grande tendresse, pour eux j'ai voulu Ta Paix consciente et durable, la plenitude de Ta Paix proportionnee a leur capacite de la recevoir. Puts j'ai pense a tous ceux vers qui nous allons, que des preoccupations enfantines agitent et qui se battent pour de mesquines competitions d'interet dans l'ignorance et l'egoisme; et avec ardeur, dans une grande aspiration, pour eux, j'ai demande la pleine lumiere de Ta Paix. Puis j'ai pense a tous ceux que nous connaissons, a tous ceux que nous ignorons, a toute la vie qui s'elabore, a tout ce qui a change de forme, a tout ce qui n'est pas encore enforme, et pour tout cela, ainsi que pour ce a quoi je ne puis penser, pour tout ce qui est present a ma memoire et pour tout ce que j'oublie, dans un grand recueillement et une muette adoration, j'ai implore Ta Paix.<sup>61</sup>*

Or again:

*Ce que j'ai voulu pour eux, avec Ta volonte, aux moments ou j'ai pu Stre en communion veritable avec Toi, permets qu'ils l'aient reçu en ce jour ou, tachant d'oublier les contingences exterieures, Us se sont tournes vers les pensee la plus noble, vers les sentiment le meilleur. Que la supreme serenite de Ta sublime Presence s'veille en eux.<sup>62</sup>*

<sup>61</sup> *I then thought of all those who were watching over the ship to safeguard and protect our route, and in gratitude, I willed that Thy peace should be born and live in their hearts; then I thought of all those who, confident and carefree, slept the sleep of inconscience and, with solicitude for their miseries, pity for their latent suffering which would awake in them in their own waking, I willed that a little of Thy Peace might dwell in their hearts and bring to birth in them the life of the Spirit, the light which dispels ignorance. I then thought of the dwellers of this vast sea, visible and invisible, and I willed that over them might be extended Thy Peace. I thought next of those whom we had left far away and whose affection is with us, and with a great tenderness I willed for them Thy conscious and lasting Peace, the plenitude of Thy Peace proportioned to their capacity to receive it. Then I thought of all those to whom we are going, who are restless with childish preoccupations and fight for mean competitions of interest in ignorance and egoism; and ardently, in a great aspiration for them I asked for the plenary light of Thy Peace. I next thought of all those whom we know, of all those whom we do not know, of all the life that is working itself out, of all that has changed its form and all that is not yet in form, and for all that, and also for all of which I cannot think, for all that is present to my memory and for all that I forget, in a great ingathering and mute adoration, I implored Thy Peace.*

<sup>62</sup> *What I willed for them, with Thy will, at the moments when I could be in a true communion with Thee, grant that they may have received it on the day when, striving to forget external contingencies, they turned towards their noblest thought, towards their best feelings. May the supreme serenity of Thy sublime Presence awake in them.*

But the Mother is not merely a representative, she has become all men, the entire humanity itself. She has identified herself with each person in her being and consciousness, she is one with all, all are merged in her. Her voice utters the cry of the human collectivity. Mother's Prayers and Meditations are the prayers and meditations of man. Thus again:

*.. il m'a semble que j'adoptais tous les habitants de ce bateau, que je les enveloppais tous dans un egal amour, et qu'ainsi en chacun d'eux quelque chose de Ta conscience s'éveillerait*<sup>63</sup>

She has so clearly and unequivocally expressed her oneness with all men. She mentions specially the miserable, the poor and afflicted mankind:

*Lorsque j'étais enfant—vers l'age de treize ans et pendant un an environ—tous les soirs des que j'étais couchee, il me semblait que je sortais de mon corps et que je m'élevais tout droit au-dessus de la Hudson, puis de la ville, tres haut. Je me voyais alors vetue d'ung magnifique robe doree, plus longue que moi; et a mesure que je montais, cette robe s'allongeait en s'etendant circulairement autour de moi pour former comme un toit immense au-dessus de la ville. Alors je voyais de tous cotes sortir des hommes, des femmes, des enfants, des vieillards, des malades, des malheureux; ils s'assemblaient sous la robe etendue, implorant secours, racontant leurs mis'eres, leurs souffrances, leurs peines. En reponse, la robe, souple et vivante, s'allongeait vers eux individuellement, et des qu'ils l'avaient touches, ils etaient consoles ou gueris, et rentraient dans leurs corps plus heureux et plus forts qu'avant d'en etre sortis.*<sup>64</sup>

But her being and consciousness are not limited to mankind alone. She has identified herself with even material objects, with all the small

<sup>63</sup> *it seemed to me that I adopted all the inhabitants of this ship, and enveloped them in an equal love, and that so in each one of them, something of Thy con-sciousness would awake.*

<sup>64</sup> *When I was a child—about the age of thirteen and for about a year—every night as soon as I was in bed, it seemed to me that I came out of my body and rose straight up above the house, then above the town, very high. I saw myself then, clad in a magnificent golden robe, longer than myself; and as I rose, that robe lengthened, spreading in a circle around me to form, as it were, an immense roof over the town. Then I would see coming out from all sides, men, women, children, the old, the sick, the unhappy; they gathered under the outspread robe, imploring help, recounting their miseries, their sufferings, their pains. In reply, the robe, supple and living, stretched out to them individually, and as soon as they touched it, they were consoled or healed, and entered back into their body happier and stronger than they had ever been before coming out of it.*

insignificant physical things which our earthly existence deals with. This is how she takes leave of the house where she had lived, and the things it had sheltered, on the eve of a long journey:

*Je les remercie avec reconnaissance de tout le charme qu'ils ont su donner exterieurement a notre vie; je souhaite que, s'il est dans leur destines de passer pour plus ou moins longtemps en d'autres mains que les notres, ces mains leur soient douces et sachant tout le respect que l'on doit a ce que Ton divin Amour, Seigneur, a fait surgir de l'obscur inconscience du chaos*<sup>65</sup>

It is to be noted how even a material object is taken up, purified and transformed almost into a living being by the Mother's loving touch.

The same feeling of unity and oneness extends to the dumb plant world also. It is oneness not partial or vague but total and absolute:

*Une grande concentration s'est emparee de moi et je me suis apercue que je m'identifiais avec une fleur de cerisier; puis a tracers cette fleur avec toutes les fleurs de cerisier; puis descendant plus profondement dans la conscience, en suivant un courant de force bleutee, je devins tout a coup le cerisier lui-meme, dressant vers le del, comme autant de bras, ses innombrables branches chargees de leur offrande fleurie. J'entendis alors distinctement la phrase suivante: "Ainsi tu t'es unie a l'ame des cerisiers et tu as pu de la sorte constater que c'est le Divin qui fait au ciel l'offrande de cette priere de fleurs." Lorsque je l'eus ecrit, tout s'effaca; mais maintenant le sang du cerisier coule dans mes veines, et avec lui une paix et une force incomparables; quelle difference y a-t-il entre le corps humain et le corps d'un arbre? Aucune vraiment, et la conscience qui les anime est bien identiquement la meme.*<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> I thank them with gratitude for all the charm they have been able to impart from the outside to our life; I wish, if they are destined to pass for a long or a brief period into other hands than ours, that these hands may be gentle to them and may feel all the respect that is due to what Thy divine Love, O Lord, has made to emerge from the dark inconscience of chaos. (3.3.1914)

<sup>66</sup> A deep concentration seized on me, and I perceived that I was identifying myself with a single cherry-blossom, then through it with all cherry-blossoms, and as I descended deeper in the consciousness, following a stream of bluish force, I became suddenly the cherry-tree itself, stretching towards the sky like so many arms its innumerable branches laden with their sacrifice of flowers. Then I heard distinctly this sentence: "Thus hast thou made thyself one with the soul of cherry-trees and so thou canst take note that it is the Divine who makes the offering of this flower-prayer to heaven." When I had written it, all was effaced; but now the blood of the cherry-tree flows in my veins and with it flows an incomparable peace and force. What difference is there between the human body and the body of a tree? In truth there is none, the consciousness which animates them is identically the same.

Indeed the Mother's voice is the voice of all men, all creatures, all beings, all things. She stands for the entire earth, not only so, she is the Earth itself; the total terrestrial being is embodied in her, earth's aspiration, and pain and yearning find utterance in her.

*Le monde douloureux s'est agenouille devant Toi, Seigneur, en muette supplication la matiere torturee se blottit a Tes pieds, son dernier, son unique refuge; et en T'implorant ainsi, elle T'adore, Toi qu'elle ne connait ni ne comprend! Sa priere s'eleve comme le cri d'un agonisant; ce qui disparaît sent confusement la possibility de revivre en Toi; la terre attend Ton arret dans me grandiose prostration..<sup>67</sup>*

This is the second status of the Mother's being, the first is the personal and individual, the second is this collective and universal being. But she is not merely the universe, she is the Mother of the universe. Hers is not merely earth's prayer, but the prayer of the Mother of the earth. It is not merely the prayer of the universe but the prayer of the Universal Mother to the Supreme Lord for the deliverance of the universe, for the re-creation of the earth—indeed, for the deliverance of herself for the r-e-creation of herself out of the present ignorant manifestation:

*O Mère, douce Mère que je suis, Tu es à la fois ce qui détruit et ce qui érige. L'univers entier vie dans Ton sein de sa vie innombrable et Tu vis dans le moindre de ses atomes immensément. Et l'aspiration de Ton infinitude se tourne vers Cela qui n'est point manifesté, afin d'implorer toujours une plus complète et plus parfaite mainifestation. <sup>68</sup>*

Or again:

*Je suis les bras puissants de Ta miséricorde. Je suis la vaste poitrine de Ton amour sans limites.. Les bras one enveloppé la terre douloureuse et*

<sup>67</sup> *This sorrowful world kneels before Thee, O Lord, in mute supplication; this tortured Matter nestles at thy feet, its last, its sole refuge; and so imploring Thee, it adores Thee, Thee whom it neither knows nor understands! Its prayer rises like the cry of one in a last agony; that which is disappearing feels confusedly the possibility of living again in Thee; the earth awaits Thy decree in a grandiose prostration.*

<sup>68</sup> *Mother, sweet Mother, who I am. Thou art at once the destroyer and the builder. The whole universe lives in Thy breast with all its life innumerable and Thou livest in Thy immensity in the least of its atoms. And the aspiration of Thy infinitude turns towards That which is not manifested to cry to it for a manifestation ever more complete and more perfect.*

*la pressent tendrement sur le cœur généreux; et lentement un baiser de suprême bénédiction est posé sur cet atome en conflit.. Le baiser de la Mère qui console et guérit.* <sup>69</sup>

And once more:

*Toute la terre est dans nos bras comme un enfant malade qu'il faut guérir et pour lequel on a, à cause même de sa faiblesse, une tendresse toute spéciale.* <sup>70</sup>

The triple status of the Mother, the individual, the collective and the transcendental (or, in other words, the personal, the universal and the supra-personal) has been condensed and epitomised in the magical note describing her first meeting with the Lord:

*Peu importe qu'il y ait milliers d'êtres plongés dans la plus épaisse ignorance, Celui que nous avons vu hier est sur terre; sa présence suffit à prouver qu'un jour viendra ou l'ombre sera transformée en lumière, et ou effectivement, Ton règne sera instauré sur la terre.* <sup>71</sup>

And the reality that Their manifestation upon earth has to establish, the supreme achievement of Their terrestrial existence is chanted, as it were, in these wonderfully mystic- Sibylline-lines:

*La mort a passé vaste et solennelle et tout s'est tu religieusement durant son passage. Une beauté surhumaine a paru sur la terre. Quelque chose de plus merveilleux que la plus merveilleuse félicité fait pressentir sa Présence.* <sup>72</sup>

I have spoken of the triple status, the three levels of her ascending reality, these are in view of her manifestation of world-labour. There is however, yet another status beyond—beyond the beyond—it is the relation between the Supreme Lord and the Divine Mother in itself

<sup>69</sup> *I am Thy puissant arms of mercy. I am the vast bosom of Thy limitless love.. The arms have enfolded the sorrowful earth and tenderly press it to the generous heart; slowly a kiss of supreme benediction settles on this atom in conflict: the kiss of the Mother that consoles and heals.*

<sup>70</sup> *All the earth is in our arms like a sick child who must be cured and for whom one has a special affection because of his very weakness.*

<sup>71</sup> *It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday, is here on earth; His presence is enough to prove that a day shall come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth.*

<sup>72</sup> *Death has passed, vast and solemn, and all fell into a religious silence during its passage. A superhuman beauty has appeared on the earth. Something more marvellous than the most marvellous bliss has made felt the impress of its Presence.*

apart from their work it heir purpose in manifestation, it is their own 'Lila' between themselves, exclusively their own. The delight of this exclusively personal play behind and beyond the creation sheds a secret aroma in and through all this existence here and it is also the source of the hidden magic that these utterances of the Prayers and Meditations contain, it is to this status surpassing all wonder that Sri Aurobindo refers so wistfully and so sweetly in those famous opening lines, in "A God's Labour":<sup>73</sup>

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

The delight of delights, the purest delight that exists up there in its self-sufficiency overflows, spills as it were, and a drop of that nectar of immortality is what constitutes these universes here below.

<sup>73</sup> *Sri Aurobindo: Collected Poems and Plays*

# *The Approach to Mysticism*

MYSTICISM is not only a science but also, and in a greater degree, an art. To approach it merely as a science, as the modern mind attempts to do, is to move towards futility, if not to land in positive disaster. Sufficient stress is not laid on this aspect of the matter, although the very crux of the situation lies here. The mystic domain has to be apprehended not merely by the true mind and understanding but by the right temperament and character. Mysticism is not merely an object of knowledge, a problem for inquiry and solution, it is an end, an ideal that has to be achieved, a life that has to be lived. The mystics themselves have declared long ago with no uncertain or faltering voice: this cannot be attained by intelligence or much learning, it can be seized only by a purified and clear temperament.

The warning seems to have fallen, in the modern age, on unheeding ears. For the modern mind, being pre-eminently and uncompromisingly scientific, can entertain no doubt as to the perfect competency of science and the scientific method to seize and unveil any secret of Nature. If, it is argued, mysticism is a secret, if there is at all a truth and reality in it, then it is and must be amenable to the rules and regulations of science; for science is the revealer of Nature's secrecies.

But what is not recognised in this view of things is that there are secrecies and secrecies. The material secrecies of Nature are of one category, the mystic secrecies are of another. The one are not only disparate but incommensurable. Any man with a mind and understanding of average culture can see and handle the 'scientific' forces, but not the mystic forces. A scientist once thought that he had clinched the issue and cut the Gordian knot when he declared triumphantly with reference to spirit seances: "Very significant is the fact that spir-

its appear only in closed chambers, in half obscurity, to somnolent minds; they are nowhere in the open air, in broad daylight to the wide awake and vigilant intellect!" Well, if the fact is as it is stated, what does it prove? Night alone reveals the stars, during the day they vanish, but that is no proof that stars are not existent. Rather the true scientific spirit should seek to know why (or how) it is so, if it is so, and such a fact would exactly serve as a pointer, a significant starting ground. The attitude of the jesting Pilate is not helpful even to scientific inquiry. This matter of the Spirits we have taken only as an illustration and it must not be understood that this is a domain of high mysticism; rather the contrary. The spiritualists approach to Mysticism is not the right one and is fraught with not only errors but dangers. For the spiritualists approach their subject with the entire scientific apparatus—the only difference being that the scientist does not believe while the spiritualist believes.

Mystic realities cannot be reached by the scientific consciousness, because they are far more subtle than the subtlest object that science can contemplate. The neutrons and positrons are for science today the finest and profoundest object-forces; they belong, it is said, almost to a borderland where physics ends. Nor for that reason is a mystic reality something like a mathematical abstraction,  $\square$ -n for example. The mystic reality is subtler than the subtlest of physical things and yet, paradoxical to say, more concrete than the most concrete thing that the senses apprehend.

Furthermore, being so, the mystic domain is of infinitely greater potency than the domain of intra-atomic forces. If one comes, all on a sudden, into contact with a force here without the necessary preparation to hold and handle it, he may get seriously bruised, morally and physically. The adventure into the mystic domain has its own toll of casualties—one can lose the mind, one can lose one's body even and it is a very common experience among those who have tried the path. It is not in vain and merely as a poetic metaphor that the ancient seers have said

Ksurasya dhara nisita duratyqya<sup>74</sup>

or

<sup>74</sup> *"Sharp as a razor's edge, difficult of going, hard to traverse is that path!"*

nayamatma balahinena labhyah<sup>75</sup>

The mystic forces are not only of immense potency but of a definite moral disposition and character, that is to say, they are of immense potency either for good or for evil. They are not mechanical and amoral forces like those that physical sciences deal with; they are forces of consciousness and they are conscious forces, they act with an aim and a purpose. The mystic forces are forces either of light or of darkness, either Divine or Titanic. And it is most often the powers of darkness that the naturally ignorant consciousness of man contacts when it seeks to cross the borderline without training or guidance, by the sheer arrogant self-sufficiency of mental scientific reason.

Ignorance, certainly, is not man's ideal condition—it leads to death and dissolution. But knowledge also can be equally disastrous if it is not of the right kind. The knowledge that is born of spiritual disobedience, inspired by the Dark ones, leads to the soul's fall and its calvary through pain and suffering on earth. The seeker of true enlightenment has got to make a distinction, learn to separate the true and the right from the false and the wrong, unmask the luring Mara, say clearly and unflinchingly to the dark light of Lucifer—apage Satana, if he is to come out into the true light and command the right forces. The search for knowledge alone, knowledge for the sake of knowledge, the path of pure scientific inquiry and inquisitiveness, in relation to the mystic world, is a dangerous thing. For such a spirit serves only to encourage and enhance man's arrogance and in the end not only limits but warps and falsifies the knowledge itself. A knowledge based on and secured exclusively through the reason and mental light can go only so far as that faculty can be reasonably stretched and not infinitely—to stretch it to infinity means to snap it. This is the warning that Yajnavalkya gave to Gargi when the latter started renewing her question ad infinitum. Yajnavalkya said, "If you do not stop, your head will fall off."

## II

The mystic truth has to be approached through the heart. "In the heart is established the Truth," says the Upanishad: it is there that is seated eternally the soul, the real being, who appears no bigger than the thumb. Even if the mind is utilised as an instrument of knowledge,

<sup>75</sup> *"This spirit is a thing no weakling can gain."*

the heart must be there behind as the guide and inspiration. It is precisely because, as I have just mentioned, Gargi sought to shoot up—like "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself" of which Shakespeare speaks—through the mind alone to the highest truth that Yajriavalkya had to pull her up and give the warning that she risked losing her head if she persisted in her questioning endlessly.

For true knowledge comes of, and means, identity of being. All other knowledge may be an apprehension of things but not comprehension. In the former, the knower stands apart from the object and so can envisage only the outskirts, the contour, the surface nature; the mind is capable of this alone. But comprehension means an embracing and penetration which is possible when the knower identifies himself with the object. And when we are so identified we not merely know the object, but becoming it in our consciousness, we love it and live it.

The mystic's knowledge is a part and a formation of his life. That is why it is a knowledge not abstract and remote but living and intimate and concrete. It is a knowledge that pulsates with delight: indeed it is the radiance that is shed by the purest and intensest joy. For this reason it may be that in approaching through the heart there is a chance of one's getting arrested there and not caring for the still higher, the solar lights; but this need not be so. In the heart there is a golden door leading to the deepest delights, but there is also a diamond door opening up into the skies of the brightest luminosities.

For it must be understood that the heart, the mystic heart, is not the external thing which is the seat of emotion or passion; it is the secret heart that is behind, the inner heart—*antarhrdaya* of the Upanishad—which is the centre of the individual consciousness, where all the divergent lines of that consciousness meet and from where they take their rise. That is what the Upanishad means when it says that the heart has a hundred channels which feed the human vehicle. That is the source, the fount and origin, the very substance of the true personality. Mystic knowledge—the true mystic knowledge which saves and fulfils—begins with the awakening or the entrance into this real being. This being is pure and luminous and blissful and sovereignly real, because it is a portion, a spark of the Divine Consciousness and Nature: a contact and communion with it brings automatically into play the light and the truth that are its substance. At the same time it is an uprising flame that reaches out naturally to higher domains of consciousness and manifests -them through .its translucent dynamism.

