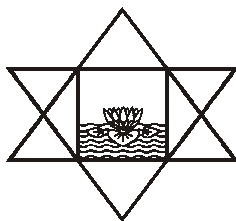


# BENGALI WRITINGS

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

SRI AUROBINDO



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PONDICHERRY

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## NOTE

Sri Aurobindo started learning Bengali, his mother tongue, in England, as a probationer for the Indian Civil Service. After his return to India he began a serious study of the language with a view to acquiring proficiency in reading, writing and speaking. During his stay at Baroda he wrote some poetry in Bengali, attempting even a long poem called “Usha-Haran Kabya”.

It is to this poem that his brother, Manmohan, himself a poet, refers in his letter to Rabindranath Tagore, dated October 24, 1894. We quote from it the following extract: “Aurobinda is anxious to know what you think of his book of verses<sup>1</sup>, but I have explained to him how busy you are just now; and that you will write later when you have a little more leisure to do justice to his book. I myself think that he is possessed of considerable powers of language and a real literary gift, — but is lacking in stuff and matter, perhaps in warmth of temperament. But those pieces on Parnell<sup>2</sup>, consisting of fine philosophic reflection, show, I think, that he might do great things. Unfortunately he has directed (or rather misdirected) all his energies to writing Bengali poetry. He is at present engaged on an epic (inspired I believe by Michael Madhusudan) on the subject of Usha and Aniruddha.”

He wrote several articles for the earlier issues of *Yugantar*, a Bengali revolutionary weekly started by his brother Barin and others under his guidance in March 1906. But not a single copy of this journal has so far been traced.

1 Songs to Myrtilla published a year later, in 1895.

2 *Charles Stewart Parnell* (1891) and *Hic Jacet* (Centenary Volume 5, pp. 15, 11).

The earliest available Bengali writings of Sri Aurobindo besides “Usha-Haran Kabya” are the three letters to his wife Mrinalini Devi written between 1905 and 1907. These were produced as exhibits in the Alipore Conspiracy Case in 1908, and having attracted public notice were reproduced in various journals and in book-form soon afterwards.

After his acquittal in 1909 Sri Aurobindo started a Bengali weekly called *Dharma*, and wrote most of the editorial comments and leading articles for it until his withdrawal to Chandernagore in February 1910. Most of these leading articles were published in book-form in 1920 under the title *DHARMA O JATIYATA* by Prabartak Publishing House, Chandernagore. In the present volume these articles are arranged under two sections, “Dharma” and “Jatiyata” (Religion and Nationalism).

Some of the articles on the Gita from *Dharma* were separately brought out in book-form in 1920 by the Prabartak Sangha under the title *Gitar Bhumika*.

*KARAKAHINI* (Tales of Prison Life) was first serialised in nine parts in the Bengali monthly, *Suprabhat* in 1909-1910. This series remained incomplete as Sri Aurobindo left Bengal in 1910. The essay, “Karagriha O Swadhinata” (Prison and Freedom), was published in *Bharati*, a Bengali journal, about the same time. *KARAKAHINI* came out in book-form in 1920 from Chandernagore.

In 1918 Sri Aurobindo wrote “Jagannather Rath” (the Chariot of Jagannath) for *Prabartak*, a journal published from Chandernagore. The article was published in book-form in 1921 along with some others under the same title by the Prabartak Publishing House.

His letter to Barin, also known as “Letter from Pondicherry”, written in 1920 was first published in *Naraya-*

na, a journal edited by C. R. Das. It was also issued as a booklet in the same year and later along with "Letters to Mrinalini" under the title SRI AUROBINDO PATRA (Letters of Sri Aurobindo) by the Prabartak Publishing House.

A number of articles on the Vedas, Upanishads and other subjects found in Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts were first put together in book-form in 1955 under the title VIVIDHA RACHANA. In this volume they have been distributed in various sections.

The letters Sri Aurobindo wrote to some women disciples who did not know English were published as PATRAWALI in two parts, the first in 1951 and the second in 1959.