The knowledge that is obtained without the heart's instrumentation or co-operation is liable to be what the Gita describes as Asuric. First of all, from the point of view of knowledge itself, it would be, as I have already said, egocentric, a product and agent of one's limited and isolated self, easily put at the service of desire and passion. This knowledge, whether rationalistic or occult, is, as it were, hard and dry in its constitution, and oftener than not, negative and destructive—withering and blasting in its career like the desert simoom.

There are modes of knowledge that are occult—and to that extent mystic—and can be mastered by practices in which the heart has no share. But they have not the saving grace that comes by the touch of the Divine. They are not truly mystic—the truly mystic belongs to the ultimate realities, the deepest and the highest,—they, on the other hand, are transverse and tangential movements belonging to an intermediate region where light and obscurity are mixed up and even for the greater part the light is swallowed up in the obscurity or utilised by it.

The mystic's knowledge and experience is not only true and real: it is delightful and blissful. It has a supremely healing virtue. It brings a sovereign freedom and ease and peace to the mystic himself, but also to those around him, who come in contact with him. For truth and reality are made up of love and harmony, because truth is, in its essence, unity.

# Mystic Poetry

I would like to make a distinction between mystic poetry and spiritual poetry. To equate mysticism and spirituality is not always happy or even correct. Thus, when Tagore sings:

Who comes along singing and steering his boat?  
It seems a face familiar.  
He goes in full sail, turns nor right nor left;  
The waves break helplessly at the sides!  
His face looks familiar... <sup>76</sup>

it is mysticism, mysticism in *excelsis*. Even A.E.'s

I turn  
To Thee, invisible, unrumoured, still:  
White for Thy whiteness all desires burn.  
Ah, with what longing once again I turn!<sup>77</sup>

is just on the borderland: it has succeeded in leaving behind the mystic domain, but has not yet entered the city of the Spirit—at the most, it has turned the corner and approached the gate. Listen now,

My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,  
My body is God's happy living tool,  
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> "The Golden Boat."

<sup>77</sup> A.E.: "Desire."

<sup>78</sup> Sri Aurobindo: "Transformation."

or the more occult yet luminously vibrant lines:

He stood upon a threshold serpent-watched,  
And peered into gleaming endless corridors,  
Silent and listening in the silent heart  
For the coming of the new and the unknown.  
He gazed across the empty stillness  
And heard the footsteps of the undreamed Idea  
In the far avenues of the Beyond.  
He heard the secret Voice, the Word that knows,  
And saw the secret face that is our own...<sup>79</sup>

Is there not a fundamental difference, difference not merely with regard to the poetic personality, but with regard to the very stuff of consciousness? There is direct vision here, the fullness of light, the native rhythm and substance of revelation, as if

In the dead wall closing from a wider self,  
Parting a door to things unseized by earth-sense,  
It lifted the heavy curtain of the flesh...<sup>80</sup>

When the Spirit speaks its own language in its own name, we have spiritual poetry. If, however, the Spirit speaks—from choice or necessity—an alien language and manner, e.g., that of a profane consciousness, or of the consciousness of another domain, idealistic or philosophical or even occult, puts on or imitates spirit's language and manner, we have what we propose to call mystic poetry proper. When Samain sings of the body of the dancer:

Et Pannyre deviant fleur, flamme, papillon! ...  
Comme au travers d'unecausoyeuse et continue;  
Dans un divin éclair, montre Pannyre nue<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *Sri Aurobindo: Switri, Book I, Canto III.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid. Later version:*

*In the dead wall closing us from wider self,  
Into a secrecy of apparent sleep,  
The mystic tract beyond our waking thoughts,  
A door parted, built in by Matter's force,  
Releasing things unseized by earthly sense:*

<sup>81</sup> *Albert Samain:*

or when Mallarmé describes the laurel flower:

Vermeil comme le pur orteil du séraphin  
Que rougit la pudeur des aurores foulées, <sup>82</sup>

both so idealise, etherealize, almost spiritualise the earth and the flesh that they seem ostensibly only a vesture of something else behind, something mysterious and other-worldly, something other than, even just opposite to what they actually are or appear to be. That is the mystique of the senses which is a very characteristic feature of some of the best poetic inspirations of France. Baudelaire too, the Satanic poet, by the sheer intensity of sympathy and sincerity, pierces as it were into the soul of things and makes the ugly, the unclean, the diseased, the sordid throb and glow with an almost celestial light. Here is the Baudelairean manner:

Tout cassés  
Qu'ils sont, ils ont des yeux perçants comme une vrille,  
Luisant comme ce trou où l'eau dard dans la nuit;  
Ils ont les yeux divins de la petite fille. . . <sup>83</sup>

It is not merely by addressing the beloved as your goddess that you can attain this mysticism; the Elizabethan did that in merry abundance, and nauseam. A finer temper, a more delicate touch, a more subtle sensitiveness and a kind of artistic wizardry are necessary to tune the body into a rhythm of the spirit. The other line of mysticism is common enough, viz., to express the spirit in terms and rhythms of the flesh. Tagore did that liberally, the Vaishnava poets did nothing but that, the Song of Solomon is an exquisite example of that procedure. There is here, however, a difference in degrees which is an interesting feature worth noting. Thus in Tagore the reference to the spirit is evident, that is the major or central chord; the earthly

*"Pannyre awe talons d'or"—Aux Flancs du Vase.  
And Pannyre became flower, flame, butterfly. . .  
As though through a silky continuity of water  
In a divine flash showed Pannyre naked.*

<sup>82</sup> Mallarmé: "Les Fleurs". "Vermilion like the pure toe of the seraph reddened by the blush of dawns it trampled through."

<sup>83</sup> "Quite broken they are, yet they have eyes that pierce like a drill, shine like those holes in which the water sleeps at night: they have the divine eyes of a little girl."—Baudelaire, "Les petites vieilles"

and the sensuous are meant as the name and form, as the body to render concrete, living and vibrant, near and intimate what otherwise would perhaps be vague and abstract, afar, aloof. But this mundane or human appearance has a value in so far as it is a support, a pointer or symbol of the spiritual import. And the mysticism lies precisely in the play of the two, a hide-and-peek between them. On the other hand, as I said, the greater portion of Vaishnava poetry, like a precious and beautiful casket, no doubt, hides the spiritual import: not the pure significance but the sign and symbol are luxuriously elaborated, they are placed in the foreground in all magnificence: as if it was their very purpose to conceal the real meaning. When the Vaishnava poet says,

O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,  
Since mortal words are weak?  
In life, in death,  
In being and in breath  
No other lord but thee can Radha seek.<sup>84</sup>

there is nothing in the matter or manner which can indicate, to the uninitiated, any reference to the Spirit or the Divine. Or this again,

I have gazed upon beauty from my very birth  
and yet my eyes  
are not satiated; I have rested bosom upon bosom  
for thousands  
of aeons and yet my heart is not soothed.. . .

they all give a very beautiful, a very poignant experience of love, but one does not know if it is love human or divine, if it is soul's love or mere bodily love.

The famous Song of Solomon too is not on a different footing, when the poet cries:

Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse;  
thou hast  
ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with  
one chain of thy neck.. . .

<sup>84</sup> Sri Aurobindo: "Radha's Appeal" in *Songs to Myrilla*.

one can explain that it is the Christ calling the Church or God appealing to the human soul or one can simply find in it nothing more than a man pining for his woman. Anyhow I would not call it spiritual poetry or even mystic poetry. For in itself it does not carry any double or oblique meaning, there is no suggestion that it is applicable to other fields or domains of consciousness: it is, as it were, monovalent. An allegory is never mysticism. There is more mysticism in Wordsworth, even in Shelley and Keats, than in Spenser, for example, who stands in this respect on the same ground as Bunyan in his *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Take Wordsworth as a Nature-worshipper,

Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.<sup>85</sup>

or Wordsworth the Pagan,

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.<sup>86</sup>

I do not know if this is not mysticism, what else is. Neither is religious poetry true mysticism (or true spirituality). I find more mysticism in

Come, let us run  
And give the world a girdle with the sun!<sup>87</sup>

than in this pious morning hymn,

Heaven is, dear Lord! where'er Thou art,  
O never then from me depart !!<sup>88</sup>

I am anticipating however, I shall come to the point presently again. I was speaking of spiritual poetry. Listen once more to these simple, transparent, yet vibrant lines:

But how shall body not seem a hollow space  
When the soul bears eternity's embrace?<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> *"The Solitary Reaper"*.

<sup>86</sup> *"The World is too much with us"*...

<sup>87</sup> *John Hall: "To his Tutor"*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ken: "A Morning Hymn"*.

<sup>89</sup> *K. D. Sethna: "Deluge" in The Secret Splendour*.

or these again equally fraught with an intense experience a quiet in—gathered luminous consciousness:

I held my breath and from a world of din  
Solitarily I sat apart  
And felt the being vistaed into fire  
Of truth which did acquire  
Rhythm in the heart,  
When lo, I knew the worlds without as worlds within.<sup>90</sup>

But first let us go to the *fans et origo*, be acquainted with the very genuine article in its purity and perfection, in its essential simplicity. I do not know of any other ideal exemplar than the Upanishad. Thus,

There the sun shines not and the moon has no splendour and the stars are blind; there these lightnings flash not, nor any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shineth.<sup>91</sup>

Or this one equally deep, luminous and revealing:

Even as one Fire hath entered into the world but it shapeth itself to the form it meeteth, so there is one Spirit within all creatures but it shapeth itself to form and form; it is likewise outside these.<sup>92</sup>

This is spiritual matter and spiritual manner that can never be improved upon. This is spiritual poetry in its quintessence. I am referring naturally here to the original and not to the translation which can never do full justice, even at its very best, to the poetic value in question. For apart from the individual genius of the poet, the greatness of the language, the instrument used by the poet, is also involved. It may well be what is comparatively easy and natural in the language of the gods (*devabhasha*) would mean a *tour de force*, if not altogether an impossibility, in a human language. The Sanskrit language was moulded and fashioned in the hands of the Rishis, that is to say, those who lived and moved and had their being in the spiritual

<sup>90</sup> Harindranath Chattopadhyaya: "Blue Profound" in *Strange Journey*.

<sup>91</sup> *Katha Upanishad*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

consciousness. The Hebrew or even the Zend does not seem to have reached that peak, that absoluteness of the spiritual tone which seems inherent in the Indian tongue, although those too breathed and grew in a spiritual atmosphere. The later languages, however, Greek or Latin or their modern descendants, have gone still farther from the source, they are much nearer to the earth and are suffused with the smell and effluvia of this vale of tears.

Among the ancients, strictly speaking, the later classical Lucretius was a remarkable phenomenon. By nature he was a poet, but his mental interest lay in metaphysical speculation, in philosophy, and unpoetical business. He turned away from arms and heroes, wrath and love and, like Seneca and Aurelius, gave himself up to moralising and philosophising, delving into the mystery, the why and the how and the whither of it all. He chose a dangerous subject for his poetic inspiration and yet it cannot be said that his attempt was a failure. Lucretius was not a religious or spiritual poet; he was rather Marxian,—atheistic, materialistic. The dialectical materialism of today could find in him a lot of nourishment and support. But whatever the content, the manner has made a whole difference. There was an idealism, a clarity of vision and an intensity of perception, which however scientific apparently, gave his creation a note, an accent, an atmosphere high, tense, aloof, ascetic, at times bordering on the supra-sensual. It was a high light, a force of consciousness that at its highest pitch had the ring and vibration of something almost spiritual. For the basic principle of Lucretius' inspiration is a large thought-force, a tense perception, a taut nervous reaction—it is not, of course, the identity in being with the inner realities which is the hallmark of a spiritual consciousness, yet it is something on the way towards that.

There have been other philosophical poets, a good number of them since then—not merely rationally philosophical, as was the vogue in the eighteenth century, but metaphysically philosophical, that is to say, inquiring not merely into the phenomenal but also into the labyrinths of the noumenal, investigating not only what meets the senses, but also things that are behind or beyond. Amidst the earlier efflorescence of this movement the most outstanding philosopher poet is of course Dante, the Dante of *Paradiso*, a philosopher in the mediaeval manner and to the extent a lesser poet, according to some. Goethe is another, almost in the grand modern manner. Wordsworth is full of metaphysics from the crown of his head to the tip of his toe although his poetry, perhaps the major portion of it, had to undergo some kind of martyrdom because of it. And Shelley, the supremely

lyric singer, has had a very rich undertone of thought-content genuinely metaphysical. And Browning and Arnold and Hardy—indeed, if we come to the more moderns, we have to cite the whole host of them, none can be excepted.

We left out the Metaphysicals, for they can be grouped as a set apart. They are not so much metaphysical as theological, religious. They have a brain-content stirring with theological problems and speculations, replete with scintillating conceits and intricate fancies. Perhaps it is because of this philosophical burden, this intellectual bias that the Metaphysicals went into obscurity for about two centuries and it is precisely because of that that they are slowly coming out to the forefront and assuming a special value with the moderns. For the modern mind is characteristically thoughtful, introspective—"introvert"—and philosophical; even the exact physical sciences of today are rounded off in the end with metaphysics.

The growth of a philosophical thought-content in poetry has been inevitable. For man's consciousness in its evolutionary march is driving towards a consummation which includes and presupposes a development along that line. The *mot d'ordre* in old-world poetry was "fancy", imagination—remember the famous lines of Shakespeare characterising a poet; in modern times it is Thought, even or perhaps particularly abstract metaphysical thought. Perceptions, experiences, realisations—of whatever order or world they may be—expressed in sensitive and aesthetic terms and figures, that is poetry known and appreciated familiarly. But a new turn has been coming on with an increasing insistence—a definite time has been given to that, since the Renaissance, it is said: it is the growing importance of Thought or brain-power as a medium or atmosphere in which poetic experiences find a sober and clear articulation, a definite and strong formulation. Rationalisation of all experiences and realisations is the keynote of the modern mentality. Even when it is said that reason and rationality are not ultimate or final or significant realities, that the irrational or the submental plays a greater role in our consciousness and that art and poetry likewise should be the expression of such a mentality, even then, all this is said and done in and through a strong rational and intellectual stress and frame the like of which cannot be found in the old-world frankly non-intellectual creations.

The religious, the mystic or the spiritual man was, in the past, more or less methodically and absolutely non-intellectual and anti-intellectual: but the modern age, the age of scientific culture, is tend-

ing to make him as strongly intellectual: he has to explain, not only present the object but show up its mechanism also—explain to himself so that he may have a total understanding and a firmer grasp of the thing which he presents and explains to others as well who demand a similar approach. He feels the necessity of explaining, giving the rationality—the rationale—the science, of his art; for without that, it appears to him, a solid ground is not given to the structure of his experience: analytic power, preoccupation with methodology seems inherent in the modern creative consciousness.

The philosophical trend in poetry has an interesting history with a significant role: it has acted as a force of purification, of sublimation, of katharsis. As man has risen from his exclusively or predominantly vital nature into an increasing mental poise, in the same way his creative activities too have taken this new turn and status. In the earlier stages of evolution the mental life is secondary, subordinate to the physico-vital life; it is only subsequently that the mental finds an independent and self-sufficient reality. A similar movement is reflected in poetic and artistic creation too: the thinker, the philosopher remains in the background at the outset, he looks out; peers through chinks and holes from time to time; later he comes to the forefront, assumes a major role in man's creative activity.

Man's consciousness is further to rise from the mental to over-mental regions. Accordingly, his life and activities and along with that his artistic creations too will take on a new tone and rhythm, a new mould and constitution even. For this transition, the higher mental—which is normally the field of philosophical and idealistic activities—serves as the Paraclete, the Intercessor; it takes up the lower functionings of the consciousness, which are intense in their own way, but narrow and turbid, and gives, by purifying and enlarging, a wider frame, a more luminous pattern, a more subtly articulated, form for the higher, vaster and deeper realities, truths and harmonies to express and manifest. In the old-world spiritual and mystic poets, this intervening medium was overlooked—for evident reasons, for human reason or even intelligence is a double-edged instrument, it can make as well as mar, it has a light that most often and naturally shuts off other higher lights beyond it. So it was bypassed, some kind of direct and immediate contact was sought to be established between the normal and the transcendental. The result was, as I have pointed out, a pure spiritual poetry, on the one hand, as in the Upanishads, or, on the other, religious poetry of various grades and denominations that spoke of the spiritual but in the terms and in the

manner of the mundane, at least very much coloured and dominated by the latter. Vyasa was the great legendary figure in India who, as is shown in his Mahabharata, seems to have been one of the pioneers, if not the pioneer, to forge and build the missing link of Thought Power. The exemplar of the manner is the Gita. Valmiki's represented a more ancient and primary inspiration, of a vast vital sensibility, something of the kind that was at the basis of Homer's genius. In Greece it was Socrates who initiated the movement of speculative philosophy and the emphasis of intellectual power slowly began to find expression in the later poets, Sophocles and Euripides. But all these were very simple beginnings. The moderns go in for something more radical and totalitarian. The rationalising element instead of being an additional or subordinate or contributing factor, must itself give its norm and form, its own substance and manner to the creative activity. Such is the present-day demand.

The earliest preoccupation of man was religious; even when he concerned himself with the world and worldly things, he referred all that to the other world, thought of gods and goddesses, of after-death and other where. That also will be his last and ultimate preoccupation though in a somewhat different way, when he has passed through a process of purification and growth, a "sea-change". For although religion is an aspiration towards the truth and reality beyond or behind the world, it is married too much to man's actual worldly nature and carries always with it the shadow of profanity.

The religious poet seeks to tone down or cover up the mundane taint, since he does not know how to transcend it totally, in two ways: (1) by a strong thought-element, the metaphysical way, as it may be called and (2) by a strong symbolism, the occult way. Donne takes to the first course, Blake the second. And it is the alchemy brought to bear in either of these processes that transforms the merely religious into the mystic poet. The truly spiritual, as I have said, is still a higher grade of consciousness: what I call Spirit's own poetry has its own matter and manner—*swabhava* and *swadharmā*. A nearest approach to it is echoed in those famous lines of Blake:

To see a World in a grain of Sand,  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> "Auguries of Innocence".

And a considerable impact of it is vibrant and aglow in these lines of a contemporary Indian poet:

Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!  
..... lean down from above,  
Temper-the unborn light no thought can trace,  
Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.  
For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:  
Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,  
And all Thy formless glory turn to love  
And mould Thy love into a human face.<sup>94</sup>

Something of the fullness of spiritual matter and manner overflows in these epic lines:

His spirit mingles with eternity's heart  
And bears the silence of the Infinite.

In a divine retreat from mortal thought,  
In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,  
His being towered into pathless heights,  
Naked of its vesture of humanity.<sup>95</sup>

or this simple single line pregnant no less with the self-same fullness:

An eye awake in voiceless heights of trance,<sup>96</sup>

This, I say, is something different from the religious and even from the mystic. It is away from the merely religious, because it is naked of the vesture of humanity (in spite of a human face that masks it at times) ; it is something more than the merely mystic, for it does not stop being a signpost or an indication to the Beyond, but is itself the presence and embodiment of the Beyond. The mystic gives us, we can say, the magic of the Infinite; what I term the spiritual, the spiritual proper, gives in addition the logic of the Infinite. At least this is what distinguishes modern spiritual consciousness from the ancient, that is,

<sup>94</sup> K. D. Sethna: "This Errant Life" in *The Secret Splentiour*.

<sup>95</sup> Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri, Book I, Canto V*.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, *Book I, Canto III*.

Upanishadic spiritual consciousness. The Upanishad gives expression to the spiritual consciousness in its original and pristine purity and perfection, in its essential simplicity. It did not buttress itself with any logic. It is the record of fundamental experiences and there was no question of any logical exposition. But, as I have said, the modern mind requires and demands a logical element in its perceptions and presentations. Also it must needs be a different kind of logic that can satisfy and satisfy wholly the deeper and subtler movements of a modern consciousness. For the philosophical poet of an earlier age, when he had recourse to logic, it was the logic of the finite that always gave him the frame, unless he threw the whole thing overboard and leaped straight into the occult, the illogical and the a logical, like Blake, for instance. Let me illustrate and compare a little. When the older poet explains *indriyani hayan ahuh*, it is an allegory he resorts to, it is the logic of the finite he marshals to point to the infinite and the beyond. The stress of reason is apparent and effective too, but the pattern is what we are normally familiar with—the movement, we can say, is almost Aristotelian in its rigour. Now let us turn to the following:

Our life is a holocaust of the Supreme.  
 The great World-Mother by her sacrifice  
 Has made her soul the body of our state;  
 Accepting sorrow and unconsciousness  
 Divinity's lapse from its own splendours wove  
 The many-patterned ground of all we are.  
 An idol of self is our mortality. <sup>97</sup>

or this chiselled bit of diamond,

An inconscient Power groped towards consciousness,  
 Matter smitten by Matter glimmered to sense, <sup>98</sup>

Here we have a pattern of thought-movement that does not seem to follow the lineaments of the normal brain-mind consciousness, although it too has a basis there: our customary line of reasoning receives a sudden shock, as it were, and then is shaken, moved, lifted up, transported—gradually or suddenly, according to the temperament of the listener. Besides, we have here the peculiar modern tone,

<sup>97</sup> *Sri Aurobindo: Savitri, Book II, Canto i.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid., Book II, Canto IV.*

which, for want of a better term, may be described as scientific. The impress—*imprimatur*—of Science is its rational coherence, justifying or justified by sense data, by physical experience, which gives us the pattern or model of an inexorable natural law. Here too we feel we are in the domain of such natural law but lifted on to a higher level.

This is what I was trying to make out as the distinguishing trait of the real spiritual consciousness that seems to be developing in the poetic creation of tomorrow, e.g., it has the same rationality, clarity, concreteness of perception as the scientific spirit has in its own domain and still it is rounded off with a halo of magic and miracle. That is the nature of the logic of the infinite proper to the spiritual consciousness. We can have a Science of the Spirit as well as a Science of Matter. This is the Thought element or what corresponds to it, of which I was speaking, the philosophical factor, that which gives form to the formless or definition to that which is vague, a nearness and familiarity to that which is far and alien. The fullness of the spiritual consciousness means such a thing, the presentation of a divine name and form. And this distinguishes it from the mystic consciousness which is not the supreme solar consciousness but the nearest approach to it. Or, perhaps, the mystic dwells in the domain of the Divine, he may even be suffused with a sense of unity but would not like to acquire the Divine's nature and function. Normally and generally he embodies all the aspiration and yearning moved by intimations and suggestions belonging to the human mentality, the divine urge retaining still the human flavour. We can say also, using a Vedantic terminology, that the mystic consciousness gives us the *tatastha lakshana*, the nearest approximative attribute of the attributeless; or otherwise, it is the *hiranyagarbha* consciousness which englobes the multiple play, the coruscated possibilities of the Reality: while the spiritual proper may be considered as *prajñāghana*, the solid mass, the essential lineaments of revelatory knowledge, the typical "wave-particles" of the Reality. In the former there is a play of imagination, even of fancy, a decorative aesthesis, while in the latter it is vision pure and simple. If the spiritual poetry is *solar* in its nature, we can say, by extending the analogy, that mystic poetry is characteristically *lunar*—Moon representing the delight and the magic that Mind and mental imagination, suffused, no doubt, with a light or a reflection of some light from beyond, is capable of (the Upanishad speaks of the Moon being born of the Mind).

To sum up and recapitulate. The evolution of the poetic expression in man has ever been an attempt at a return and a progressive

approach to the spiritual source of poetic inspiration, which was also the original, though somewhat veiled, source from the very beginning. The movement has followed devious ways—strongly negative at times—even like man’s life and consciousness in general of which it is an organic member; but the ultimate end and drift seems to have been always that ideal and principle even when fallen on evil days and evil tongues. The poet’s ideal in the dawn of the world was, as the Vedic Rishi sang, to raise things of beauty in heaven by his poetic power, *kaviḥ kavitvā divi rūpam āsajat*. Even a Satanic poet, the inaugurator, in a way, of modernism and modernistic consciousness, Charles Baudelaire, thus admonishes his spirit:

*”Flyaway, far from these morbid miasmas, go and purify yourself in the higher air and drink, like a pure and divine liquor, the clear fire that fills the limpid spaces.”*<sup>99</sup>

That angelic poets should be inspired by the same ideal is, of course, quite natural: for they sing:

Not a senseless, trancèd thing,  
But divine melodious truth;  
Philosophic numbers smooth;

since they

Have ye souls in heaven too,  
Double-lived in regions new?<sup>100</sup>

Poetry, actually however, has been, by and large, a profane and mundane affair: for it expresses the normal man’s perceptions and feelings and experiences, human loves and hates and desires and ambitions. True. And yet there has also always been an attempt, a tendency to deal with them in such a way as can bring calm and purity—katharsis—not trouble and confusion. That has been the purpose of all Art

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*Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides;  
Va te purifier dans l’air supérieur,  
Et bois, comme tine pure et divine liqueur,  
Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides.  
”Élévation” Spleen et Idéal.*

<sup>100</sup> Keats: *”Ode on the Poets”*.

from the ancient days. Besides, there has been a growth and development in the historic process of this katharsis. As by the sublimation of his bodily and vital instincts and impulses, man is gradually growing into the mental, moral and finally spiritual consciousness, even so the artistic expression of his creative activity has followed a similar line of transformation. The first and original transformation happened with religious poetry. The religious, one may say, is the profane inside out; that is to say, the religious man has almost the same tone and temper, the same urges and passions, only turned Godward. Religious poetry too marks a new turn and development of human speech, in taking the name of God human tongue acquires a new plasticity and flavour that transform or give a new modulation even to things profane and mundane it speaks of. Religious means at bottom the colouring of mental and moral idealism. A parallel process of katharsis is found in another class of poetic creation, viz., the allegory. Allegory or parable is the stage when the higher and inner realities are expressed wholly in the modes and manner, in the form and character of the normal and external, when moral, religious or spiritual truths are expressed in the terms and figures of the profane life. The higher or the inner ideal is like a loose clothing upon the ordinary consciousness, it does not fit closely or fuse. In the religious, however, the first step is taken for a mingling and fusion. The mystic is the beginning of a real fusion and a considerable ascension of the lower into the higher. The philosopher poet follows another line for the same katharsis—instead of uplifting emotions and sensibility, he proceeds by thought-power, by the ideas and principles that lie behind all movements and give a pattern to all things existing. The mystic can be of either type, the religious mystic or the philosopher mystic, although often the two are welded together and cannot be very well separated. Let us illustrate a little:

The spacious firmament on high,  
 With all the blue ethereal sky,  
 And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
 Their great Original proclaim.<sup>101</sup>

This is religious poetry, pure and simple, expressing man's earliest and most elementary feeling, marked by a broad candour, a rather shallow monotone. But that feeling is raised to a pitch of fervour and scintillating sensibility in Vaughan's

<sup>101</sup> *Addison: "Hymn".*

They are all gone into the world of light  
And I alone sit lingering here,...  
O Father of eternal life, and all  
Created glories under Thee,  
Resume Thy spirit from this world of thrall  
Into true liberty.<sup>102</sup>

The same religious spirit seems to climb a little higher still stretching towards the mystic vein in Donne,

My heart is by dejection, clay,  
And by self-murder, red.  
From this red earth, O Father, purge away  
All vicious tinctures, that new fashioned  
I may rise up from death, before ram dead.<sup>103</sup>

The allegorical element too finds here cleverly woven into the mystically religious texture. Here is another example of the mystically religious temper from Donne:

For though through many streights, and lands I roame,  
I launch at paradise, and saile towards home,<sup>104</sup>

The same poet is at once religious and mystic find philosophical in these lines, for example:

That All, which always is All every where,  
Which cannot sinne, and yet all sinnes must beare,  
Which cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die,  
Loe, faithfull Virgin,...  
Whom thou conceiv'st, conceiv'd; yea thou art now  
Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother;  
Thou 'hast light in darke; and shutst in little roome,  
*Immensity cloistered in thy deare wombe.*<sup>105</sup>

Blake's powerfully pregnant lines are mystically philosophic:

<sup>102</sup> "They Are All Gone".

<sup>103</sup> "The Litanie"—*Divine Poems*

<sup>104</sup> *The Progress of the Soule, VI.*

<sup>105</sup> "Annunciation"—*Divine Poems*

Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity in an hour.<sup>106</sup>

Blake had this wonderful gift of transmuting the baser metal of mundane experience into the gold of a deep mystic and spiritual experience:

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!<sup>107</sup>

An allegorical structure has been transfused into a living and burning symbolism of an inner world.

But all that is left far behind, when we hear a new voice announcing an altogether new manner, revelatory of the truly and supremely spiritual consciousness, not simply mystic or religious but magically occult and carved out of the highest if recondite *philosophia*:

A finite movement of the Infinite  
Came winging its way through a wide air of Time;  
A march of Knowledge moved in Nescience  
And guarded in the form a separate soul. <sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> "Auguries of Innocence".

<sup>107</sup> "Jerusalem".

<sup>108</sup> Sri Aurobindo: Savitri, Book II, Canto IV.

# *The Poetry in the Making*

Is the artist—the supreme artist, when he is a genius, that is to say—conscious in his creation or is he unconscious? Two quite opposite views have been taken of the problem by the best of intelligences. On the one hand, it is said that genius is genius precisely because it acts unconsciously, and on the other it is asserted with equal emphasis that genius is the capacity of taking infinite pains, which means it is absolutely a self-conscious activity.

We take a third view of the matter and say that genius is neither unconscious or conscious but *superconscious*. And when one is superconscious, one can be in appearance either conscious or unconscious. Let us at the outset try to explain a little this psychological riddle.

When we say one is conscious, we usually mean that one is conscious with the mental consciousness, with the rational intelligence, with the light of the brain. But this need not be always so. For one can be conscious with other forms of consciousness or in other planes of consciousness. In the average or normal man the consciousness is linked to or identified with the brain function, the rational intelligence and so we conclude that without this wakeful brain activity there can be no consciousness. But the fact is otherwise. The experiences of the mystic prove the point. The mystic is conscious on a level which we describe as higher than the mind and reason, he has what may be called the overhead consciousness. (Apart from the normal consciousness, which is named *jagrat*, waking, the Upanishad speaks of three other increasingly subtler states of consciousness, *swapna*, *sushupti* and *turya*.) And then one can be quite unconscious, as in *samadhi*—that can be *sushupti* or *turiya*—or partially conscious—in *swapna*, for example, the external behaviour may be like that of a child or a lunatic

or even a goblin. One can also remain normally conscious and still be in the superconscience. Not only so, the mystic—the Yogi—can be conscious on infraconscious levels also; that is to say, he can enter into and identify with the consciousness involved in life and even in Matter; he can feel and realise his oneness with the animal world, the plant world and finally the world of dead earth, of "stocks and stones" too. For all these strands of existence have each its own type of consciousness and all different from the mode of mind which is normally known as consciousness. When St. Francis addresses himself to the brother Sun or the sister Moon, or when the Upanishad speaks of the tree silhouetted against the sky, as if stilled in trance, we feel there is something of this fusion and identification of consciousness with an infra-conscious existence.

I said that the supreme artist is superconscious: his consciousness withdraws from the normal mental consciousness and becomes awake and alive in another order of consciousness. To that superior consciousness the artist's mentality—his ideas and dispositions, his judgments and valuations and acquisitions, in other words, his normal psychological make-up—serves as a channel, an instrument, a medium for transcription. Now, there are two stages, or rather two lines of activity in the processus, for they may be overlapping and practically simultaneous. First, there is the withdrawal and the ingathering of consciousness and then its reappearance into expression. The consciousness retires into a secret or subtle world—Wordsworth's "recollected in tranquillity"—and comes back with the riches gathered or transmuted there. But the purity of the gold thus garnered and stalled in the artistry of words and sounds or lines and colours depends altogether upon the purity of the channel through which it has to pass. The mental vehicle receives and records and it can do so to perfection if it is perfectly in tune with what it has to receive and record; otherwise the transcription becomes mixed and blurred, a faint or confused echo, a poor show. The supreme creators are precisely those in whom the receptacle, the instrumental faculties offer the least resistance and record with absolute fidelity the experiences of the over or inner consciousness. In Shakespeare, in Homer, in Valmiki the inflatus of the secret consciousness, the inspiration, as it is usually termed, bears down, sweeps away all obscurity or contrariety in the recording mentality, suffuses it with its own glow and puissance, indeed resolves it into its own substance, as it were. And the difference between the two, the secret norm and the recording form, determines the scale of the artist's creative value. It happens often that the ob-

struction of a too critically observant and self-conscious brain-mind successfully blocks up the flow of something supremely beautiful that wanted to come down and waited for an opportunity.

Artists themselves, almost invariably, speak of their inspiration: they look upon themselves more or less as mere instruments of something or some Power that is beyond them, beyond their normal consciousness attached to the brain- mind, that controls them and which they cannot control. This perception has been given shape in myths and legends. Goddess Saraswati or the Muses are, however, for them not a mere metaphor but concrete realities. To what extent a poet may feel himself to be a mere passive, almost inanimate, instrument—nothing more than a mirror or a sensitive photographic plate—is illustrated in the famous case of Coleridge. His *Kubia Khan*, as is well known, he heard in sleep and it was a long poem very distinctly recited to him, but when he woke up and wanted to write it down he could remember only the opening lines, the rest having gone completely out of his memory; in other words, the poem was ready-composed somewhere else, but the transmitting or recording instrument was faulty and failed him. Indeed, it is a common experience to hear in sleep verses or musical tunes and what seem then to be very beautiful things, but which leave no trace on the brain and are not recalled in memory.

Still, it must be noted that Coleridge is a rare example, for the recording apparatus is not usually so faithful but puts up its own formations that disturb and alter the perfection of the original. The passivity or neutrality of the intermediary is relative, and there are infinite grades of it. Even when the larger waves that play in it in the normal waking state are quieted down, smaller ripples of unconscious or half-conscious habitual formations are thrown up and they are sufficient to cause the scattering and dispersal of the pure light from above.

The absolute passivity is attainable, perhaps, only by the Yogi. And in this sense the supreme poet is a Yogi, for in his consciousness the higher, deeper, subtler or other modes of experiences pass through and are recorded with the minimum aberration or diffraction.

But the Yogi is a wholly conscious being; a perfect Yogi is he who possesses a conscious and willed control over his instruments, he silences them, as and when he likes, and makes them convey and express with as little deviation as possible truths and realities from the Beyond. Now the question is, is it possible for the poet also to

do something like that, to consciously create and not to be a mere unconscious or helpless channel? Conscious artistry, as we have said, means to be conscious on two levels of consciousness at the same time, to be at home in both equally and simultaneously. The general experience, however, is that of "one at a time": if the artist dwells more in the one, the other retires into the background to the same measure. If he is in the over-consciousness, he is only half-conscious in his brain consciousness, or even not conscious at all—he does not know how he has created, the sources or process of his creative activity, he is quite oblivious of them, gone through them all as if *per saltum*. Such seems to have been the case with the primitives, as they are called, the elemental poets—Shakespeare and Homer and Valmiki. In some others, who come very near to them in poetic genius, yet not quite on a par, the instrumental intelligence is strong and active, it helps in its own way but in helping circumscribes and limits the original impulsion. The art here becomes consciously artistic, but loses something of the initial freshness and spontaneity: it gains in correctness, polish and elegance and has now a style in lieu of Nature's own naturalness. I am thinking of Virgil and Milton and Kalidasa. Dante's place is perhaps somewhere in between. Lower in the rung where the mental medium occupies a still more preponderant place we have intellectual poetry, poetry of the later classical age whose representatives are Pope and Dryden. We can go farther down and land in the domain of versification—although here, too, there can be a good amount of beauty in shape of ingenuity, cleverness and conceit: Voltaire and Delille are of this order in French poetry.

The three or four major orders I speak of in reference to conscious artistry are exemplified characteristically in the history of the evolution of Greek poetry. It must be remembered, however, at the very outset that the Greeks as a race were nothing if not rational and intellectual. It was an element of strong self-consciousness that they brought into human culture—that was their special gift. Leaving out of account Homer who was, as I said, a primitive, their classical age began with Aeschylus who was the first and the most spontaneous and intuitive of the Great Three. Sophocles, who comes next, is more balanced and self-controlled and pregnant with a reasoned thought-content clothed in polished phrasing. We feel here that the artist knew what he was about and was exercising a conscious control over his instruments and materials, unlike his predecessor who seemed to be completely carried away by, the onrush of the poetic enthusiasmos. Sophocles, in spite of his artistic perfection or perhaps because of it, appears

to be just a little, one remove, away from the purity of the central inspiration—there is a veil, although a thin transparent veil, yet a veil between which intervenes. With the third of the Brotherhood, Euripides, we slide lower down—we arrive at a predominantly mental transcription of an experience or inner conception; but something of the major breath continues, an aura, a rhythm that maintains the inner contact and thus saves the poetry. In a subsequent age, in Theocritus, for example, poetry became truly very much 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought', so much of virtuosity and precocity entered into it; in other words, the poet then was an excessively self-conscious artist. That seems to be the general trend of all literature.

But should there be an inherent incompatibility between spontaneous creation and self-consciousness? As we have seen, a harmony and fusion can and do happen of the superconscious and the normally conscious in the Yogi. Likewise, an artist also can be wakeful and transparent enough so that he is conscious on both the levels simultaneously—above, he is conscious of the source and origin of his inspiration, and on the level plain he is conscious of the working of the instrument, how the vehicle transcribes and embodies what comes from elsewhere. The poet's consciousness becomes then divalent as it were—there is a sense of absolute passivity in respect of the receiving apparatus and coupled and immixed with it there is also the sense of dynamism, of conscious agency as in his secret being he is the master of his apparatus and one with the Inspirer—in other words, the poet is both a seer (*kavīh*) and a creator or doer (*poietes*).

Not only so, the future development of the poetic consciousness seems inevitably to lead to such a consummation in which the creative and the critical faculties will not be separate but form part of one and indivisible movement. Historically, human consciousness has grown from unconsciousness to consciousness and from consciousness to self-consciousness; man's creative and artistic genius too has moved *pari passu* in the same direction. The earliest and primitive poets were mostly unconscious, that is to say, they wrote or said things as they came to them spontaneously, without effort, without reflection, they do not seem to know the whence and wherefore and whither of it all, they know only that the wind bloweth as it listeth. That was when man had not yet eaten the fruit of knowledge, was still in the innocence of childhood. But as he grew up and progressed, he became more and more conscious, capable of exerting and exercising a deliberate will and initiating a purposive action, not only in the external practical field but also in the psychological domain. If the earlier group is called

"primitives", the later one, that of conscious artists, usually goes by the name of "classicists." Modern creators have gone one step farther in the direction of self-consciousness, a return upon oneself, an inlook of full awareness and a free and alert activity of the critical faculties. An unconscious artist in the sense of the "primitives" is almost an impossible phenomenon in the modern world. All are scientists: an artist cannot but be consciously critical, deliberate, purposive in what he creates and how he creates. Evidently, this has cost something of the old-world spontaneity and supremacy of utterance; but it cannot be helped, we cannot command the tide to roll back, Canute-like. The feature has to be accepted and a remedy and new orientation discovered.

The modern critical self-consciousness in the artist originated with the Romantics. The very essence of Romanticism is curiosity—the scientist's pleasure in analysing, observing, experimenting, changing the conditions of our reactions, mental or sentimental or even nervous and physical by way of discovery of new and unforeseen or unexpected modes of "psychoses" or psychological states. Goethe, Wordsworth, Stendhal represented a mentality and initiated a movement which led logically to the age of Hardy, Housman and Bridges and in the end to that of Lawrence and Joyce, Ezra Pound and Eliot and Auden. On the Continent we can consider Flaubert as the last of the classicists married to the very quintessence of Romanticism. A hard, self-regarding, self-critical mentality, a cold scalpel-like gaze that penetrates and upturns the reverse side of things is intimately associated with the poetic genius of Mallarmé and constitutes almost the whole of Valéry's. The impassioned lines of a very modern poet like Aragon are also characterised by a consummate virtuosity in chiselled artistry, conscious and deliberate and willed at every step and turn.