Volume 4 in the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* contains Sri Aurobindo's original Bengali writings. Volume 27 adds a few pages. In the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, 1967 and 1968. English translations of all the prose writings appearing in volume 4, except the Editorial Comments (*Dharma*), were published. The same translations appear in the present volume, with the exception of the letter to Barin which has been taken from the *Archives*. April 1980.

The *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* is published by the Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, Calcutta. The *Hymn to Durga* is Sri Aurobindo's own translation. The translations of other writings were done by Nolini Kanta Gupta, Niranjana, Somnath Maitra, Sanat K. Banerjee, Sisir Kumar Ghose, Jugal Kishore Mukherji, Arindam Basu, Prithvindra and others.

Some further matter has appeared in the *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research* journal referred to as *Archives*. From this source one hymn and six pieces of poetry have been included in this volume.

The original sources of all articles are indicated in the Table of Contents.



## **I. HYMNS**





# Hymn to Durga

MOTHER DURGA! Rider on the lion, giver of all strength, Mother, beloved of Siva! We born from thy parts of Power, we the youth of India, are seated here in thy temple. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

MOTHER DURGA! From age to age, in life after life, we come down into the human body, do thy work and return to the Home of Delight. Now too we are born, dedicated to thy work. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, come to our help.

MOTHER DURGA! Rider on the lion, trident in hand, thy body of beauty armour-clad, Mother, giver of victory, India awaits thee, eager to see the gracious form of thine. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

MOTHER DURGA! Giver of force and love and knowledge, terrible art thou in thy own self of might, Mother beautiful and fierce. In the battle of life, in India's battle, we are warriors commissioned by thee; Mother, give to our heart and mind a titan's strength, a titan's energy, to our soul and intelligence a god's character and knowledge.

MOTHER DURGA! India, world's noblest race, lay whelmed in darkness. Mother, thou risest on the eastern horizon, the dawn comes with the glow of thy divine limbs scattering the darkness. Spread thy light, Mother, destroy the darkness.

MOTHER DURGA! We are thy children, through thy grace, by thy influence may we become fit for the great work, for the great Ideal. Mother, destroy our smallness, our selfishness, our fear.

MOTHER DURGA! Thou art Kali, naked, garlanded with human heads, sword in hand, thou slayest the Asura. Goddess, do thou slay with thy pitiless cry the enemies who dwell within us, may none remain alive there, not one. May we become pure and spotless, this is our prayer, O Mother, make thyself manifest.

MOTHER DURGA! India lies low in selfishness and fearfulness and littleness. Make us great, make our efforts great, our hearts vast, make us true to our resolve. May we no longer desire the small, void of energy, given to laziness, stricken with fear.

MOTHER DURGA! Extend wide the power of Yoga. We are thy Aryan children, develop in us again the lost teaching, character, strength of intelligence, faith and devotion, force of austerity, power of chastity and true knowledge, bestow all that upon the world. To help mankind, appear, O Mother of the world, dispel all ills.

MOTHER DURGA! Slay the enemy within, then root out all obstacles outside. May the noble heroic mighty Indian race, supreme in love and unity, truth and strength, arts and letters, force and knowledge ever dwell in its holy woodlands, its fertile fields, under its sky-scraping hills, along the banks of its pure-streaming rivers. This is our prayer at the feet of the Mother. Make thyself manifest.

MOTHER DURGA! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength.

We shall become thy instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. Fulfil this yearning of thy young children, O Mother. Be the master and drive thy instrument, wield thy sword and slay the evil, hold up the lamp and spread the light of knowledge. Make thyself manifest.

MOTHER DURGA! When we possess thee, we shall no longer cast thee away; we shall bind thee to us with the tie of love and devotion. Come, Mother, manifest thyself in our mind and life and body.

Come, Revealer of the hero-path. We shall no longer cast thee away. May our entire life become a ceaseless worship of the Mother, all our acts a continuous service to the Mother, full of love, full of energy. This is our prayer, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

# Hymn to Dawn

Lo, dawn, the Beloved, appears in her gleaming young body. She impels all Life on the path towards the goal. Fire, the Divine Force, is born to be kindled in man. Dawn drives away all Darkness and fulfils herself in creating Light.