The consciously purposive activity of the poetic consciousness—in fact, of all artistic consciousness—has shown itself with a clear and unambiguous emphasis in two directions. First of all with regard to the subject-matter: the old-world poets took things as they were, as they were obvious to the eye, things of human nature and things of physical Nature, and without questioning dealt with them in the beauty of their normal form and function. The modern mentality has turned away from the normal and the obvious: it does not accept and admit the "given" as the final and definitive norm of things. It wishes to discover and establish other norms, it strives to bring about changes in the nature and condition of things, envisage the shape of

things to come, work for a brave new world. The poet of today, in spite of all his effort to remain a pure poet, in spite of Housman's advocacy of nonsense and not-sense being the essence of true Art, is almost invariably at heart an incorrigible prophet. In revolt against the old and established order of truths and customs, against all that is normally considered as beautiful,—ideals and emotions and activities of man or aspects and scenes and movements of Nature—against God or spiritual life, the modern poet turns deliberately to the ugly and the macabre, the meaningless, the insignificant and the trifling—tins and teas, bone and dust and dustbin, hammer and sickle—he is still a prophet, a violent one, an iconoclast, but one who has his own icon, a terribly jealous being, that seeks to pull down the past, erase it, to break and batter and knead the elements in order to fashion out of them something conforming to his heart's desire. There is also the class who have the vision and found the truth and its solace, who are prophets, angelic and divine, messengers and harbingers of a new beauty that is to dawn upon earth. And yet there are others in whom the two strains mingle or approach in a strange-way. All this means that the artist is far from being a mere receiver, a mechanical executor, a passive unconscious instrument, but that he is supremely conscious and master of his faculties and implements. This fact is doubly reinforced when we find how much he is preoccupied with the technical aspect of his craft. The richness and variety of patterns that can be given to the poetic form know no bounds today. A few major rhythms were sufficient for the ancients to give full expression to their poetic inflatus. For they cared more for some major virtues, the basic and fundamental qualities—such as truth, sublimity, nobility, forcefulness, purity, simplicity, clarity, straightforwardness; they were more preoccupied with what they had to say and they wanted, no doubt, to say it beautifully and powerfully; but the *modus operandi* was not such a passion or obsession with them, it had not attained that almost absolute value for itself which modern craftsmanship gives it. As technology in practical life has become a thing of overwhelming importance to man today, become, in the Shakespearean phrase, his "be-all and end-all", even so the same spirit has invaded and pervaded his aesthetics too. The subtleties, variations and refinements, the revolutions, reversals and inventions which the modern poet has ushered and takes delight in, for their own sake, I repeat, for their intrinsic interest, not for the sake of the subject which they have to embody and clothe, have never been dreamt by Aristotle, the supreme legislator among the ancients, nor by Horace, the almost incomparable craftsman among the ancients in the domain of poetry. Man has become,

to be sure, a self-conscious creator to the pith of his bone.

Such a stage in human evolution, the advent of Homo Faber, has been a necessity; it has to serve a purpose and it has done admirably its work. Only we have to put it in its proper place.

The salvation of an extremely self-conscious age lies in an exceeding and not in a further enhancement or an exclusive concentration of the self-consciousness, nor, of course, in a falling back into the original unconsciousness. It is this shift in the poise of consciousness that has been presaged and prepared by the conscious, the scientific artists of today. Their task is to forge an instrument for a type of poetic or artistic creation completely new, unfamiliar, almost revolutionary which the older mould would find it impossible to render adequately. The yearning of the human consciousness was not to rest satisfied with the familiar and the ordinary, the pressure was for the discovery of other strands, secret stores of truth and reality and beauty. The first discovery was that of the great Unconscious, the dark and mysterious and all-powerful subconscious. Many of our poets and artists have been influenced by this power, some even sought to enter into that region and become its denizens. But artistic inspiration is an emanation of Light; whatever may be the field of its play, it can have its origin only in the higher spheres, if it is to be truly beautiful and not merely curious and scientific.

That is what is wanted at present in the artistic world—the true inspiration, the breath from higher altitudes. And here comes the role of the mystic, the Yogi. The sense of evolution, the march of human consciousness demands and prophesies that the future poet has to be a mystic—in him will be fulfilled the travail of man's conscious working. "The self-conscious craftsman, the tireless experimenter with his adventurous analytic mind has sharpened his instrument, made it supple and elastic, tempered, refined and enriched it; that is comparable to what we call the aspiration or call from below. Now the Grace must descend and fulfil. And when one rises into this higher consciousness beyond the brain and mind, when one lives there habitually, one knows the why and the how of things, one becomes a perfectly conscious operator and still retains all spontaneity and freshness and wonder and magic that are usually associated with inconstancy and irreflexion. As there is a spontaneity of instinct, there is likewise also a spontaneity of vision: a child is spontaneous in its movements, even so a seer. Not only so, the higher spontaneity is more spontaneous, for the higher consciousness means not only

awareness but the free and untrammelled activity and expression of the truth and reality it is.

Genius had to be generally more or less unconscious in the past, because the instrument was not ready, was clogged as it ' were with its own lower grade movements; the higher inspiration had very often to bypass it, or rob it of its serviceable materials without its knowledge, in an almost clandestine way. Wherever it was awake and vigilant, we have seen it causing a diminution in the poetic potential. And yet even so, it was being prepared for a greater role, a higher destiny it is .to fulfil in the future. A conscious and full participation of a refined and transparent and enriched instrument in the delivery of superconscious truth and beauty will surely mean not only a new but the very acme of aesthetic creation. We thus foresee the age of spiritual art in which the sense of creative beauty in man will find its culmination. Such an art was only an exception, something secondary or even tertiary, kept in the background, suggested here and there as a novel strain, called "mystic" to express its unfamiliar nature—unless, of course, it was openly and obviously scriptural and religious.

I have spoken of the source of inspiration as essentially and originally being a super-consciousness or over-consciousness. But to be more precise and accurate I should add another source, an *inner* consciousness. As the super-consciousness is imaged as lying *above* the normal consciousness, so the inner consciousness may be described as *lying behind or within it*. The movement of the inner consciousness has. found expression more often and more largely than that of over-consciousness in the artistic creation of the past: and that was in keeping with the nature of the old-world inspiration, for the inspiration that comes from the inner consciousness, which can be considered as the lyrical inspiration, tends to be naturally more "spontaneous", less conscious, since it does not at all go by the path of the head, it evades that as much as possible and goes by the path of the heart.

But the evolutionary urge, as I have said, has always been to bring down or instil more and more light and self-consciousness into the depths of the heart too: and the first result has been an intellectualisation, a rationalisation of the consciousness, a movement of scientific observation and criticism which very naturally leads to a desiccation of the poetic enthusiasm and fervour. But a period of transcendence is in gestation. All efforts of modern poets and craftsmen, even those that seem apparently queer, bizarre and futile, are at bottom a travail

for this transcendence, including those that seem contradictory to it.

Whether the original and true source of the poet's inspiration lies deep within or high above, all depends upon the mediating instrument—the mind (in its most general sense) and speech—for a successful transcription. Man's ever-growing consciousness demanded also a conscious development and remoulding of these two factors. A growth, a heightening and deepening of the consciousness meant inevitably a movement towards the spiritual element in things. And that means, we have said, a twofold change in the future poet's make-up. First as regards the substance. The revolutionary shift that we notice in modern poets towards a completely new domain of subject-matter is a signpost that more is meant than what is expressed. The superficialities and futilities that are dealt with do not in their outward form give the real trend of things. In and through all these major and constant preoccupation of our poets is "the pain of the present and the passion for the future": they are, as already stated, more prophets than poets, but prophets for the moment crying in the wilderness—although some have chosen the path of denial and revolt. They are all looking ahead or beyond or deep down, always yearning for another truth and reality which will explain, justify and transmute the present calvary of human living. Such an acute tension of consciousness has necessitated an overhauling of the vehicle of expression too, the creation of a mode of expressing the inexpressible. For that is indeed what human consciousness and craft are aiming at in the present stage of man's evolution. For everything, almost everything that can be normally expressed has been expressed and in a variety of ways as much as is possible: that is the history of man's aesthetic creativity. Now the eye probes into the unexpressed world; for the artist too the Upanishadic problem has cropped up: ,

By whom impelled does the mind fall to its target, what is the agent that is behind the eye and sees through the eyes, what is the hearing and what the speech that their respective sense organs do not and cannot convey and record adequately or at all ?

Like the modern scientist the artist or craftsman too of today has become a philosopher, even a mystic philosopher. The subtler and higher ranges of consciousness are now the object of inquiry and investigation and expression and revelation for the scientist as well as for the artist. The external sense-objects, the phenomenal movements are symbols and signposts, graphs and pointer-readings of facts and realities that lie hidden, behind or beyond. The artist and the scientist

are occult alchemists. What to make of this, for example:

Beyond the shapes of empire, the capes of Carbonek, over  
the topless waves of trenched Broceliande, drenched  
by |the everlasting spray of existence, with no mind's  
sail | reefed or set, no slaves at the motived oars, I  
drove into and clove the wind from unseen shores.  
Swept from all altars, swallowed in a path of power  
by the wrath that wrecks the pirates in the Narrow  
Seas,...multiple without dimension, indivisible with-  
out uniformity, the ship of Solomon (blessed be he)  
drove on <sup>109</sup>

Well, it is sheer incantation. It is word-weaving, rhythm-plaiting,  
thought-wringing in order to pass beyond these frail materials, to  
get into contact with, to give some sense of the mystery of existence  
that passeth understanding. We are very far indeed from the "natural"  
poets, Homer or Shakespeare, Milton or Virgil. And this is from a  
profane, a mundane poet, not an ostensibly religious or spiritual poet.  
The level of the poetic inspiration, at least of the poetic view and  
aspiration has evidently shifted to a higher, a deeper degree. We may  
be speaking of tins and tinsel, bones and dust, filth and misery, of the  
underworld of ignorance and ugliness,

All things uncomely and broken, all things worn out and  
old,

and the imaginative idealist, the romantically spiritual poet says  
that these or

The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak of a lumbering  
cart,  
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing the. wintry  
mould,

all, all the dark spots and blotches on the fair face of earth and  
humanity

<sup>109</sup> "The Last Voyage" by Charles Williams—*A Little Book of Modern Verse*, (Faber and Faber).

Are wronging your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps  
of my heart.

and he cries out:

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be  
told;

and declares the ardent aspiration of his heart and soul:

I hunger to build them anew, and sit on a green knoll apart,  
With the earth and the sky and the water, re-made, like a  
casket of gold .

For my dreams of your image that blossoms a rose in the  
deeps of my heart<sup>110</sup>

But the more truly modern mind looks at the thing in a slightly different way. The good and the evil are not, to it, contrary to each other: one does not deny or negate the other. They are intermixed, fused in a mysterious identity. The best and the worst are but two conditions, two potentials of the same entity. Baudelaire, who can be considered as the first of the real moderns in many ways, saw and experienced this intimate polarity or identity of opposites in human nature and consciousness. What is Evil, who is the Evil One:

*Une Idee, une Forme, Un Etre  
Parti de l'azur et tombe  
Dans un Styx bourbeux et plombe  
Ou nul œil du Ciel ne penetre;*<sup>111</sup>

(L'Irremediable)

And therefore it is not so irremediable as it appears to be. For the miracle happens and is an inevitable natural phenomenon, and that is why

<sup>110</sup> W. B. Yeats: "The Lover tells of the Rose in his Heart"—*The Wind among the Reeds*.

<sup>111</sup> *An Idea, a Form, a Being left the azure and fell into the mud and grey of a Styx where no eye from Heaven can penetrate.*

*Par l'opération d'un mystere vengeur  
Dans la brute assoupie un ange se reveille.*<sup>112</sup>

(L'Aube spirituelle)

Heaven and Earth are not incommensurables, divinity and humanity function as one reality, towards one purpose and end: cruel heaven, miserable humanity? Well, this is how they appear to the poet's eye:

*Le Ciel! couvercle noir de la grande marmite  
Ou bout l'imperceptible et vaste Humanite*<sup>113</sup>

(Le Couvercle)

In other words, the tension in the human consciousness has been raised to the power, the heat of a brooding consciousness is about to lead it to an outburst of new creation— sah tapastaptva. Human self-consciousness, the turning of oneself upon oneself, the probing and projecting of oneself into oneself—self-consciousness raised so often to the degree of self-torture, marks the acute travail of the spirit. The thousand "isms" and "logics" that pullulate in all fields of life, from the political to the artistic or even the religious and the spiritual indicate how the human laboratory is working at white heat. They are breaches in the circuit of the consciousness, volcanic eruptions from below or cosmic-ray irruptions from above, tearing open the normal limit and boundary—Baudelaire's Couvercle or the "golden lid" of the Upanishads—disclosing and bringing into the light of common day realities beyond and unseen till now.

If so long the poet was more or less a passive, a half-conscious or unconscious intermediary between the higher and the lower lights and delights, his role in the future will be better fulfilled when he becomes fully aware of it and consciously moulds and directs his creative energies. The poet is and has to be the harbinger and minstrel of unheard-of melodies: he is the fashioner of the creative word that

<sup>112</sup> *An avenging Mystery operating, out of the drowsy animal awakes an angel.*

<sup>113</sup> *Heaven! it is the dark lid upon the huge cauldron in which the imperceptible and vast humanity is boiling. —Les Fleurs du Mal.*

brings down and embodies the deepest aspirations and experiences of the human consciousness. The poet is a missionary: he is missioned by Divine Beauty to radiate upon earth something other than charm and wizardry. The fullness of his role he can only play up when he is fully conscious—for it is under that condition that all obstructing and obscuring elements lying across the path of inspiration can be completely and wholly eradicated: the instrument purified and tempered and transmuted can hold and express golden truths and beauties and puissances that otherwise escape the too human mould.

# *Hymn to Darkness*

Here is a modern poem in Bengali. It is characteristically modern, though perhaps not quite modernist. It is an invocation to Darkness:

That darkness is not more,  
The darkness in which my heart plunged when you came,  
It is no more there.  
Many are the lights now around the heart  
Arrayed as in a festive illumination. Ceaseless now  
There is the earth's merry-go-round all the time.  
But beyond still,  
Outside Time, the mind, even this mind stands  
And sends its call to Thee alone.  
Yes, the Darkness is there no longer;  
And yet stretching out both the arms  
My mind yearns to reach the Darkness  
And itself becomes the Darkness.

Invocation to Darkness has, it appears, become quite fashionable among a certain group of modern poets. It is a favourite theme on which many a poet, many a good poet has played each in his way, a characteristic variation. Curiously enough, I came across about the same time the work of another poet, a French poet, also modern and almost modernist and, curiously still, in the same manner, a worshipper of Darkness. He is Yves Bonnefoy, originally belonging to the school of Jouve, an earlier modern. He speaks of two kinds of Night, one darker than the other—the less dark one is our common day with its grey light. The other is on the other shore:

*Vers l'autre rive encore plus nocturne* <sup>114</sup>

This darker night on the other shore is not illuminated by any light, but there is fire there, fire and its flame and the transparency of that flame: here is his description of how they stand to each other, that Night and our familiar day:

*Une torche est portée dans le jour gris,  
Le feu déchire le jour.  
Il y a que la transparence de la flame  
Amèrement nie le jour.*<sup>115</sup>

But why bitterly? Perhaps the day (the common day) tasted bitter in the mouth of the poet.

The poet has not perhaps the spiritual sense as we in India understand it. He speaks in effect of a dark goddess, he calls her

*Douve profonde et noire* <sup>116</sup>

He names her Douve, perhaps in memory of his first master Jouve, and addresses her as Sombre Lumière (Dark Light). He evidently means his poetic inspiration; his vision of the other shore is that of the world of his poetic experiences and realisations. But the nature of the contents of that world is very characteristic. They are apparendy qualities and objects fundamentally spiritual— transparent fire and even motionless silence. Yes, that world is of wind and fire (compare our world of Tapas) and yet calm and tranquil. So the poet sings:

*Douve sera ton nom au loin parmi les pierres,  
Douve profonde et noire,  
Eau basse irréductible où l'effort se perdra.*<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> "Towards the other bank in a still darker night."

<sup>115</sup>

*"A torch is held up in the day's grey.  
The fire tears rifts in the day.  
There's this: the flame's transparency  
Bitterly denies the day."*

<sup>116</sup> "Douve dark and black."

<sup>117</sup>

Inspiration, according to the poet, is not the high swell of garrulousness and anxious effort. It is the solid bedrock underground when all the surface effusions have ebbed away—a shadowy dark strong tranquil repose.

A modern English poet—Robert Graves—worships a White Goddess. But from the description he gives of the lady, she would appear to be more black than white; for she seems to be intimately connected with the affairs—that is to say—the mysteries—of Hades and Hecate, underground worlds and midnight rites. She incarnates as the sow, although a white sow, she flows as the sap within plants and rises as passion and lust in man.

We in India have a dark god and a dark goddess— Krishna and Kali. Krishna is dark, his is the deep blue of the sky. Kali is dark, hers is the blackness of the earthly night. The Vaishnava poet and saint sang:

Oh, I love black,  
 For black is the tamal tree, black is Krishna,  
 Oh, how I love black.

Ramprasad the Bhakta thus speaks of Kali, his dark Mother: the poem itself is very dark, that is to say, the meaning is dark, and the style, the phrasing is darker still. A literal translation is out of question. A very free rendering is only possible:

I have brooded over it and I am utterly confused;  
 She in whose name one defies dark time,  
 She at whose feet lies low the Supreme in his pure whiteness  
 Why should she herself be black?  
 Many are the forms of blackness,  
 But here is a very marvel of blackness.  
 If you hold it in your heart,  
 the lotus there shall bloom and burn bright—  
 Oh, she is dark and her name is Mother Darkness:  
 She is blacker than blackness.  
 But one who has seen that beauty is lost for good,  
 He will have no eye for any other beauty.

*"Douve shall be your name far off among the stones,  
 Douve dark and black,  
 Irreducible low water where effort shall spend itself."*

Are the moderns on the same track as these older mystics?

But why this panegyric in worship of darkness? Whence this fascination for blackness?

Our ancient Rishis speak of the supreme Light of lights, the Source of all the lights that bum here, the Light that is beyond darkness, on the other shore. Darkness is this world, the world of ignorance, our earthly consciousness; this is a perception easily understandable. But in the mystic consciousness of a kind, darkness and light seem to be interchangeable. Darkness seems to be a form of light, nay even of a greater light.

It is said, the occultists say, that between the light of the day, that is to say, the light, of the ordinary consciousness and the higher spiritual light, there is an interim world, an intermediate zone of consciousness. When one leaves the earthly day, the normal consciousness and goes within and to the heights, towards the other Light, one enters at first into a dark region (cf. the *selva oscura* of Dante). Physically also, the scientists say today that when you leave the earth's atmosphere, from a certain height you no longer see the earthly light but you dive into a darkness where the sun does not shine in its glory as on earth. You see and feel the sunlight again when you approach the sun and are about to be consumed in its fires. In the same way, we are told that on the spiritual path too, the path of the inner consciousness, when you leave the ordinary consciousness, when you lose that normal light and yet have not arrived at the other higher light you grope in an intermediary region of darkness. You have lost the lower knowledge and have not yet gained the higher knowledge, then you are in that uncertain world of greyness or darkness. Or it happens also that while in the comparatively faint light of the ordinary consciousness, you are suddenly confronted with the Superior Light—through some grace perhaps—you cannot stand the light and get blinded and see sheer darkness. Again, the infinite sky in its fathomless depth appears to the naked eye blue, deep blue, blue-black. Light concentrated, solidified, materialised becomes a speck of darkness to the human eye. Do we not say today that a particle of matter (consolidated darkness) is only a quantum of concentrated light-energy?

Something of these supraphysical experiences must have entered into the consciousness of the modern poets who have also fallen in love with darkness and blackness—have become adorers, although they do not know, of Shyāmā and Shyāmā.

Here, for example, is a hymn from the Rig Veda, a whole hymn addressed by Rishi Kushika to Night. Listen how the Rishi invokes his black goddess: Night and Light are unified—almost one—in his consciousness. The Vedic Rishis considered Night as only another form or function of Day—*naktoṣasa samanāsā virūpe* — Night and Dawn have the same mind although the forms are different.

### Ode to Darkness

(Rigveda: X. 127)

Night spreads wide, she comes everywhere, a Goddess with shining eyes—she looms over these glories as their overlord. (1)

The Immortal Goddess fills up the Vast, above and below. She compels the darkness with her light.(2)

The Goddess comes and veils her sister, the Dawn and glows through the blackness.(3)

She is now that to us wherein we shall rest even as birds do on a tree.(4)

In her repose all habitations, all the footed and winged creatures, even the fast racing eagle.(5)

O Ocean-born Goddess! Smite the wolf, he or she, smite the robber! Garry us safely through.(6)

Black darkness clings to me all around; it stands here firm. O Dawn!  
clear it even as you do my debts. (7)

Daughter of Heaven! A Herd of light is this hymn of victory that  
moves towards you. I have made it for your sake. Do thou accept it,  
O Night. (8)

# *Vedic Story*

(RIGVEDA - X. 51.)