She, the Goddess, rises lifting her forward gaze towards the Vast, the Universal. She has put on the robe of Light and displays the white brilliance of her subtle norms of Truth. Heaven-gold is her hue, her vision is all-round seeing: verily, she is the mother of the herd of brilliances of knowledge, a leader of our bright days; her luminous body is disclosed.

The Goddess, All-Enjoyment she is: she comes carrying the Sun, the Eye of the Gods, bringing here the white Life-steeds that have the perfect vision, she comes, the Goddess wholly revealing herself in the rays of the Sun. Behold her in her multiple divine riches, behold her manifest everywhere, in all things, behold her the Mother of Radiance.

All delight is within, all that is hostile to man is afar: so let it be in thy dawning. Build our pasture of infinity, illumined with truth, build our home of delight freed from fear. Drive away all that divides and antagonises, bring to us all the wealth of the human soul, O Mother of Plenty, send forth into life all the plenitude of delight.

Goddess Dawn, manifest thyself in our hearts in the play of thy supreme Effulgence, widen the life of this embodied being. O Mother of Delight, give us stable impulsion. Give us that plenty whose wealth is the luminous herd of Truth, where range the chariots and horses of Life moving towards Infinity.

We are rich in those riches, we the steadfast aspirants,  
O Goddess, born in perfection, Daughter of Heaven! We  
foster Thee with our thought-streams and Thou too hold-  
est in our bosom the knowledge won and the Vast and the  
Seas of Delight.



## **II. STORIES**





## A Dream

**A POOR** man was sitting in a dark hut thinking of his miseries and of the injustice and wrongs that could be found in this world of God's making. Out of *abhimāna* he began to mutter to himself, "As men do not want to cast a slur on God's name, they put the blame on Karma. If my misfortunes are really due to the sins committed in my previous birth and if I was so great a sinner, then currents of evil thoughts should still be passing through my mind. Can the mind of such a wicked person get cleansed so soon? And what about that Tinkari Sheel who has such colossal wealth and commands so many people! If there is anything like the fruits of Karma, then surely he must have been a famous saint and sadhu in his previous life; but I see no trace of that at all in his present birth. I don't think a bigger rogue exists — one so cruel and crooked. All these tales about Karma are just clever inventions of God to console man's mind. Shyamsundar<sup>1</sup> is very tricky; luckily he does not reveal himself to me, otherwise I would teach him such a lesson that he would stop playing these tricks."

As soon as he finished muttering, the man saw that his dark room was flooded with a dazzling light. After a while the luminous waves faded and he found in front of him a charming boy of a dusky complexion standing with a lamp in his hand, and smiling sweetly without saying a word. Noticing the musical anklets round his feet and the peacock plume, the man understood that Shyamsundar had revealed himself. At first he was at a loss what to do; for a moment he

<sup>1</sup> One of Sri Krishna's names.

thought of bowing at his feet, but looking at the boy's smiling face no longer felt like making his obeisance. At last he burst out with the words, "Hullo, Keshta,<sup>1</sup> what makes you come here?" The boy replied with a smile, "Well, didn't you call me? Just now you had the desire to whip me! That is why I am surrendering myself to you. Come along, whip me." The man was now even more confounded than before, but not with any repentance for the desire to whip the Divine: the idea of punishing instead of patting such a sweet youngster did not appeal to him. The boy spoke again, "You see, Harimohon, those who, instead of fearing me, treat me as a friend, scold me out of affection and want to play with me, I love very much. I have created this world for my play only; I am always on the lookout for a suitable playmate. But, brother, I find no one. All are angry with me, make demands on me, want boons from me; they want honour, liberation, devotion — nobody wants me. I give whatever they ask for. What am I to do? I have to please them; otherwise they will tear me to pieces. You too, I find, want something from me. You are vexed and want to whip some one. In order to satisfy that desire you have called me. Here I am, ready to be whipped. *ye yathā mām prapadyante*<sup>2</sup>, I accept whatever people offer me. But before you beat me, if you wish to know my ways, I shall explain them to you. Are you willing?" Harimohon replied, "Are you capable of that? I see that you can talk a good deal, but how am I to believe that a mere child like you can teach me something?" The boy smiled again and said, "Come, see whether I can or not."