The gods are in a great fix. Where is ((Agni))? How is it that the comrade has disappeared all on a sudden? The Sacrifice—the great work has to be undertaken. And he is to be the leader, for he alone can take up the burden. There is no time to be lost, everything is ready for the ceremony to start and just at the moment the one needed most is nowhere. So the gods organise a search party to find out the Whereabouts of the runaway god.

The search party consists of Varuna, Mitra and Yama. We shall presently understand the sense of the selection. They look about here and there—in ten directions, it is mentioned—and at last spot the defaulting god hiding within a huge thick strong cloak or caul. They hail him and ask him to come out and take up his charge. Agni refuses: he says he is not competent to undertake the burden; indeed that is why he ran away and they must not force him. The gods explain, entreat, encourage Agni. They say and assure him that no harm will come to him, rather he will flourish and prosper and become immortal. He is mighty and he will become almighty as he takes up his work and proceeds with it. Agni accepts in the end and marches out with the gods.

What does this parable mean? First of all then we must know what Sacrifice—a Vedic sacrifice—is. Sacrifice symbolises the cosmic labour, the march of the universe towards its goal, the conquest of Light over Darkness, the ascent of manhood to godhead, the flaming rise and progress of consciousness to its supreme expression and embodiment. It is the release out of Inconscience and Unconsciousness

to consciousness and finally into the superconsciousness.

Sacrifice consists essentially in lighting the fire and pouring fuel—offerings—into it so that it may burn always and brighter and brighter. It calls the gods, also, it is said, ascends to them, brings them down here to live among men, in men. It lifts men from the ordinary life and consciousness, takes them to the abode of the gods. In other words its function is to bring down and infuse into the human vessel the godly consciousness and delight and power. Its purpose is to divinise human life. Through the sacrifice man offers his present possessions, his body and life and mind to the Deity and deities and by this surrender and submission constant and unfailing (*namas*) he awakens the Divine in him—the Agni that is to lead him to the divine consummation.

Fire then is the energy of consciousness secreted in the heart of things. It is that which moves the creation upward, produces the unfolding evolution that is history, both individual and collective. It is kindled, it increases in volume and strength and purity and effectiveness, as and when a lower element is offered and submitted to a higher reality and this higher reality impinges upon the lower one (which is what the rubbing of the arani or the pressing of the *soma* symbolises); the limitation is broken, the small enters into and becomes the vast, the crooked is straightened and lengthened out, what was hidden becomes manifest. This is described as the progression of the sacrifice (*adhvara* - advance on the path). That is also the victorious battle waged against the dark forces of Ignorance. The goal, the purpose is the descent and manifestation of the gods here upon earth in human vehicles.

But this Fire is not normally available. It is lost, imbedded in the thick petrified folds of unconsciousness and inconscience. Man's soul is not an apparent reality. It has to be found out, called forth, brought to the front. Even so, in the normal consciousness, the soul, the divine fire is a flickering, twinkling, hesitating spark; it is not sure of itself, not certain of its destiny. Yet when the time is ripe and the call comes, the gods, the luminous forces from above descend with all their insistence and meet the hidden godhead: ((Agni)) is reminded of his work and destiny which nothing can frustrate or cancel. He has to consent and undertake his sacrificial labour.

Agni feared and tried to escape from the burden of his responsibility. He wrapped himself in a thick and vast cloak and hid in the depths of far waters. That is the parable way of describing the difficulty, the

apparent impossibility of the undertaking Agni has to shoulder. Curiously however he has taken shelter just in the spot which seemed safest to him, from where begins his work, whose nature and substance he has to transform, that is to say, the nether regions of inconscience which is to be raised and transfigured into the solar region of the supra-consciousness.

One interesting point in the story is the choice of the gods who formed the search party. They were Mitra, Varuna and Yama. Varuna is the god of the vast consciousness (Brihat), the wide universal, the Infinite. His eye naturally penetrates everywhere and nothing can escape his notice. Mitra is harmony and rhythm of the infinity. Every individual element he embraces and he holds them all together in loving union—his is the friendly tie of comradeship with all. Finally Yama is the master of the lower regions, the underworld of physical and material consciousness, where precisely Agni has taken refuge. Agni is within the jurisdiction of this trinity and it devolves upon them to tackle the truant god.

There is another point which requires clarification. As a reason for his nervousness and flight he alleges that greater people who preceded him had attempted the work, but evidently failed in the attempt; so how can he, a younger novice, dare to go the same way? Putting the imagery back to its psychological bearing, one may explain that the predecessors refer to the deities of the physical, vital and mental consciousness who ruled the earth before the emergence of the psychic or soul consciousness. It is precisely because of the failure or insufficiency of these anterior—in the evolutionary movement—and inferior gods that Agni's service is being requisitioned. Mythologically also a parallelism is found in the Greek legends where it is said that the Olympian gods—Zeus and his company—were a younger generation that replaced, after of course a bloody warfare, their ancestors, the more ancient race of Kronos, the Titans. Titans were the Asuras and Rakshasas who reigned upon earth before the advent of the mental—sattwic—human being, Manu, as referred here. Now, here I give you the original text in translation:

## THE COLLOQUY OF AGNI AND THE GODS

(Rigveda-X. 51.)

The gods

1. Huge and firm was that covering with which you shrouded yourself and entered into the waters. O Agni! You are conscious from your very birth. The One God saw you in all your multiple universal body.

Agni

2. Who saw me? Which of the gods saw my multiple body all around? O Mitra! O Varuna! Tell me, where do they dwell—all the blazing fuel that move to the gods?

The gods

3. O Agni! god self-conscious, we seek you, you who have entered variably into the waters and into the growths of the earth. You shine richly. Yama has seen you as you flame out of your ten seats.

Agni

4. O Varana! I fled because I was afraid of the work of the priest. The gods must not yoke me to that work. That was why I embedded my body variably so that I as Agni may not know of that pathway.

The gods

5. Come, O Agni! Man, the mental being, desires to do the sacrifice, he has made everything ready, and you dwell in obscurity! Make easy-going the path that leads to the gods, with a happy mind carry the offering.

Agni

6. Thee were elders before Agni who covered the same path, even as charioteers do their way. That is why, O Varuna! out of fear I have come away so far, even as an animal shrinks and shivers at a shooting arrow.

The gods

7. We shall make your life undecaying, O Agni! so that no harm comes to you when engaged in the work. So, carry to the gods their share of the offering; a happy birth you have, a happy mind you must carry.

Agni

8. Then bring to me my share of the mighty offerings, those that are given before, those that are given after and those that are simply given. O gods! Long life to the being shining in the waters, to Agni himself lying in the growths of the earth.

The gods

9. The offerings that precede, the offerings that follow, offerings pure and simple—all forceful, may you enjoy. May this sacrifice be yours entirely. The four quarters bow down to you, O Agni!

## *A Vedic Conception of the Poet*

'Kavi' is an invariable epithet of the gods. The Vedas mean by this attribute to bring out a most fundamental character, an inalienable *dharma* of the heavenly host. All the gods are poets; and a human being can become a poet only in so far as he attains to the nature and status of a god. Who is then a *kavi*? The Poet is he who by his poetic power raises forms of beauty in heaven— *kaviḥ kavitvā divi rūpam āsajat*.<sup>118</sup> Thus the essence of poetic power is to fashion divine Beauty, to reveal heavenly forms. What is this Heaven whose forms the Poet discovers and embodies? Heaven—Dyaus—has a very definite connotation in the Veda. It means the luminous or divine Mind<sup>119</sup>—the mind purified of its obscurity and limitations, due to subjection to the external senses, thus opening to the higher Light, receiving and recording faithfully the deeper and vaster movements and vibrations of the Truth, giving them a form, a perfect body of the right thought and the right word. Indra is the lord of this world and he can be approached only with an enkindled intelligence, *dīdhayā manīṣā*,<sup>120</sup> a faultless understanding, *sumedhā*<sup>121</sup> He is the supreme Artisan of the poetic power, *Tashṭā*<sup>120</sup>, the maker of perfect forms, *surūpa kṛtnum*.<sup>122</sup> All the gods turn towards Indra and become gods and poets, attain their Great Names of Supreme Beauty.<sup>123</sup> Indra is also the master of the senses, *indnyas*, who are his hosts. It is through this mind and the senses that the poetic creation has to be manifested. The

<sup>118</sup> *Rig Veda*, X. 124. 7.

<sup>119</sup> *The Secret of the Veda*, by Sri Aurobindo.

<sup>120</sup> *Rig Veda*, III. 38. 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Rig Veda*, III. 38. 1.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 4. 1.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, X. S. 3.

mind spreads out wide the Poet's weaving;<sup>124</sup> the poet is the priest who calls down and works out the right thinking in the sacrificial labour of creation,<sup>125</sup> But that creation is made in and through the inner mind and the inner senses that are alive to the subtle formation of a vaster knowledge.<sup>126</sup> The poet envisages the golden, forms fashioned out of the very profundity of the consciousness.<sup>127</sup> For the substance, the material on which the Poet works, is Truth. The seat of the Truth the poets guard, they uphold the supreme secret Names.<sup>128</sup> The poet has the expressive utterance, the creative word; the poet is a poet by his poetic creation—the shape faultlessly wrought out that unveils and holds the Truth.<sup>129</sup> The form of beauty is the body of the Truth.

The poet is a trinity in himself. A triune consciousness forms his personality. First of all, he is the Knower—the Seer of the Truth, *kavayah satyadraṣṭārah*. He has the direct vision, the luminous intelligence, the immediate perception.<sup>130</sup> A subtle and profound and penetrating consciousness is his, *nīṅyam, pracetas*; his is the eye of the Sun, *sūrya cakṣuḥ*.<sup>131</sup> He secures an increased being through his effulgent understanding.<sup>132</sup> In the second place, the Poet is not only Seer but Doer; he is knower as well as creator. He has a dynamic knowledge and his vision itself is power, *nṛcakṣāḥ*,<sup>133</sup> he is the Seer-Will, *kavikratuḥ*.<sup>134</sup> He has the blazing radiance of the Sun and is supremely potent in his self-luminousness<sup>135</sup> The Sun is the light and the energy of the Truth. Even like the Sun the Poet gives birth to the Truth, *sūrya satyasava, satyāya satyaprasavāya*. But the Poet as Power is not only the revealer or creator, *savitā*, he is also the builder or fashioner, *taṣṭā*, and he is the organiser, *vedhāḥ*, of the Truth.<sup>136</sup> As Savita he manifests the Truth, as Tashta he gives a perfected body and form to the Truth, and as Vedha he maintains the Truth in its dynamic working. The effective marshalling and organisation of the Truth is what is called Ritam, the

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, X. S. 3.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* I. 151. 7.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* IV. 16. 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* VIII. 8. 2.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* X. S. 2.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* IX. 96. 17.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* I. 71. 10; *kavmi ketum-VII. 6. 2.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* IX. 10. 8-9.

<sup>132</sup> *Rig., Veda, VIII. 44.12.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* III. 54. 6.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* I. I. 5.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* VII. 59. 11.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* V. 52. 13.

Right; it is also called Dharma,<sup>137</sup> the Law or the Rhythm, the ordered movement and invincible execution of the Truth. The Poet pursues the Path of the Right,<sup>138</sup> it is he who lays out the Path for the march of the Truth, the progress of the Sacrifice.<sup>139</sup> He is like a fast steed well-yoked, pressing forward;<sup>140</sup> he is the charger that moves straight and unswerving and carries us beyond<sup>141</sup>—into the world of felicity.

Indeed delight is the third and the supremely intimate element of the poetic personality. Dear and delightful is the poet, dear and delightful his works, *priya, priyāni*. His hand is dripping with sweetness, *kavir hi madhuḥastyaḥ*.<sup>142</sup> The Poet-God shines in his pristine beauty and is showering delight.<sup>143</sup> He is filled with utter ecstasy so that he may rise to the very source of the luminous Energy<sup>144</sup>? Pure is the Divine Joy and it enters and purifies all forms as it moves to the seat of the Immortals.<sup>145</sup> Indeed this sparkling Delight is the Poet-Seer and it is that that brings forth the creative word, the utterance of Indra.<sup>146</sup>

The solar vision of the Poet encompasses in its might the wide Earth and Heaven, fuses them in supreme Delight in the womb of the Truth.<sup>147</sup> The Earth is lifted up and given marriage to Heaven in the home of Truth, for the creation and expression of the Truth in its varied beauty, *cāru citram*.

The Poet creates forms of beauty in Heaven; but these forms are not made out of the void. It is the Earth that is raised to Heaven and transmuted into divine truthforms. The union of Earth and Heaven is the source of the Joy, the Ananda, that the Poet unseals and distributes. Heaven and Earth join and meet in the world of Delight; between them they press out Soma, the drink of the gods.

The Mind and the Body are held together by means of the Life, the mid-world. The Divine Mind by raising the body-consciousness into itself gathers up too, by that act, the delight of life and releases

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, III. 38. 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII. 8. 23.

<sup>139</sup> *Taittiriya Samhita*, III. 5S. 3.

<sup>140</sup> *Rig Veda*, III. 38. 1.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 16. 11.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, V. 5. 2.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, IX. 25. 2.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, IX. 25. 6.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, IX. 25. 4.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, IX. 25. 5.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*: III. 54.6.

the fountain of immortal Bliss. That is the work and achievement of the gods as poets.

*Where then is the birth of the Poets? Ask it of the Masters. The Poets have seized and mastered the Mind, they have the perfect working and they fashion the Heaven. On this Earth they hold everywhere in themselves all the secrets. They make Earth and Heaven move together, so that they may realise their heroic strength. They measure them with their rhythmic measurings, they hold in their controlled grasp the vast and great twins, and unite them and establish between them the mid-world of Delight for the perfect poise.*<sup>148</sup>

All the gods are poets—their forms are perfect, *surupa, sudrsa*, their Names full of beauty, *cāru devasya nāma*,<sup>149</sup> This means also that the gods embody the different powers that constitute the poetic consciousness. Agni is the Seer-Will, the creative vision of the Poet—the luminous energy born of an experience by identity with the Truth. Indra is the Idea- Form, the architectonic conception of the work or achievement. Mitra and Varuna are the large harmony, the vast cadence and sweep of movement. The Aswins, the Divine Riders, represent the intense zest of well-yoked Life-Energy. Soma is Rasa, Ananda, the Supreme Bliss and Delight.

The Vedic Poet is doubtless the poet of Life, the architect of Divinity in man, of Heaven upon earth. But what is true of Life is fundamentally true of Art too—at least true of the Art as it was conceived by the ancient seers and as it found expression at their hands.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>148</sup> *Rig Veda*, 111. 38. 2. 3.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 24. 1

<sup>150</sup> *The Vedic term Kavi means literally 'a seer', 'one who has the vision', as the word 'poet' means etymologically 'a doer', 'a creator'. I have combined the two senses to equate the terms and bring out the meaning involved in their more current acceptance.*

# *The Beautiful in the Upanishads*

When the Rigveda says

*idam śreṣṭham jyotiṣām jyotiḥ āgāt citraḥ praketo ajaniṣṭa vibhvā*

*Lo! the supreme Light of lights is come, a varied awakening is born, wide manifest*

*ruśadvastā ruśatī śwetyāgāt  
āraigu kṛiṣṇā sadanānyasyāḥ*

*The white Mother comes reddening with the ruddy child; the dark Mother opens wide her chambers,*

the feeling and the expression of the beautiful raise no questioning; they are authentic as well as evident. All will recognise at once that we have here beautiful things said in a beautiful way. No less authentic however is the sense of the beautiful that underlies these Upanishadic lines:

*na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratāarakam  
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yam agniḥ  
tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvām  
tasya bhāsā sarvām idam vibhāti*

*There the sun shines not, nor the moon, nor the stars; these lightnings too there shine not; how then this fire! That shines and therefore all shine in its wake; by the sheen of That, all this shines.*

Only, to some perhaps the beauty may not appear as evident and apparent. The Spirit of beauty that resides in the Upanishadic consciousness is more retiring and reticent. It dwells in its own privacy, in its own home, as it were, and therefore chooses to be bare and austere, simple and sheer. Beauty means usually the beauty of form, even if it be not always the decorative, ornamental and sumptuous form. The early Vedas aimed at the perfect form (*surūpakṛtnum*), the faultless expression, the integral and complete embodiment; the gods they envisaged and invoked were gleaming powers carved out of harmony and beauty and figured close to our modes of apprehension (*sūpāyanāḥ*). But the Upanishads came to lay stress upon what is beyond the form, what the eye cannot see nor the vision reflect:

*na sandṛśi tiṣṭhati rūpamasya  
na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścanainam*

*Its figure does not lie in the field of vision, none can see it with the eye*

The form of a thing can be beautiful; but the formless too has its beauty. Indeed, the beauty of the formless, that is to say, the very sum and substance, the ultimate essence, the soul of beauty—that is what suffuses, with in-gathered colour and enthusiasm, the realisation and poetic creation of the Upanishadic seer. All the forms that are scattered abroad in their myriad manifest beauty hold within themselves a secret Beauty and are reflected or projected out of it. This veiled Name of Beauty can be compared to nothing on the phenomenal hemisphere of Nature; it has no adequate image or representation below:

*na tasya pratimā asti—*

it cannot be defined or figured in the terms of the phenomenal consciousness. In speaking of it, however, the Upanishads invariably and repeatedly refer to two attributes that characterise its fundamental nature. These two aspects have made such an impression upon the consciousness of the Upanishadic seer that his enthusiasm almost wholly plays about them and is centred on them. When he contemplates or communes with the Supreme Object, these seem to him to be the mark of its authenticity, the seal of its high status and the reason of all the charm and magic it possesses. The first aspect or

attribute is that of light—the brilliance, the solar effulgence—*ravituly-arūpaḥ*—the bright, clear, shadow less Light of lights—*virajam śubhram jyotiśām jyotiḥ* The second aspect is that of delight, the bliss, the immortality inherent in that wide effulgence—*ānandarūpam amṛtam yad vibhāti*.

And what else is the true character, the soul of beauty than light and delight? "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." And a thing of joy is a thing of light. Joy is the radiance rippling over a thing of beauty. Beauty is always radiant: the charm, the loveliness of an object is but the glow of light that it emanates. And it would not be a very incorrect mensuration to measure the degree of beauty by the degree of light radiated. The diamond is not only a thing of value, but a thing of beauty also, because of the concentrated and undimmed light that it enshrines within itself. A dark, dull and dismal thing, devoid of interest and attraction becomes aesthetically precious and significant as soon as the artist presents it in terms of the values of light. The entire art of painting is nothing but the expression of beauty, in and through the modalities of light.