Then Sri Krishna placed his palm on Harimohon's head. Instantly electric currents started flowing all through his body; from the *mūlādhāra* the slumbering *kuṇḍalinī* power

<sup>1</sup> One of Sri Krishna's names.

<sup>2</sup> The *Gīta* 4. 11.

went up running to the head-centre (*brahmarandhra*), hissing like a serpent of flame; the head became filled with the vibration of life-energy. The next moment it seemed to Harimohon that the walls around were moving away from him, as if the world of forms and names was fading into Infinity leaving him alone. Then he became unconscious. When he came back to his senses, he found himself with the boy in an unknown house, standing before an old man who was sitting on a cushion, plunged in deep thought, his cheek resting on his palm. Looking at that heart-rending despondent face distorted by tormenting thoughts and anxiety, Harimohon could not believe that this was Tinkari Sheel, the all-in-all in their village. Then, extremely frightened, he asked the boy, "Keshta, what have you done? You have entered someone's dwelling in the dead of night like a thief! The police will come and thrash the life out of us. Don't you know Tinkari Sheel's power?" The boy laughed and said, "I know it pretty well. But stealing is an old practice of mine, and, besides, I am on good terms with the police. Don't you fear. Now I am giving you the inner sight, look inside the old man. You know Tinkari's power, now witness how mighty I am."

At once Harimohon could see into the man's mind. He saw, as in an opulent city ravaged by a victorious enemy, innumerable terrible-looking demons and ogres who had entered into that brilliant intelligence, disturbing its peace and composure, plundering its happiness. The old man had quarrelled with his young son and turned him out; the sorrow of losing his beloved child had cowed down his spirit, but anger, pride and vanity had shut the door of his heart and were guarding it. Forgiveness had no entry there. Hearing calumnies against his own daughter he had driven her away and was lamenting over the cherished one he had lost. He knew that she was chaste but the fear of social censure and a

feeling of shame coupled with his own arrogance and selfishness had put a curb on his affection. Frightened by the memory of a thousand sins the old man was trembling, but he did not have the courage or the strength to mend his evil ways. Now and then thoughts of death and of the other world came to him and filled him with terror. Harimohon saw also that from behind these morbid thoughts the hideous messenger of death was constantly peeping out and knocking at the door. Whenever this happened, the old man's heart sank and he frantically screamed with fear.

Horrified by this sight Harimohon looked at the boy and exclaimed, "Why, Keshta! I used to think this man the happiest of all!" The boy replied, "Just there lies my power. Tell me now which of the two is mightier — this Tinkari Sheel or Sri Krishna, the master of Vaikuntha? Look, Harimohon, I too have the police, sentinels, government, law, justice, I too can play the game of being a king; do you like this game?" "No, my child," answered Harimohon, "it is a very cruel game. Why, do you like it?" The boy laughed and declared, "I like all sorts of games; I like to whip as well as to be whipped." Then he continued. "You see, Harimohon, people like you look at the outward appearance of things and have not yet cultivated the subtle power of looking inside. Therefore you grumble that you are miserable and Tinkari is happy. This man has no material want; still, compared to you, how much more this millionaire is suffering! Can you guess why? Happiness is a state of mind, misery also is a state of mind. Both are only mind-created. He Who possesses nothing, whose only possessions are difficulties, even he, if he wills, can be greatly happy. But just as you cannot find happiness after spending your days in dry piety, and as you are always dwelling upon your miseries so too this man who spends his days in sins which give him no real pleasure is now thinking only of his miseries. All this is

the fleeting happiness of virtue and the fleeting misery of vice, or the fleeting misery of virtue and the fleeting happiness of vice. There is no joy in this conflict. The image of the abode of bliss is with me: he who comes to me, falls in love with me, wants me, lays his demands on me, torments me — he alone can succeed in getting my image of bliss.” Harimohon went on eagerly listening to these words of Sri Krishna. The boy continued, “And look here, Harimohon, dry piety has lost its charm for you, but in spite of that you cannot give it up, habit<sup>1</sup> binds you to it; you cannot even conquer this petty vanity of being pious. This old man, on the other hand, gets no joy from his sins, yet he too cannot abandon them because he is habituated to them, and is suffering hell's own agonies in this life. These are the bonds of virtue and vice; fixed and rigid notions, born of ignorance, are the ropes of these bonds. But the sufferings of that old man are indeed a happy sign. They will do him good and soon liberate him.”

So far Harimohon had been listening silently to Sri Krishna's words. Now he spoke out, “Keshta, your words are undoubtedly sweet, but I don't trust them. Happiness and misery may be states of mind, but outer circumstances are their cause. Tell me, when the mind is restless because of starvation, can anyone be happy? Or when the body is suffering from a disease or enduring pain, can any one think of you?” “Come, Harimohon, that too I shall show you,” replied the boy.

Again he placed his palm on Harimohon's head. As soon as he felt the touch, Harimohon saw no longer the dwelling of Tinkari Sheel. On the beautiful, solitary and breezy summit of a hill an ascetic was seated, absorbed in meditation, with a huge tiger lying prone at his feet like a sentinel.

<sup>1</sup> Sanskara.

Seeing the tiger Harimohon's own feet would not proceed any further. But the boy forcibly dragged him near to the ascetic. Incapable of resisting the boy's pull Harimohon had to go. The boy said, "Look, Harimohon." Harimohon saw, stretched out in front of his eyes, the ascetic's mind like a diary on every page of which the name of Sri Krishna was inscribed a thousand times. Beyond the gates of the Formless Samadhi the ascetic was playing with Sri Krishna in the sunlight.

Harimohon saw again that the ascetic had been starving for many days, and for the last two his body had experienced extreme suffering because of hunger and thirst. Reproachingly Harimohon asked, "What's this, Keshta? Babaji loves you so much and still he has to suffer from hunger and thirst? Have you no common sense? Who shall feed him in this lonely forest home of tigers?" The boy answered, "I will feed him. But look here for another bit of fun." Harimohon saw the tiger go straight to an ant-hill which was close by and break it with a single stroke of the paw. Hundreds of ants scurried out and began stinging the ascetic angrily. The ascetic remained plunged in meditation, undisturbed, unmoved. Then the boy sweetly breathed in his ears, "Beloved!" The ascetic opened his eyes. At first he felt no pain from the stings; the all-enchanting flute-call which the whole world longs for, was still ringing in his ears — as it had once rung in Radha's ears at Vrindavan. At last, the innumerable repeated stings made him conscious of his body. But he did not stir. Astonished, he began muttering to himself, "How strange! I have never known such things! Obviously it is Sri Krishna who is playing with me. In the guise of these insignificant ants he is stinging me." Harimohon saw that the burning sensation no longer reached the ascetic's mind.

Rather every sting produced in him an intense ecstasy all over his body, and, drunk with that ecstasy, he began to dance, clapping his hands and singing the praise of Sri Krishna. The ants dropped down from his body and fled.

Stupefied, Harimohon exclaimed, "Keshta, what is this spell?" The boy clapped now his hands, swung round twice on his foot and laughed aloud, "I am the only magician on earth. None shall understand this spell. This is my supreme riddle. Did you see it? Amid this agony also he could think only of me. Look again." The ascetic sat down once more, self-composed; his body went on suffering hunger and thirst, but his mind merely perceived the suffering and did not get involved in it or affected by it. At this moment, a voice, sweeter than a flute, called out from the hill, "Beloved!" Harimohon was startled. It was the very voice of Shyam-sunder, sweeter than a flute. Then he saw a beautiful dusky-complexioned boy come out from behind the rocks, carrying in a dish excellent food and some fruits. Harimohon was dumb-founded and looked towards Sri Krishna. The boy was standing beside him, yet the boy who was coming resembled Sri Krishna in every detail! This boy came and throwing a light on the ascetic, said, "See what I have brought for you." The ascetic smiled and asked, "Oh, you have come? Why did you keep me starving so long? Well, take your seat and dine with me." The ascetic and the boy started eating the food from the dish, feeding each other, snatching away each other's share. After the meal was over, the boy took the dish and disappeared into the darkness.