And where there is light, there is cheer and joy. *Rasamaya* and *jyotirmaya* are thus the two conjoint characteristics fundamental to the nature of the ultimate reality. Sometimes these two are named as the 'solar and the lunar aspect. The solar aspect refers obviously to the Light, that is to say, to the Truth; the lunar aspect refers to the *rasa* (Soma), to Immortality, to Beauty proper,—

*yatte suśamam hṛdayam adhi candramasi śṛitam  
tenāmṛtatvasyeśena*

*O Lord of Immortality! Thy' heart of beauty that is sheltered in the moon—*

or, as the Prasna Upanishad has it,

*rayireva candramāḥ.. mūirtireva rayiḥ*

*The Moon means Delight... and Delight means the created form.*

The perception of beauty in the Upanishadic consciousness is something elemental-of concentrated essence. It silhouettes the main contour, outlines the primordial gestures. Pregnant and pulsating with

the burden of beauty, the *mantra* here reduces its external expression to a minimum. The body is bare and unadorned, and even in its nakedness, it has not the emphatic and vehement musculature of an athlete; rather it tends to be slim and slender and yet vibrant with the inner nervous vigour and glow. What can be more bare and brief and full to the brim of a self-gathered luminous energy than, for example:

*yat prāṇena na praṇiti yena prāṇaḥ  
prāṇīyate tadeva brahma—*

*That which lives not by Life, but which makes Life live—That is Brahman.*

or,

*nālpe sukhamasti bhūmaiva sukham...yo vai  
bhūmā tadamṛtam atha yadalpam tanmartyam—*

*In the Little there lies no happiness, the Vast alone is the Happiness. The Vast is the Immortality, the Little is the Mortality.*

The rich and sensuous beauty luxuriating in high colour and ample decoration that one meets often in the creation of the earlier Vedic seers returned again, in a more chiselled and polished and stylised manner, in the classical poets. The Upanishads in this respect have a certain kinship with the early poets of the intervening age—Vyasa and Valmiki. *Upamā Kālidāsasya*—Kalidasa revels in figures and images; they are profusely heaped on one another and usually possess a complex and composite texture. Valmiki's images are simple and elemental, brief and instinct with a vast resonance, spare and full of power. The same brevity and simplicity, vibrant with an extraordinary power of evocation, are also characteristic of the Upanishadic *mantra* With Valmiki's

*ākāśamiva duṣpāram —*

*like the sky hard to cross over,*

or,

*gatārciṣamivānalam —*

*like a fire whose light of flame is gone,*

or,

*tejasādityasamkāśaḥ kṣamayā pṛthivīsamah —*

*fiery as the burning sun, full of forbearance like the earth,*

can be compared, in respect of vivid and graphic terseness and pointedness and suggestive reverberation, the Upanishadic

*vṛkṣa iva stabdho divi tiṣṭhatyekaḥ—*

*The One stands alone in the heaven motionless, like a tree against the sky,*

or,

*śaravat tanmayo bhavet—*

*Be wholly fixed on That, like an arrow on its target,*

or again,

*yathemā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudrāyanāḥ—*

*like these rivers that flowing journey towards the sea.*

Art at its highest tends to become also the simplest and the most unconventional; and it is then the highest art, precisely because it does not aim at being artistic. The aesthetic motive is totally absent in the Upanishads; the sense of beauty is there, but it is attendant upon and involved in a deeper strand of consciousness. That consciousness seeks consciousness itself, the fullness of consciousness, the awareness and possession of the Truth and Reality,—the one thing which, if known, gives the knowledge of all else. And this consciousness of the Truth is also Delight, the perfect Bliss, the Immortality where the whole universe resolves itself into its original state of *rasa*, that is to say, of essential and inalienable harmony and beauty.

# *Upanishadic Symbolism*

A certain rationalistic critic divides the Upanishadic symbols into three categories—those that are rational and can be easily understood by the mind; those that are not understood by the mind and yet do not go against reason, having nothing inherently irrational in them and may be simply called non-rational, those that seem to be quite irrational, for they go frankly against all canons of logic and common sense. As an example of the last, the irrational type, the critic cites a story from the *Chhândogya*, which may be rendered thus:

There was an aspirant, a student who was seeking after knowledge. One day there appeared to him a white dog. Soon, other dogs followed and addressed their predecessor: "O Lord, sing to our Food, for we desire to eat." The white dog answered, "Come to me at dawn here in this very place." The aspirant waited. The dogs, like singer-priests, circled round in a ring. Then they sat and cried aloud; they cried out, "*Om* we eat and *Om* we drink, may the gods bring here our food."

Now, before any explanation is attempted it is important to bear in mind that the Upanishads speak of things experienced—not merely thought, reasoned or argued and that these experiences belong to a world and consciousness other than that of the mind and the senses. One should naturally expect here a different language and mode of expression than that which is appropriate to mental and physical things. For example, the world of dreams was once supposed to be a sheer chaos, a mass of meaningless confusion; but now it is held to be quite otherwise. Psychological scientists have discovered a method—even a very well-defined and strict method—in the madness of that domain. It is an ordered, organised, significant world; but its terminology has to be understood, its code deciphered.

It is not a jargon, but a foreign language that must be learnt and mastered.

In the same way, the world of spiritual experiences is also something methodical, well-organized, significant. It may not be and is not the rational world of the mind and the sense, but it need not, for that reason, be devoid of meaning, mere fancifulness or a child's imagination running riot. Here also the right key has to be found, the grammar and vocabulary of that language mastered. And as the best way to have complete mastery of a language is to live among the people who speak it, so, in the matter of spiritual language, the best and the only way to learn it is to go and live in its native country.

Now, as regards the interpretation of the story cited, should not a suspicion arise naturally at the very outset that the dog of the story is not a dog but represents something else? First, a significant epithet is given to it—*white*; secondly, although it asks for food, it says that *Om* is its food and *Om* is its drink. In the Vedas we have some references to dogs. Yama has twin dogs that "guard the path and have powerful vision." They are his messengers, "they move widely and delight in power and possess the vast strength." The Vedic Rishis pray to them for Power and Bliss and for the vision of the Sun.<sup>151</sup> There is also the Hound of Heaven, Sarama, who comes down and discovers the luminous cows stolen and hidden by the Panis in their dark caves; she is the path-finder for Indra, the deliverer.

My suggestion is that the dog is a symbol of the keen sight of Intuition, the unfailing perception of direct knowledge. With this clue the Upanishadic story becomes quite sensible- and clear and not mere abracadabra. To the aspirant for Knowledge came first a purified power of direct understanding, an Intuition of fundamental value, and this brought others of the same species in its train. They were all linked together organically—that is the significance of the circle, and formed a rhythmic utterance and expression of the supreme truth (*Om*). It is also to be noted that they came and met at dawn to chant the Truth. Dawn is the opening and awakening of the consciousness to truths that come from above and beyond.

It may be asked why the dog has been chosen as the symbol of Intuition. In the Vedas, the cow and the horse also play a large part; even the donkey and the frog have their own assigned roles. These objects are taken from the environment of ordinary life, and are those that are

<sup>151</sup> *Rig Veda*, X. 14-11,12.

most familiar to the external consciousness, through which the inner experiences have to express themselves, if they are to be expressed at all. These material objects represent various kinds of forces and movements and subtle and occult and spiritual dynamisms. Strictly speaking, however, symbols are not *chosen* in a subtle or spiritual experience, that is to say, they are not arbitrarily selected and constructed by the conscious intelligence. They form part of a dramatization (to use a term of the Freudian psychology of dreams), a psychological alchemy, whose method and process and rationale are very obscure, which can be penetrated only by the vision of a third eye.

## I. THE SEVERAL LIGHTS

The *Bṛihadaraṅjyaka* speaks of several lights that man possesses, one in the absence of another, for his illumination and guidance.

First of all, he has the Sun; it is the primary light by which he lives and moves. When the Sun sets, the Moon rises to replace it. When both the Sun and the Moon set, he has recourse to the Fire. And when the Fire, too, is extinguished, there comes the Word. In the end, when the Fire is quieted and the Word silenced, man is lighted by the Light of the Atman. This Atman is All-Knowledge, it is secreted within the life, within the heart: it is self-luminous—*vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hṛdyantarjyotiḥ*.

The progression indicated by the order of succession points to a gradual withdrawal from the outer to the inner light, from the surface to the deep, from the obvious to the secret, from the actual and derivative to the real and original. We begin by the senses and move towards the Spirit.

The Sun is the first and the most immediate source of light that man has and needs. He is the presiding deity of our waking consciousness and has his seat in the eye—*cakṣusah ādityaḥ, ādityaḥ cakṣuh bhūtvā akṣiṇi prāviśat*. The eye is the representative of the senses; it is the sense *par excellence*. In truth, sense-perception is the initial light with which we have to guide us, it is the light with which we start on the way. A developed stage comes when the Sun sets for us, that is to say, when we retire from the senses and rise into the mind, whose divinity is the Moon. It is the mental knowledge, the light of reason and intelligence, of reflection and imagination that govern our consciousness. We have to proceed farther and get beyond the mind, exceed the derivative light of the Moon. So when the Moon sets, the Fire is kindled. It is the

light of the ardent and aspiring heart, the glow of an inner urge, the instincts and inspirations of our secret life-will. Here we come into touch with a source of knowledge and realization, a guidance more direct than the mind and much deeper than the sense- perception. Still this light partakes more of heat than of pure luminosity; it is, one may say, incandescent feeling, but not vision. We must probe deeper, mount higher—reach heights and profundities that are serene and transparent. The Fire is to be quieted and silenced, says the Upanishad. Then we come nearer, to the immediate vicinity of the Truth: an inner hearing opens, the direct voice of Truth—the Word—reaches us to lead and guide. Even so, however, we have not come to the end of our journey; the Word of revelation is not the ultimate Light. The Word too is a clothing, though a luminous clothing —*hiraṇmayam pātram*. When this last veil dissolves and disappears, when utter silence, absolute calm and quietude reign in the entire consciousness, when no other lights trouble or distract our attention, there appears the Atman in its own body; we stand face to face with the source of all lights, the self of the Light, the light of the Self. We are that Light and we become that Light.

## II. THE FOUR OBLATIONS

*The Word has four breasts. The Gods feed on two, SWAHAKAR and VASHATKAR, men upon the third, HANTAKAR, and the Ancestor upon the fourth, SWADHA.*<sup>152</sup>

Ritualistically these four terms are the formulae for oblation to four Deities, Powers or Presences, whom the sacrificer wishes to please and propitiate in order to have their help and blessing and in order thereby to discharge his dharma or duty of life. Svaha is the offering especially dedicated to Agni, the foremost of the Gods, for he is the divine messenger who carries men's offering to the Gods and brings their blessing to men. Vasatkar is the offering to the Gods generally. *Hantakār* is the offering to mankind, to our kin, an especial form of it being the worship of the guests, *sarvadevamayo'tithi*. *Svadhā* is the offering to the departed Fathers (Pitris).

The duty of life consists, it is said, in the repaying of three debts which every man contracts as soon as he takes birth upon earth—the debt to the Gods, to Men and to the Ancestors. This threefold debt

<sup>152</sup> *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, V. 8 .i.*

or duty has, in other terms, reference to the three fields or domains wherein an embodied being lives and moves and to which he must adjust and react rightly if he is to secure for his life an integral fulfilment. These are the family, society and the world and beyond-world. The Gods are the Powers that rule the world and beyond, they are the forms and forces of the One Spirit underlying the universe, the varied expressions of divine Truth and Reality. To worship the Gods, to do one's duty by them, means to come into contact and to be united—in being, consciousness and activity—with the universal and spiritual existence, which is the supreme end and purpose of human life. The second—a more circumscribed field—is the society to which one belongs, the particular group of humanity in which he functions as a limb. The service to society or good citizenship entails the worship of humanity, of Man as a god. Lastly, man belongs to the family, which is the unit of society; and the backbone of the family is the continuous line of ancestors, who are its presiding deity and represent the norm of a living dharma, the ethic of an ideal life.

From the psychological standpoint, the four oblations are movements or reactions of consciousness in its urge towards the utterance and expression of Divine Truth. Like some other elements in the cosmic play, these also form a quartet—*catūr vyūha*—and work together for a common purpose in view of a perfect and all-round result.

*Svāhā* is the offering and invocation. One must dedicate everything to the Divine, cast all one has or does into the Fire of Aspiration that blazes up towards the Most High, and through the tongue of that one-pointed flame call on the Divinity.

In doing so, in invoking the Truth and consecrating oneself to it, one begins to ascend to it step by step; and each step means a tearing of another veil and a further opening of the passage.. This graded mounting is *vaśatkāra*.

*Hantakāra* is the appearance, the manifestation of the Divinity—that which makes the worshipper cry in delight, "Hail!" It is the coming of the Dawn—*ahanā*—when the night has been traversed and the lid rent open, the appearance of the Divine to a human vision for the human consciousness to seize, almost in a human form.

Finally, once the Truth is reached, it is to be held fast, firmly established, embodied and fixed in its inherent nature here in life and the waking consciousness. This is *Svadhā*.

The Gods feed upon *Svadhā* and *Vaśat*, as these represent the as-

ending movement of human consciousness: it is man's self-giving and aspiration and the upward urge of his heart and soul that reach to the Gods, and it is that which the immortals take into themselves and are, as it were, nourished by, since it is something that appertains to their own nature.

And in response they descend and approach and enter into the aspiring human soul—this descent and revelation and near and concrete presence of Divinity, this *Hanta* is man's food, for by it his consciousness is nourished.

This interchange, or mutual giving, the High Covenant between the Gods and Men, to which the Gita too refers

*With this sacrifice nourish the Gods, that the Gods may nourish you; thus mutually nourishing ye shall obtain the highest felicity*<sup>153</sup>

is the very secret of the cosmic play, the basis of the spiritual evolution in the universal existence.

The Gods are the formations or particularisations of the Truth-consciousness, the multiple individualisations of the One spirit. The Pitris are the Divine Fathers, that is to say, souls that once laboured and realised here below, and now have passed beyond. They dwell in another world, not too far removed from the earth, and from there, with the force of their realisation, lend a more concrete help and guidance to the destiny that is being worked out upon earth. They are forces and formations of consciousness in an intermediate region between Here and There (*antarikṣa*), and serve to bring men and gods nearer to each other, inasmuch as they belong to both the categories, being a divinised humanity or a humanised divinity. Each fixation of the Truth-consciousness in an earthly mould is a thing of joy to the Pitris; it is the *Svadhā* or food by which they live and grow, for it is the consolidation and also the resultant of their own realisation. The achievements of the sons are more easily and securely reared and grounded upon those of the forefathers, whose formative powers we have to invoke, so that we may pass on to the realisation, the firm embodiment of higher and greater destinies.

### III. THE PATH OF THE FATHERS AND THE PATH OF THE GODS

<sup>153</sup> *The Gita, III-11*

One is an ideal in and of the world, the other is an ideal transcending the world. The Path of the Fathers (*Pitṛyāna*) enjoins the right accomplishing of the *dharma* of Life—it is the path of works, of Karma; it is the line of progressive evolution that man follows through the experience of life after life on earth. The Path of the Gods (*Devayāna*) runs above life's evolutionary course; it lifts man out of the terrestrial cycle and places him in a superior consciousness—it is the path of knowledge, of Vidya.<sup>154</sup> The Path of the Fathers is the soul's southern or inferior orbit (*dakṣināyana, aparārdha*); the Path of the Gods is the northern or superior orbit (*uttarāyana, parārdha*). The former is also called the Lunar Path and the latter the Solar Path.<sup>155</sup> For the moon represents the mind,<sup>156</sup> and is therefore, an emblem that befits man so long as he is a mental being and pursues a dharma that is limited by the mind; the sun, on the other hand, is the knowledge and consciousness that is beyond the mind—it is the eye of the Gods.<sup>157</sup>

Man has two aspects or natures; he dwells in two worlds. The first is the manifest world—the world of the body, the life and the mind. The body has flowered into the mind through the life. The body gives the basis or the material, the life gives power and energy and the mind the directing knowledge. This triune world forms the humanity of man. But there is another aspect hidden behind this apparent nature, there is another world where man dwells in his submerged, larger and higher consciousness. To that his soul—the Purusha in his heart only has access. It is the world where man's nature is transmuted into another triune reality—Sat, Chit and Ananda.

The one, however, is not completely divorced from the other. The apparent, the inferior nature is only a preparation for the real, the superior nature. The Path of the Fathers concerns itself with man as a mental being and seeks so to ordain and accomplish its duties and ideals as to lead him on to the Path of the Gods; the mind, the life, and the body consciousness should be so disciplined, educated, purified, they should develop along such a line and gradually rise to such a stage as to make them fit to receive the light which belongs to the higher level, so allowing the human soul imbedded in them to extricate itself and pass on to the Immortal Life.

And they who are thus lifted up into the Higher Orbit are freed

<sup>154</sup> *Karmaṇā pitrloko vidyayā devalokah (jayyāh)—Bṛihadaranyaka, 1.5.16.*

<sup>155</sup> *Devalokādādityam. .pitṛlokāccandram—Ibid., VI. 2.15.16.*

<sup>156</sup> *Cāndram mono bhūtvā — Aitareya, 1.2.4; Manasascandramāḥ-Ibid., 1.1.4.*

<sup>157</sup> *[Divīva cakṣurātataṁ—Rig Veda.*

from the bondage to the cycle of rebirth. They enjoy the supreme Liberation that is of the Spirit; and even when they descend into the Inferior Path, it is to work out as free agents, as vehicles of the Divine, a special purpose, to bring down something of the substance and nature of the Solar reality into the lower world, enlighten and elevate the lower, as far as it is allowed, into the higher.

#### IV. THE TRIPLE AGNI

Agni is the divine spark in man, the naming consciousness in the mortal which purifies and uplifts (*pāvaka*) mortality into immortality. It is the god "seated in the secret heart, who is the possession of infinity and the foundation of existence," as Yama says to Nachiketas.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed, it was to this godhead that Nachiketas turned and he wanted to know of it and find it, when faith seized on his pure heart and he aspired for the higher spiritual life. The very opening hymn of the Rig Veda, too, is addressed to Agni, who is invoked as the vicar seated in the front of the sacrifice, the giver of the supreme gifts.

King Yama initiated Nachiketas into the mystery of Fire Worship and spoke of three fires that have to be kindled if one aspires to enter the heaven of immortality.

The three fires are named elsewhere Garhapatya, Dakshina, and Ahavaniya.<sup>159</sup> They are the three tongues of the one central Agni, that dwells secreted in the hearth of the soul. They manifest as aspirations that flame up from the three fundamental levels of our being, the body, the life and the mind. For although the spiritual consciousness is the natural element of the soul and is gained in and through the soul, yet, in Order that man may take possession of it and dwell in it consciously, in order that the soul's empire may be established, the external being too must respond to the soul's impact and yearn for its truth in the Spirit. The mind, the life and the body which are usually obstructions in the path, must discover the secret flame that is in them too—each has his own portion of the Soul's Fire—and mount on its ardent tongue towards the heights of the Spirit.

Garhapatya is the Fire in the body-consciousness, the fire of Earth, as it is sometimes called; Dakshina is the Fire of the moon or mind, and, Ahavaniya that of life.<sup>159</sup> The earthly fire is also the fire of the

<sup>158</sup> *Katha*, 1.1.14.

<sup>159</sup> *Chhandyogya*, IV, 11, 12, 13; V, 18.2.

sun; the sun is the source of all earth's heat and symbolises at the same time the spiritual light manifested in the physical consciousness. The lunar fire is also the fire of the stars, the stars, mythologically, being the consorts or powers of the moon and they symbolise, in Yogic experience, the intuitive thoughts. The fire of the life-force has its symbol in lightning, electric energy being its vehicle.

Agni in the physical consciousness is called *gr̥hapati*, for the body is the house in which the soul is lodged and he is its keeper, guardian and lord. The fire in the mental consciousness is called *dakṣiṇā*; for it is that which gives discernment, the power to discriminate between the truth and the false-hood, it is that which by the pressure of its heat and light cleaves the wrong away from the right. And the fire in the life-force is called *āhavanīya*; for *prāṇa* is not only the plane of hunger and desire, but also of power and dynamism, it is that which calls forth forces, brings them into play and it is that which is to be invoked for the progression of the Sacrifice, for an onward march on the spiritual path.

Of the three fires one is the upholder—he who gives the firm foundation, the stable house where the Sacrifice is performed and Truth realised; the second is the Knower, often called in the Veda *jātavedā*, who guides and directs; and the third the Doer, the effective Power, the driving Energy—*vaiśvānara*.

## V. THE FIVE GREAT ELEMENTS

The five elements of the ancients—earth, water, fire, air and ether or space—are symbols taken from the physical world to represent other worlds that are in it and behind it. Each one is a principle that constitutes the fundamental nature of a particular plane of existence.

Earth represents the material world itself, Matter or existence in its most concrete, its grossest form. It is the basis of existence, the world that supports other worlds (*dharā*, *dharitri*), the first or the lowest of the several ranges of creation. In man it is his body. The principle here is that of stability, substantiality, firmness, consistency.

Water represents the next rung—the vital world, the world of life-force (*prāṇa*). Physiologically also we know that water is the element forming three-fourths of the constituents of a living body and that dead and dry are synonymous terms; it is the medium in which the living cells dwell and through which they draw their sustenance. Water

is the veritable sap of life— it is the emblem of life itself. The principle it represents is that of movement, continuity, perpetuity.

Fire represents the Heart. It is that which gives the inner motive to the forces of life, it is the secret inspiration and aspiration that drive the movements of life. It is the heat of consciousness, the ardour of our central being that lives in the Truth and accepts nothing, nothing but the Truth. It is the pure and primal energy of our divine essence, driving ever upward and onward life's course of evolution.

Air is Mind, the world of thought, of conscious formation; it is where life-movements are taken up and given a shape or articulate formula for an organised expression. The forms here have not, however, the concrete rigidity of Matter, but are pliant and variable and fluid—in fact, they are more in the nature of possibilities, rather than actualities. The Vedic Maruts are thought-gods, and Indra (the Luminous Mind), their king, is called the Fashioner of perfect forms.