Harimohon was about to ask something when, all of a sudden, he saw that there was neither Sri Krishna nor the ascetic, neither the tiger nor any hill. He found himself living in a well-to-do quarter of a town; he possessed much wealth, a family and children. Every day he was giving alms in charity to the Brahmins and to the beggars; he was regularly

repeating the Divine Name three times a day; observing all the rites and rituals prescribed in the Shastras, he was following the path shown by Raghunandan, and was leading the life of an ideal father, an ideal husband and an ideal son.

But the next moment he saw to his dismay that the residents of the locality he was living in had neither mutual good-will nor any happiness; they considered the mechanical observance of social conventions the highest virtue. Instead of the ecstatic feeling that had been his in the beginning, he now had a feeling of suffering. It seemed to him as if he had been very thirsty but, lacking water, had been eating dust, — only dust, infinite dust. He ran away from that place and went to another locality. There, in front of a grand mansion, a huge crowd had gathered; words of blessing were on every one's lips. Advancing he saw Tinkari Sheel seated on a verandah, distributing large amounts of money to the crowd; no one was going away empty-handed. Harimohon chuckled and thought, "What is this dream? Tinkari Sheel is giving alms!" Then he looked into Tinkari's mind. He saw that thousands of dissatisfactions and evil impulses such as greed, jealousy, passion, selfishness were all astir there. For the sake of virtuous appearance and fame, out of vanity, Tinkari had kept them suppressed, kept them starving, instead of driving them away from within.

In the meantime someone took Harimohon on a swift visit to the other world. He saw the hells and heavens of the Hindus, those of the Christians, the Muslims and the Greeks, and also many other hells and heavens. Then he found himself sitting once more in his own hut, on the same old torn and dirty mattress with Shyamsundar in front of him. The boy remarked, "It is quite late in the night; now if I don't return home I shall get a scolding, everybody will start beating me. Let me therefore be brief. The hells and the heavens you have visited are nothing but a dream-world, a



creation of your mind. After death man goes to hell or heaven and somewhere works out the tendencies that existed in him during his last birth. In your previous birth you were only virtuous, love found no way into your heart; you loved neither God nor man. After leaving your body you had to work out your old trend of nature, and so lived in imagination among middle-class people in a world of dreams; and as you went on leading that life you ceased to like it any more. You became restless and came away from there only to live in a hell made of dust; finally you enjoyed the fruits of your virtues and, having exhausted them, took birth again. In that life, except for your formal alms-giving and your soulless superficial dealings, you never cared to relieve anyone's wants — therefore you have so many wants in this life. And the reason why you are still going on with this soulless virtue is that you cannot exhaust the karma of virtues and vices in the world of dream, it has to be worked out in this world. On the other hand, Tinkari was charity itself in his past life and so, blessed by thousands of people, he has in this life become a millionaire and knows no poverty; but as he was not completely purified in his nature, his unsatisfied desires have to feed on vice. Do you follow now the system of Karma? There is no reward or punishment, but evil creates evil, and good creates good. This is Nature's law. Vice is evil, it produces misery; virtue is good, it leads to happiness. This procedure is meant for purification of nature, for the removal of evil. You see, Harimohon, this earth is only a minute part of my world of infinite variety, but even then you take birth here in order to get rid of evil by the help of Karma. When you are liberated from the hold of virtue and vice and enter the realm of Love, then only you are freed of this activity. In your next birth you too will get free. I shall send you my dear sister, Power, along with Knowledge, her companion; but on one condition, — you should be my

playmate, and must not ask for liberation. Are you ready to accept it?" Harimohon replied, "Well, Keshta, you have hypnotised me! I intensely feel like taking you on my lap and caressing you, as if I had no other desire in this life!"