Ether or Space is the infinitude of the Spirit, the limitless Presence that dwells in and yet transcends the body, the life the heart and the mind.

## VI. THE SCIENCE OF THE FIVE FIRES

The Science of the Five Agnis (Fires), as propounded by Pravahan, explains and illustrates the process of the birth of the body, the passage of the soul into earth existence. It describes the advent of the child, the building of the physical form of the human being. The process is conceived of as a sacrifice, the usual symbol with the Vedic Rishis for the expression of their vision and perception of universal processes of Nature, physical and psychological. Here, the child is said to be the final fruit of the sacrifice, the different stages in the process being: (i) Soma, (ii) Rain, (iii) Food, (iv) Semen, (v) Child. Soma means Rasa—physically the principle of water, psychologically the principle of delight—and symbolises and constitutes the very soul and substance of life. Now it is said that these five principles—the fundamental and constituent elements—are born out of the sacrifice, through the oblation or offering to the five Agnis. The first Agni is Heaven or the Sky-God, and by offering to it one's faith and one's ardent desire, one calls into manifestation Soma or Rasa or Water, the basic principle of life. This water is next offered to the second Agni, the Rain-God, who sends down Rain. Rain, again, is offered to the third Agni, the Earth, who brings forth Food. Food is, in its

turn, offered to the fourth Agni, the Father or Male, who elaborates in himself the generating fluid.

Finally, this fluid is offered to the fifth Agni, the Mother or the Female, who delivers the Child.

The biological process, described in what may seem to be crude and mediaeval terms, really reflects or echoes a more subtle and psychological process. The images used form perhaps part of the current popular notion about the matter, but the esoteric sense goes beyond the outer symbols. The sky seems to be the far and tenuous region where the soul rests and awaits its next birth—it is the region of Soma, the *own Home* of Bliss and Immortality. Now when the time or call comes, the soul stirs and journeys down—that is the Rain. Next, it enters the earth atmosphere and clothes itself with the earth consciousness. Then it waits and calls for the formation of the material body, first by the contribution of the father and then by that of the mother; when these two unite and the material body is formed, the soul incarnates.

Apart from the question whether the biological phenomenon described is really a symbol and a cloak for another order of reality, and even taking it at its face value, what is to be noted here is the idea of a cosmic cycle, and a cosmic cycle that proceeds through the principle of sacrifice. If it is asked what there is wonderful or particularly spiritual in this rather *naïf* description of a very commonplace happening that gives it an honoured place in the Upanishads, the answer is that it is wonderful to see how the Upanishadic Rishi takes from an event its local, temporal and personal colour and incorporates it in a global movement, a cosmic cycle, as a limb of the Universal Brahman. The Upanishads contain passages which a puritanical mentality may perhaps describe as 'pornographic'; these have in fact been put by some on the Index ex-purgatorius. But the ancients saw these matters with other eyes and through another consciousness.

We have, in modern times, a movement towards a more Conscious and courageous knowledge of things that were taboo to puritan ages. Not to shut one's eyes to the lower, darker and hidden strands of our nature, but to bring them out into the light of day and to face them is the best way of dealing with such elements, which otherwise, if they are repressed, exert an unhealthy influence on the mind and nature. The Upanishadic view runs on the same lines, but, with the unveiling and the natural—and not merely naturalistic—delineation of these under-worlds (concerning sex and food), it endows them with

a perspective *sub specie aeternitatis*. The sexual function, for example, is easily equated to the double movement of ascent and descent that is secreted in nature, or to the combined action of Purusha and Prakrit! in the cosmic Play, or again to the hidden fount of Delight that holds and moves the universe. In this view there is nothing merely secular and profane, but all is woven into the cosmic spiritual whole; and man is taught to consider and to mould all his movements—of soul and mind and body—in the light and rhythm of that integral Reality.<sup>160</sup>

The central secret of the transfigured consciousness lies, as we have already indicated, in the mystic rite or law of Sacrifice. It is the one basic, fundamental, universal Law that upholds and explains the cosmic movement, conformity to which brings to the thrice-bound human being release and freedom. Sacrifice consists essentially of two elements or processes: (i) The offering or self-giving of the lower reality to the higher, and, as a consequence, an answering movement of (ii) the descent of the higher into the lower. The lower offered to the higher means the lower sublimated and integrated into the higher; and the descent of the higher into the lower means the incarnation of the former and the fulfilment of the latter. The Gita elaborates the same idea when it says that by Sacrifice men increase the gods and the gods increase men and by so increasing each other they attain the supreme Good. Nothing is, nothing is done, for its own sake, for an egocentric satisfaction; all, even movements relating to food and to sex should be dedicated to the Cosmic Being—Visva Purusha—and that alone received which comes from Him.

## VII. THE COSMIC AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL

The Supreme Reality which is always called Brahman in the Upanishads, has to be known and experienced in two ways; for it has two fundamental aspects or modes of being. The Brahman is universal and it is transcendental. The Truth, satyam, the Upanishad says in

<sup>160</sup> *The secularisation of man's vital functions in modern ages has not been a success. It has made him more egocentric and blatantly hedonistic. From an occult point of view he has in this way subjected himself to the influences of dark and undesirable world-forces, has made an opening, to use an Indian symbolism, for Kali (the Spirit of the Iron Age) to enter into him. The sex-force is an extremely potent agent, but it is extremely fluid and elusive and uncontrollable. It was for this reason that the ancients always sought to give it a proper mould, a right continent, a fixed and definite channel; the modems, on the other hand, allow it to run free and play with it recklessly. The result has been, in the life of those born under such circumstances, a growing lack of poise and balance and a corresponding incidence of neurasthenia, hysteria and all abnormal pathological conditions.*

its symbolic etymology, is 'This' (or, He) and 'That' (*syat + tyat* i.e. *sat + tat*). 'This' means the Universal Brahman: it is what is referred to when the Upanishad says:

Isavasyamidam sarvam: All this is for habitation by the  
Lord;  
or, Sarvam khalvidam brahma: All this is indeed the Brah-  
man;  
or, Sa evedam sarvam: He is indeed all this;  
or, Ahamevedam sarvam: I am indeed all this;  
or, Atmaivedam sarvam: The Self indeed is all this;  
or again, Sarvamasmi: I am all.

The *Chhandyogya*<sup>161</sup> gives a whole typical scheme of this universal reality and explains how to realise it and what are the results of the experience. The Universal Brahman means the cosmic movement, the cyclic march of things and events taken in its global aspect. The typical movement that symbolises and epitomises the phenomenon, embodies the truth, is that of the sun. The movement consists of five stages which are called the fivefold *sāma*. *Sāma* means the equal Brahman that is ever present in all, the Upanishad itself says deriving the word from *sāma*. It is *Sāma* also because it is a rhythmic movement, a cadence—a music of the spheres. And a rhythmic movement, in virtue of its being a wave, consists of these five stages: (i) the start, (ii) the rise, (iii) the peak, (iv) the decline and (v) the fall. Now the sun follows this curve and marks out the familiar divisions of the day: dawn, forenoon, noon, afternoon and sunset. Sometimes two other stages are added, one at each end, one of preparation and another of final lapse—the twilights with regard to the sun—and then we have seven instead of five *sāmas*. Like the Sun, the Fire—that is to say, the sacrificial Fire—can also be seen in its fivefold cyclic movement: (i) the lighting, (ii) the smoke, (iii) the flame, (iv) smouldering and finally (v) extinction—the fuel as it is rubbed to produce the fire and the ashes may be added as the two supernumerary stages. Or again, we may take the cycle of five seasons or of the five worlds or of the deities that control these worlds. The living wealth of this earth is also symbolised in a quintet—goat and sheep and cattle and horse and finally man. Coming to the microcosm, we have in man the cycle of his five senses, basis of all knowledge and activity. For the macrocosm, to bring out its

<sup>161</sup> *Chhandyogya*, II, III.

vast extra-human complexity, the Upanishad refers to a quintet, each term of which is again a trinity: (i) the threefold Veda, the Divine Word that is the origin of creation, (ii) the three worlds or fields—earth, air-belt or atmosphere and space, (iii) the three principles or deities ruling respectively these worlds—Fire, Air and Sun, (iv) their expressions, emanations or embodiments—stars and birds and light-rays, and finally, (v) the original inhabitants of these worlds—to earth belong the reptiles, to the mid-region the Gandharvas and to heaven the ancient Fathers.

Now, this is the All, the Universal. One has to realise it and possess in one's consciousness. And that can be done only in one way: one has to identify oneself with it, be one with it, become it. Thus by losing one's individuality one lives the life universal; the small lean separate life is enlarged and moulded in the rhythm of the Rich and the Vast. It is thus that man shares in the consciousness and energy that inspire and move and sustain the cosmos. The Upanishad most emphatically enjoins that one must not decry this cosmic godhead or deny any of its elements, not even such as are a taboo to the puritan mind. It is in and through an unimpaired global consciousness that one attains the All-Life and lives uninterruptedly and perennially: *Sarvamanveti jyok jīvati*.

Still the Upanishad says this is not the final end. There is yet a higher status of reality and consciousness to which one has to rise. For beyond the Cosmos lies the Transcendent. The Upanishad expresses this truth and experience in various symbols. The cosmic reality, we have seen, is often conceived as a septenary, a unity of seven elements, principles and worlds, further to give it its full complex value, it is considered not as a simple septet, but a threefold heptad—the whole gamut, as it were, consisting of 21 notes or syllables. The Upanishad says, this number does not exhaust the entire range; for there is yet a 22nd place. This is the world beyond the Sun, griefless and deathless, the supreme Selfhood. The Veda also sometimes speaks of the integral reality as being represented by the number 100 which is  $99 + 1$ ; in other words, 99 represents the cosmic or universal, the unity being the reality beyond, the Transcendent.

Elsewhere the Upanishad describes more graphically this truth and the experience of it. It is said there that the sun has five—we note the familiar five—movements of rising and setting: (i) from East to West, (ii) from South to North, (iii) from West to East, (iv) from North to South and (v) from above—from the Zenith—downward. These

are the five normal and apparent movements. But there is a sixth one; rather it is not a movement, but a status, where the sun neither rises nor sets, but is always visible fixed in the same position. .

Some Western and Westernised scholars have tried to show that the phenomenon described here is an exclusively natural phenomenon, actually visible in the polar region where the sun never sets for six months and moves in a circle whose plane is parallel to the plane of the horizon on the summer solstice and is gradually inclined as the sun regresses towards the equinox (on which day just half the solar disc is visible above the horizon). The sun may be said there to move in the direction East-South-West-North and again East. Indeed the Upanishad mentions the positions of the sun in that order and gives a character to each successive station. The Ray from the East is red, symbolising the *Rik*, the Southern Ray is white, symbolising the *Yajur*, the Western Ray is black symbolising the *Atharva*. The natural phenomenon, however, might have been or might not have been before the mind's eye of the Rishi, but the symbolism, the esotericism of it is clear enough in the way the Rishi speaks of it. Also, apart from the first four movements (which it is already sufficiently difficult to identify completely with what is visible), the fifth movement, as a separate descending movement from above appears to be a foreign element in the context. And although, with regard to the sixth movement or status, the sun is visible as such exactly from the point of the North Pole for a while, the ring of the Rishi's utterance is unmistakably spiritual, it cannot but refer to a fact of inner consciousness—that is at least what the physical fact conveys to the Rishi and what he seeks to convey and express primarily.

Now this is what is sought to be conveyed and expressed. The five movements of the sun here also are nothing but the five *sāmas* and they refer to the cycle of the Cosmic or Universal Brahman. The sixth status where all movements cease, where there is no rising and setting, no ebb and flow, no waxing and waning, where there is the immutable, the ever-same unity, is very evidently the Transcendental Brahman. It is That to which the Vedic Rishi refers when he prays for a constant and fixed vision of the eternal Sun—*-jyok ca sūryam driṣe*.

It would be interesting to know what the five ranges or levels or movements of consciousness exactly are that make up the Universal Brahman described in this passage. It is the mystic knowledge, the Upanishad says, of the secret delight in things—*madhuvidyā*. The five ranges are the five fundamental principles of delight—immortali-

ties, the Veda would say— that form the inner core of the pyramid of creation. They form a rising tier and are ruled respectively by the gods— Agni, Indra, Varuna, Soma and Brahma—with their emanations and instrumental personalities—the Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas, the Maruts and the Sadhyas. We suggest that these refer to the five well-known levels of being, the modes or nodi of consciousness or something very much like them. The Upanishad speaks elsewhere of the five sheaths. The six Chakras of Tantric system lie in the same line. The first and the basic mode is the physical and the ascent from the physical: Agni and the Vasus are always intimately connected with the earth and the earth-principles (it can be compared with the Muladhara of the Tantras). Next, second in the line of ascent is the Vital, the centre of power and dynamism of which the Rudras are the deities and Indra the presiding God (*cf.* Swadhishthana of the Tantras—the navel centre). Indra, in the Vedas, has two aspects, one of knowledge and vision and the other of dynamic force and drive. In the first aspect he is more often considered as the Lord of the Mind, of the Luminous Mind. In the present passage, Indra is taken in his second aspect and instead of the Maruts with whom he is usually invoked has the Rudras as his agents and associates.

The third in the line of ascension is the region of Varuna and the Adityas, that is to say, of the large Mind and its lights —perhaps it can be connected with Tantric Ajnachakra. The fourth is the domain of Soma and the Maruts—this seems to be the inner heart, the fount of delight and keen and sweeping aspirations—the Anahata of the Tantras. The fifth is the region of the crown of the head, the domain of Brahma and the Sadhyas: it is the Overmind status from where comes the descending inflatus, the creative Maya of Brahma. And when you go beyond, you pass into the ultimate status of the Sun, the reality absolute, the Transcendent which is indescribable, unseizable, indeterminate, indeterminable, incommensurable; and once there, one never returns, never—*na ca punarāvartate na ca punarāvartate*.

### VIII. HOW MANY GODS?

”How many Gods are there?” Yajnavalkya was once asked.<sup>162</sup> The Rishi answered, they say there are three thousand and three of them, or three hundred and three, or again, thirty- three; it may be said too there are six or three or two or one and a half or one finally. Indeed as

<sup>162</sup> *Brihadaranyaka III.9.*

the Upanishad says elsewhere, it is the One Unique who wished to be many: and all the gods are the various glories (*mahimā*) or emanations of the One Divine. The ancient of ancient Rishis 'had declared long long ago, in the earliest Veda, that there is one indivisible Reality, the seers name it in various ways.

In Yajnavalkya's enumeration, however, it is to be noted, first of all, that he stresses on the number three. The principle of triplicity is of very wide application: it permeates all fields of consciousness and is evidently based upon a fundamental fact of reality. It seems to embody a truth of synthesis and comprehension, points to the order and harmony that reigns in the cosmos, the spheric music. The metaphysical, that is to say, the original principles that constitute existence are the well-known triplets: (i) the superior: Sat, Chit, Ananda; and (ii) the inferior: Body, Life and Mind—this being a reflection or translation or concretisation of the former. We can see also here how the dual principle comes in, the twin godhead or the two gods to which Yajnavalkya refers. The same principle is found in the conception of Ardhanarishwara, Male and Female, Purusha-Prakriti. The Upanishad says<sup>163</sup> yet again that the One original Purusha was not pleased at being alone, so for a companion he created out of himself the original Female. The dual principle signifies creation, the manifesting activity of the Reality. But what is this one and a half to which Yajnavalkya refers? It simply means that the other created out of the one is not a wholly separate, independent entity: it is not an integer by itself, as in the Manichean system, but that it is a portion, a fraction of the One. And in the end, in the ultimate analysis, or rather synthesis, there is but one single undivided and indivisible unity. The thousands and hundreds, very often mentioned also in the Rig Veda, are not simply multiplications of the One, a graphic description of its many-sidedness; it indicates also the absolute fullness, the complete completeness (*pūrṇasya pūrṇam*) of the Reality. It includes and comprehends all and is a rounded totality, a full circle. The hundred-gated and the thousand-pillared cities of which the-ancient Rishis chanted are formations and embodiments of consciousness human and divine, are realities whole and entire englobing all the layers and grades of consciousness.

Besides this metaphysics there is also an occult aspect in numerology of which Pythagoras was a well-known adept and in which the Vedic Rishis too seem to take special delight. The multiplication of

<sup>163</sup> *Brihadaranyaka 1.4.*

numbers represents in a general way the principle of emanation. The One has divided and subdivided itself, but not in a haphazard way: it is not like the chaotic pulverisation of a piece of stone by hammer-blows. The process of division and subdivision follows a pattern almost as neat and methodical as a genealogical tree. That is to say, the emanations form a hierarchy. At the top, the apex of the pyramid, stands the one supreme Godhead. That Godhead is biune in respect of manifestation—the Divine and his creative Power. This two-in-one reality may be considered, according to one view of creation, as dividing into three forms or aspects —the well-known Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra of Hindu mythology. These may be termed the first or primary emanations.

Now, each one of them in its turn has its own emanations—the eleven Rudriyas are familiar. These are secondary and there are tertiary and other graded emanations—the last ones touch the earth and embody physico-vital forces. The lowest formations or beings can trace their origin to one or other of the primaries and their nature and function partake of or are an echo of their first ancestor.

Man, however, is an epitome of creation. He embraces and incarnates the entire gamut of consciousness and comprises in him all beings from the highest Divinity to the lowest jinn or elf. And yet each human being in his true personality is a lineal descendant of one or other typical aspect or original Personality of the one supreme Reality; and his individual character is all the more pronounced and well-defined the more organised and developed is the being. The psychic being in man is thus a direct descent, an immediate emanation along a definite line of devolution of the supreme consciousness. We may now understand and explain easily why one chooses a particular Ishta, an ideal god, what is the drive that pushes one to become a worshipper of Siva or Vishnu or any other deity. It is not any rational understanding, a weighing of pros and cons and then a resultant conclusion that leads one to choose a path of religion or spirituality. It is the soul's natural call to the God, the type of being and consciousness of which it is a spark, from which it has descended, it is the secret affinity—the spiritual blood-relation as it were—that determines the choice and adherence. And it is this that we name Faith. And the exclusiveness and violence and bitterness which attend such adherence and which go by the name of partisanship, sectarianism, fanaticism etc., are a deformation in the ignorance on the physico-vital plane of the secret loyalty to one's source and origin. Of course, the pattern or law is not so simple and rigid, but it gives a token or typical pattern. For it must

not be forgotten that the supreme source or the original is one and indivisible and in the highest integration consciousness is global and not exclusive. And the human being that attains such a status is not bound or wholly limited to one particular formation: its personality is based on the truth of impersonality. And yet the two can go together: an individual can be impersonal in consciousness and yet personal in becoming and true to type.

The number of gods depends on the level of consciousness on which we stand. On this material plane there are as many gods as there are bodies or individual forms (adhar). And on the supreme height there is only one God without a second. In between there are gradations of types and sub-types whose number and function vary according to the aspect of consciousness that reveals itself.

## IX. NACHIKETAS THREE BOONS

The three boons asked for by Nachiketas from Yama, Lord of Death, and granted to him have been interpreted in different ways. Here is one more attempt in the direction.

Nachiketas is the young aspiring human being still in the Ignorance—*naciketa*, meaning one without consciousness or knowledge. The three boons he asks for are in reference to the three fundamental modes of being and consciousness that are at the very basis, forming, as it were, the ground-plan of the integral reality. They are (i) the individual, (ii) the universal or cosmic and (iii) the transcendental.