The boy laughed and asked, "Did you follow what I said, Harimohon?" "Yes, I did," he replied, then thought for a while and said, "O Keshta, again you are deceiving me. You never gave the reason why you created evil!" So saying, he caught hold of the boy's hand. But the boy, setting himself free, rebuked Harimohon, "Be off! Do you want to get out of me all my secrets in an hour's time?" Suddenly the boy blew out the lamp and said with a chuckle, "Well, Harimohon, you have forgotten all about lashing me! Out of that fear I did not even sit on your lap, lest, angry with your outward miseries, you should teach me a lesson! I do not trust you any more." Harimohon stretched his arms forward, but the boy moved farther and said, "No Harimohon, I reserve that bliss for your next birth. Good-bye." So saying, the boy disappeared into the dark night. Listening to the chime of Sri Krishna's musical anklets, Harimohon woke up gently. Then he began thinking, "What sort of dream is this! I saw hell, I saw heaven, I called the Divine rude names, taking him to be a mere stripling, I even scolded him. How awful! But now I am feeling very peaceful." Then Harimohon began recollecting the charming image of the dusky-complexioned boy, and went on murmuring from time to time, "How beautiful! How beautiful!"

## The Ideal of Forgiveness

**I**N the sky, the moon drifted slowly through the clouds. Far below, the river mingled its murmur with the winds, as it danced along on its course; and the earth looked bathed in beauty in the half-light of the moon. All around were the forest retreats of the Rishis, each charming enough to put the Elysian fields to shame: every hermitage was a perfect picture of sylvan loveliness with its trees and flowers and foliage.

On this moon-enraptured night, said Brahmaṛshi (the seer who has known the Supreme) Vashishtha to his spouse Arundhati Devi, “Devi (*literally*, goddess), go and beg some salt of the Rishi Vishvamitra, and bring it here soon.”

Taken aback, she replied, “My lord, what is this you are asking me to do? I cannot understand you! He who has robbed me of my hundred sons...” She could say no more, for her voice was choked with sobs as memories of the past rose up to disturb that sweet home of serenity, her heart, and to fill it with pain to its depths. After a time she recovered her composure to continue: “All my hundred sons were learned in the Vedas and dedicated to the Divine. They would go about in moonlight such as this singing His praises, but he... he has destroyed them all. And you bid me go and beg at his door for a little salt! My lord, you bewilder me!”

Slowly the sage's face filled with light; slowly from the ocean-depths of his heart came the words, “But, Devi, I love him!”

Arundhati's bewilderment increased, and she said, “If you love him you might just as well have addressed him as Brahmaṛshi! The whole trouble would have ended there,

and I should have had my hundred sons left to me.”

The Rishi's face took on a singular beauty as he said, “It was because I love him that I did not call him Brahmarshi. It was because I did not call him that, that he still has a chance of becoming a Brahmarshi.”

Vishvamitra was beside himself with rage. He could not concentrate on his *tapasyā*. He had vowed that if Vashishtha did not acknowledge him as a Brahmarshi that day, he would kill him. To carry out this resolve, he armed himself with a sword as he left his hermitage. Slowly he came to Vashishthadeva's cottage and stood outside, listening. He heard what the great sage was saying to Devi Arundhati about him. The grip on his sword-hilt relaxed as he thought, “Heavens, what was I about to do in my ignorance! To think of trying to hurt one whose soul is so far above all pettiness!” He felt the sting of a hundred bees in his conscience, and ran forward and fell at Vashishtha's feet. For a time he could not speak, but in a little while he recovered his speech and said, “Pardon me, O pardon me! But I am unworthy even of your mercy!” He could say no more, for his pride still held him fast. But Vashishtha stretched out both arms to raise him. “Rise, Brahmarshi!” he gently said. But Vishvamitra, in his shame and mortification, could not believe that Vashishtha meant what he said.

“Do not deride me, my lord,” he cried.

“I never say what is false,” replied Vashishtha. “You have become a Brahmarshi today. You have earned that status because you have shed your haughty self-conceit.”

“Teach me divine lore, then,” implored Vishvamitra.

“Go to Anantadeva, he will give you what you desire,” said Vashishtha.

Vishvamitra came to where Anantadeva stood with the Earth resting on his head. “Yes, I will teach you what you want to learn. But, first, you must hold up the Earth.”

Proud of his *tapasyā*-won powers, Vishvamitra said, "Very well, relinquish your burden and let me bear it."

"Hold it then," said Anantadeva, moving away. And the Earth began to spin down and down in space.

"Here and now I give up all the fruits of my *tapasyā*" shouted Vishvamitra, "only let the Earth not sink downwards."