The first boon regards the individual, that is to say, the individual identity and integrity. It asks for the maintenance of that individuality so that it may be saved from the dissolution that Death brings about. Death, of course, means the dissolution of the body, but it represents also dissolution pure and simple. Indeed death is a process which does not stop with the physical phenomenon, but continues even after; for with the body gone, the other elements of the individual organism, the vital and the mental too gradually fall off, fade and dissolve. Nachiketas wishes to secure from Death the safety and preservation of the earthly personality, the particular organisation of mind and vital based upon a recognisable physical frame. That is the first necessity for the aspiring mortal—for, it is said, the body is the first instrument for the working out of one's life ideal. But man's true personality, the real individuality lies beyond, beyond the body, beyond the life, beyond the mind, beyond the triple region that Death

lords it over. That is the divine world, the Heaven of the immortals, beyond death and beyond sorrow and grief. It is the hearth secreted in the inner heart where burns the Divine Fire, the God of Life Everlasting. And this is the nodus that binds together the threefold status of the manifested existence, the body, the life and the mind. This triplicity is the structure of name and form built out of the bricks of experience, the kiln, as it were, within which burns the Divine Agni, man's true soul. This soul can be reached only when one exceeds the bounds and limitations of the triple cord and experiences one's communion and identity with all souls and all existence. Agni is the secret divinity within, within the individual and within the world; he is the Immanent Divine, the cosmic godhead that holds together and marshals all the elements and components, all the principles that make up the manifest universe. He it is that has entered into the world and created facets of his own reality in multiple forms: and it is he that lies secret in the human being as the immortal soul through all its adventure of life and death in the series of incarnations in terrestrial evolution. The adoration and realisation of this Immanent Divinity, the worship of Agni taught by Yama in the second boon, consists in the triple sacrifice, the triple work, the triple union in the triple status of the physical, the vital and the mental consciousness, the mastery of which leads one to the other shore, the abode of perennial existence where the human soul enjoys its eternity and unending continuity in cosmic life. Therefore, Agni, the master of the psychic being, is called *jātavedās*, he who knows the births, all the transmigrations from life to life.

The third boon is the secret of secrets, for it is the knowledge and realisation of Transcendence that is sought here. Beyond the individual lies the universal; is there anything beyond the universal? The release of the individual into the cosmic existence gives him the griefless life eternal: can the cosmos be rolled up and flung into something beyond? What would be the nature of that thing? What is there outside creation, out-side manifestation, outside Maya, to use a latter day term? Is there existence or non-existence (utter dissolution or extinction —Death in his supreme and absolute status)? King Yama did not choose to answer immediately and even endeavoured to dissuade Nachiketas from pursuing the question over which people were confounded, as he said. Evidently it was a much discussed problem in those days. Buddha was asked the same question and he evaded it, saying that the pragmatic man should attend to practical and immediate realities and not waste time and energy in discussing things

ultimate and beyond that have hardly any relation to the present and the actual.

But Yama did answer and unveil the mystery and impart the supreme secret knowledge—the knowledge of the Transcendent Brahman: it is out of the transcendent reality that the immanent deity takes his birth. Hence the Divine Fire, the Lord of creation and the Inner Master—*sarvabhūtāntarātmā*, *antaryāmi*—is called *brahmajam*, born of the Brahman. Yama teaches the process of transcendence. Apart from the knowledge and experience first of the individual and then of the cosmic Brahman, there is a definite line along which the human consciousness (or unconsciousness, as it is at present) is to ascend and evolve. The first step is to learn to distinguish between the Good and the Pleasurable (*śreya* and *preya*). The line of pleasure leads to the external, the superficial, the false: while the other path leads towards the inner and the higher truth. So the second step is the gradual withdrawal of the consciousness from the physical and the sensual and even the mental preoccupation and focussing it upon what is certain and permanent. In the midst of the death-ridden consciousness—in the heart of all that is unstable and fleeting—one has to look for Agni, the eternal godhead, the Immortal in mortality, the Timeless in time through whom lies the passage to Immortality beyond Time.

Man has two souls corresponding to his double status. In the inferior, the soul looks downward and is involved in the current of Impermanence and Ignorance, it tastes of grief and sorrow and suffers death and dissolution: in the higher it looks upward and communes and joins with the Eternal (the cosmic) and then with the Absolute (the transcendent). The lower is a reflection of the higher, the higher comes down in a diminished and hence tarnished light. The message is that of deliverance, the deliverance and reintegration of the lower soul out of its bondage of worldly ignorant life into the freedom and immortality first of its higher and then of its highest status. It is true, however, that the Upanishad does not make a trenchant distinction between the cosmic and the transcendent and often it speaks of both in the same breath, as it were. For in fact they are realities involved in each other and interwoven. Indeed the triple status, including the Individual, forms one single totality and the three do not exclude or cancel each other; on the contrary, they combine and may be said to enhance each other's reality. The Transcendence expresses or deploys itself in the cosmos—he goes abroad, *sa paryagat*: and the cosmic individualises, concretises itself in the particular and the personal. The one single spiritual reality holds itself, aspects itself in a threefold

manner.

The teaching of Yama in brief may be said to be the gospel of immortality and it consists of the knowledge of triple immortality. And who else can be the best teacher of immortality than Death himself, as Nachiketas pointedly said? The first immortality is that of the physical existence and consciousness, the preservation of the personal identity, the individual name and form—this being in itself as expression and embodiment and instrument of the Inner Reality. This inner reality en-shrines the second immortality—the eternity and continuity of the soul's life through its incarnations in time, the divine Agni lit for ever and ever growing in flaming consciousness. And the third and final immortality is in the being and consciousness beyond time, beyond all relativities, the absolute and self-existent delight.

# *Rabindranath Tagore : A Great Poet, A Great Man*

TAGORE is a great poet: he will be remembered as one of the greatest world-poets. But humanity owes him another—perhaps a greater—debt of gratitude: his name has a higher value, a more significant potency for the future.

In an age when Reason was considered as the highest light given to man, Tagore pointed to the Vision of the mystics as always the still greater light; when man was elated with un-dreamt-of worldly success; puffed up with incomparable material possessions and powers, Tagore's voice rang clear and emphatic in tune with the cry of the ancients: "What shall I do with all this mass of things, if I am not made immortal by that?" When men, in their individual as well as collective egoism, were scrambling for earthly gains and hoards, he held before them vaster and cleaner horizons, higher and deeper ways of being and living, maintained the sacred sense of human solidarity, the living consciousness of the Divine, one and indivisible. When the Gospel of Power had all but hypnotised men's minds, and Superman or God-man came to be equated with the Titan, Tagore saw through the falsehood and placed in front and above all the old-world eternal verities of love and self-giving, harmony and mutuality, sweetness and light. When pessimism, cynicism, agnosticism struck the major chord of human temperament, and grief and frustration and death and decay were taken as a matter of course to be the inevitable order of earthly life—*bhasmantam idam shariram*— he continued to sing the song of the Rishis that Ananda and Immortality are the breath of things, the birthright of human beings. When Modernism declared with a certitude never to be contested that Matter is Brahman, Tagore

said with the voice of one who knows that Spirit is Brahman.

Tagore is in direct line with those bards who have sung of the Spirit; who always soared high above the falsehoods and uglinesses of a merely mundane life and lived in the undecaying-delights and beauties of a diviner consciousness. Spiritual reality was the central theme of his poetic creation: only and naturally he viewed it in a special way and endowed it with a special grace. We know of another God-intoxicated man, the Jewish philosopher Spinoza, who saw things *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the figure or mode of eternity. Well, Tagore can be said to see things, in their essential spiritual reality, under the figure or mode of beauty. Keats indeed spoke of truth being beauty and beauty truth. But there is a great difference in the outlook and inner experience. A worshipper of beauty, unless he rises to the Upanishadic norm, is prone to become sensuous and pagan. Keats was that, Kalidasa was that, even Shelley was not far different. The spiritual vein in all these poets remains secondary. In the old Indian master, it is part of his intellectual equipment, no doubt, but nothing much more than that. In the other two it comes in as strange flashes from an unknown country, as a sort of irruption or on the peak of the poetic afflatus or enthousiasmos.

The world being nothing but Spirit made visible is, according to Tagore, fundamentally a thing of beauty. The scars and spots that are on the surface have to be removed and mankind has to repossess and clothe itself with that mantle of beauty. The world is beautiful, because it is the image of the Beautiful, because it harbours, expresses and embodies the Divine who is Beauty supreme. Now by a strange alchemy, a wonderful effect of polarisation, the very spiritual element in Tagore has made him almost a pagan and even a profane. For what are these glories of Nature and the still more exquisite glories that the human body has captured? They are but vibrations and modulations of beauty—the delightful names and forms of the supreme Lover and Beloved.

Socrates is said to have brought down Philosophy from Heaven to live among men upon earth. A similar exploit can be ascribed to Tagore. The Spirit, the bare transcendental Reality contemplated by the orthodox Vedantins, has been brought nearer to our planet, close to human consciousness in Tagore's vision, being clothed in earth and flesh and blood, made vivid with the colours and contours of the physical existence. The Spirit, yes and by all means, but not necessarily asceticism and monasticism. So Tagore boldly declared

in those famous lines of his:

*Mine is not the deliverance achieved through mere renunciation. Mine rather the freedom that tastes itself in a thousand associations* <sup>164</sup>

The spirit of the age demands this new gospel. Mankind needs and awaits a fresh revelation. The world and life are not an illusion or a lesser reality: they are, if taken rightly, as real as the pure Spirit itself. Indeed, Spirit and Flesh, Consciousness and Matter are not antinomies; to consider them as such is itself an illusion. In fact, they are only two poles or modes or aspects of the same reality. To separate or divide them is a one-sided concentration or abstraction on the part of the human mind. The fulfilment of the Spirit is in its expression through Matter; human life too reaches its highest term, its *summum bonum*, in embodying the spiritual consciousness here on earth and not dissolving itself in the Transcendence. That is the new Dispensation which answers to the deepest aspiration in man and towards which he has been travelling through the ages in the course of the evolution of his consciousness. Many, however, are the prophets and sages who have set this . ideal before humanity and more and more insistently and clearly as we come nearer to the age we live in. But none or . very few have expressed it with such beauty and charm and compelling persuasion. It would be carping criticism to point out—as some, purists one may call them, have done—that in poetising and aesthetising the spiritual truth and reality, in trying to make it human and terrestrial, he has diminished and diluted the original substance, in endeavouring to render the diamond iridescent, he has turned it into a baser alloy. Tagore's is a poetic soul, it must be admitted; and it is not necessary that one should find in his ideas and experiences and utterances the cent per cent accuracy and inevitability of a Yogic consciousness. Still his major perceptions, those that count, stand and are borne out by the highest spiritual realisation.

Tagore is no inventor or innovator when he posits Spirit as Beauty, the spiritual consciousness as the ardent rhythm of ecstasy. This experience is the very core of Vaishnavism and for which Tagore is sometimes called a Neo-Vaishnava. The Vaishnava sees the world pulsating in glamorous beauty as the Lila (Play) of the Lord, and the Lord, God himself, is nothing but Love and Beauty. Still Tagore is

<sup>164</sup> *Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.* —Gitanjali, 73.

not all Vaishnava or merely a Vaishnava; he is in addition a modern (the carping voice will say, there comes the dilution and adulteration)—in the sense that problems exist for him—social, political, economic, national, humanitarian—which have to be faced and solved: these are not merely mundane, but woven into the texture of the fundamental problem of human destiny, of Soul and Spirit and God. A Vaishnava was, in spite of his acceptance of the world, an introvert, to use a modern psychological phrase, not necessarily in the pejorative sense, but in the neutral scientific sense. He looks upon the universe and human life as the play of the Lord, as an actuality and not mere illusion indeed; but he does not participate or even take interest in the dynamic working out of the world process, he does not care to know, has no need of knowing that there is a terrestrial purpose and a diviner fulfilment of the mortal life upon earth. The Vaishnava dwells more or less absorbed in the Vaikuntha of his inner consciousness; the outer world, although real, is only a symbolic shadow-play to which he can but be a witness—real, is only a nothing more.

A modern idealist of the type of a reformer would not be satisfied with that role. If he is merely a moralist reformer, he will revolt against the "witness business", calling it a *laissez-faire* mentality of bygone days. A spiritual reformer would ask for more—a dynamic union with the Divine Will and Consciousness, not merely a passive enjoyment in the Bliss, so that he may be a luminous power or agent for the expression of divine values in things mundane.

Not the acceptance of the world as it is, not even a joyous acceptance, viewing it as an inexplicable and mysterious and magic play of God, but the aspiration and endeavour to change it, mould it in the pattern of its inner divine realities—for there are such realities which seek expression and embodiment in earthly life—that is the great mission and labour of humanity and that is all the meaning of man's existence here below. And Tagore is one of the great prophets and labourers who had the vision of the shape of things to come and worked for it. Only it must be noted, as I have already said, that unlike mere moral reformists or scientific planners, Tagore grounded himself upon the eternal ancient truths that "age cannot wither nor custom stale"—the divine truths of the Spirit.

Tagore was a poet; this poetic power of his he put in the service of the great cause for the divine uplift of humanity. Naturally, it goes without saying, his poetry did not preach or propagandize the truths for which he stood—he had a fine and powerful weapon in his prose

to do the work, even then in a poetic way—but to sing them. And he sang them not in their philosophical bareness, like a Lucretius, or in their sheer transcendental austerity like some of the Upanishadic Rishis, but in and through human values and earthly norms. The especial aroma of Tagore’s poetry lies exactly here, as he himself says, in the note of unboundedness in things bounded that it describes. A mundane; profane sensuousness, Kalidasian in richness and sweetness, is matched or counterpointed by a simple haunting note imbedded or trailing somewhere behind, a lyric cry persevering into eternity, the nostalgic cry of the still small voice.<sup>165]</sup>

Thus, on the one hand, the Eternity, the Infinity, the Spirit is brought nearer home to us in its embodied symbols and living vehicles and vivid formulations, it becomes easily available to mortals, even like the father to his son, to use a Vedic phrase; on the other hand, earthly things, mere humanities are uplifted and suffused with a "light that never was, on sea or land."

Another great poet of the spirit says also, almost like Tagore:

Cold are the rivers of peace and their banks are leafless and  
lonely.

and sends up this prayer:

Earth-souls needing the touch of the heaven’s peace  
to recapture,  
Heaven needing earth’s passion to .quiver its peace  
into rapture.  
Marry, O lightning eternal, the passion of a moment-

<sup>165</sup> *pass:a,p[Tagore the poet reminds one often and anon of Kalidasa. He was so much in love, had such kinship with the great old master that many of his poems, many passages and lines are reminiscences, echoes, modulations or a paraphrase of the original classic. Tagore himself refers in his memoirs to one Kalidasian line that haunted his juvenile brain because of its exquisite music and enchanting imagery:*

*Mandakini nirjhar asikar an am vodha muhuh-kampita-deva-daruh Winds carrying spray from the falls of Mandakini, making deodars all astir.*

*Both the poets were worshippers, idolaters, of beauty, especially of natural physical beauty, of beauty heaped on beauty, of beauty gathered, like honey from all places and stored and ranged and stalled with the utmost decorative skill. Yet the difference between the two is not less pronounced. A philosopher is reminded of Bergson, the great exponent of movement as reality, in connection with certain aspects of Tagore. Indeed, Beauty in Tagore is something moving, flowing, dancing, rippling; it is especially the beauty which music embodies and expresses. A Kalidasian beauty, on the contrary, is statuesque and plastic, it is to be appreciated in situ. This is, however, by the way.*

born fire!  
Out of thy greatness draw close to the breast of our  
mortal desire!

This also is Tagore's soul-prayer, his deepest aspiration.

# *Rabindranath And Sri Aurobindo*

"Tagore has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way." Sri Aurobindo wrote these words in the thirties and their full significance can be grasped only when it is understood that the two master-souls were at one in the central purpose of their lives. Also there is a further bond of natural affinity between them centring round the fact that both were poets, in a deeper sense, seer poets—Rabindranath the Poet of the Dawn, Sri Aurobindo the Poet and Prophet of the Eternal Day, a new Dawn and Day for the human race.

And both had the vision of a greater Tomorrow for their Motherland and that was why both regarded her freedom as the basic necessity for the recovery of her greatness. How the inspired songs and speeches of Rabindranath and the flaming utterances of Sri Aurobindo created a psychological revolution almost overnight in the mind and heart of the people during the Swadeshi days forms a glorious chapter in the history of India's freedom movement. Profoundly touched by Sri Aurobindo's soul-stirring lead to the country, Rabindranath wrote a memorable poem, addressing Sri Aurobindo, which is still enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen. Rabindranath himself called on Sri Aurobindo and read out to him his heart's homage. We remember with thrill the majestic opening lines:

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!  
O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free, Of  
India's soul!

Sri Aurobindo retired from the outer political world to devote himself more intensively to the discovery and conquest of a new consciousness and force, glimpses of which he was having at the time and which

alone could save mankind and recreate it. From 1910 to 1914 he was, he said, silently developing this new power in seclusion and in 1914 he began to give to the world the result of his realisations through his monthly review *Arya*. In five major sequences published month after month through several years, he envisaged, in the main, the progressive march of man towards a divine life on earth, towards the unity of mankind and a perfect social order. One of these serials was called the *Future Poetry* in which he traced the growth and development that world poetry is undergoing towards its future form that would voice the dawn of a New Age of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo hailed those who feel and foresee this distant dawn behind the horizon as the Fore-runners of the new Spirit, among whom he included Rabindranath, because he saw in Tagore's the first beginnings, "a glint of the greater era of man's living", something that "seems to be in promise". "The poetry of Tagore," Sri Aurobindo says, "owes its sudden and universal success to this advantage that he gives us more of this discovery and fusion for which the mind of our age is in quest than any other creative writer of the time. His work is a constant music of the overpassing of the borders, a chant-filled realm in which the subtle sounds and lights of the truth of the spirit give new meanings to the finer subtleties of life."

Characterising Tagore's poetry, in reference to a particular poem, Sri Aurobindo once wrote: "But the poignant sweetness, passion and spiritual depth and mystery of a poem like this, the haunting cadences subtle with a subtlety which is not of technique but of the soul, and the honey-laden felicity of the expression, these are the essential Rabindranath and cannot be imitated because they are things of the spirit and one must have the same sweetness and depth of soul before one can hope to catch any of these desirable qualities." Furthermore: "One of the most remarkable peculiarities of Rabindra Babu's genius is the happiness and originality with which he has absorbed the whole spirit of Vaishnava poetry and turned it into something essentially the same and yet new and modern. He has given the old sweet spirit of emotional and passionate religion an expression of more delicate and complex richness voiceful of subtler and more penetratingly spiritual shades of feeling than the deep-hearted but simple early age of Bengal could know."

Certain coincidences and correspondences in their lives may be noticed here. The year 1905 and those that immediately followed found them together on the crest wave of India's first nationalist resurgence. Again both saw in the year 1914 a momentous period

marked by events of epochal importance, one of which was the First World War. For Tagore it was "yuga-sandhi, the dying of the old age of Night to the dawning of a new with its blood-red sunrise emerging through the travail of death, sorrow and pain". For Sri Aurobindo it was a cataclysm intended by Nature to effect a first break in the old order to usher in the new. The significant year 1914 was also the period when Rabindranath expressed in the magnificent series of poems of the *Balaka* his visions and experiences of the forces at work on earth, and Sri Aurobindo began revealing through the pages of the *Arya* the truths of the supramental infinities that were then pouring down into him and through him into the earth's atmosphere.

So it was natural and almost inevitable—written among the stars—that both should meet once more on this physical earth. Sri Aurobindo had been in complete retirement seeing none except, of course, his attendants. He was coming out only four times in the year to give silent darshan to his devotees and a few others who sought for it. It was in the year 1928. Tagore was then on a tour to the South. He expressed to Sri Aurobindo by letter his desire for a personal meeting. Sri Aurobindo naturally agreed to receive him. Tagore reached Pondicherry by steamer, and I had the privilege to see him on board the ship and escort him to the Ashram. The Mother welcomed him at the door of Sri Aurobindo's apartments and led him to Sri Aurobindo. Tagore already knew the Mother, for both were together in Japan and stayed in the same house and she attended some of his lectures in that country. It may be interesting to mention here that Tagore requested the Mother to take charge of the *Visva Bharati*, for evidently he felt that the future of his dear institution would be in sure hands. But the Mother could not but decline since it was her destiny to be at another place and another work.

What transpired between them is not for me to say, the meeting being a private one. But I may quote here what Tagore himself wrote about it subsequently (*The Modern Review*, July 1928):

"For a long time I had a strong desire to meet Aurobindo. It has just been fulfilled... At the very first sight I could realise that he had been seeking for the soul and had gained it, and through this long process of realisation had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light... I felt that the utterance of the ancient Rishi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human soul its freedom of entrance into the All. I said to him, 'You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from

you. India will speak through your voice to the world, 'Hearken to me"... Years ago I saw Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth and I sang to him:

Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Rabindranath. Today I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of a reticent richness of wisdom and again sang to him in silence:

Aurobindo, accept the salutation from Rabindranath."

Vibhutis, emanations and embodiments of the higher destiny of mankind appear upon earth from time to time to lead and guide the race on the upward way. And we are fortunate that we are born in an age that has been blessed by two such Shining Ones.