"You have not done *tapasyā* enough to hold up the Earth, O Vishvamitra." Anantadeva shouted back. "Have you ever associated with holy men? If you have, offer up the merit you have so acquired."

"For a moment only, I was with Vashishtha," answered Vishvamitra.

"Offer up the fruits of that contact then," commanded Anantadeva.

"I do here offer them up," said Vishvamitra. Slowly the Earth stopped sinking downwards.

"Give me divine knowledge, now", importuned Vishvamitra.

"Fool!" exclaimed Anantadeva, "you come to *me* for divine knowledge turning away from him whose momentary touch has given you virtue enough to hold up the Earth!"

Vishvamitra grew angry at the thought that Vashishthadeva had played him a trick. So he hurried back to him and demanded why he had deceived him.

Unruffled, Vashishtha answered him in slow and solemn tones: "If I had given you the knowledge you asked for then, you would not have accepted it as true. Now you will have faith in me."

And so Vishvamitra came to acquire knowledge of the Divine from Vashishtha.

Such were the saints and sages of India in the olden days, and such was their ideal of forgiveness. So great was the

power they had acquired by their *tapasyā* that they could even carry the Earth on their shoulders. Such sages are being born in India again, today. They will dim the lustre of the Rishis of old by their radiance, and confer on India a glory greater than any she has ever known.

### **III. THE VEDA**





# The Secret of the Veda

**T**HE Veda Samhita is the eternal source of the dharma, culture and spiritual knowledge of India. But the fountain-head of this source is lost in the cave of an inaccessible mountain and even its initial course is hidden under the strange vines, bushes and flowering trees of a thorny forest, deep and very ancient. The Veda is mysterious. The language, the manner of expression and the form of thinking have been created by another age; they are the product of a different type of mentality. On one hand, it is extremely simple like the flow of a pure and swift mountain stream; yet, on the other, this process of thinking appears so complex to us, the meaning of its language so uncertain that from very ancient times disagreements and discussions have continued regarding its essential thought and even regarding the simple words used in every line. Upon reading the commentary of the great scholar Sayana-charya, one gets the impression that a coherent sense of the Veda never did exist, or else what was there got submerged in the sea of oblivion of all-devouring Time even long before the Brahmanas, which came after the Vedas, were composed.

Sayana was in a quandary when he undertook to find the significance of the Veda. It was like some one who, wearied of pursuing a false light through darkness, stumbled often and fell into holes full of mire and filthy water, yet was unable to abandon the pursuit. The meaning of the fundamental Scripture of the Aryan dharma had to be found but the words were so enigmatic, the synthesis was made up of so many mysterious and profound entangled thoughts that in a thousand places it had no sense at all and, where somehow a

meaning could be gleaned, the shadow of doubt fell across it. Many a time, discouraged by this perplexity, Sayana has put in the mouths of the Rishis such ungrammatical language, such complicated, jumbled and halting sentences, and attributed to them such disorderly and incoherent thought that upon reading his commentary, instead of calling this language and thought the Aryan language, the Aryan thought, one is tempted to treat them as the ravings of a barbarian or a lunatic. Sayana is not to be blamed. The ancient lexicographer Yaska also committed the same blunder, and long before him the authors of the Brahmanas, unable to discover the plain meaning of the Veda, made an unsuccessful attempt to interpret the difficult Riks with the help of their “mythopoetic faculty.” The historians, imitating this method, invested the Veda with a numerous pageantry of purely imaginary events twisting and obscuring its sacred and simple meaning. An example will illustrate the nature and the amount of distortion that the sense has suffered by this treatment. In the second Sukta of the fifth Mandala there is the mention about the compressed or the covered state of Agni and his vast manifestation after a long time. “*Kumāraṁ mātā yuvatīḥ samubdham guhā bibharti ne dadāti pitre... kametaṁ tvaṁ yuvate kumāraṁ peṣī bibharṣi mahiṣī jajāna. Pūrvīrhi garbhaḥ śarado... yadasūta mātā.*” It means, “The young Mother carries the boy suppressed in the secret cavern and she gives him not to the Father; his force is undiminished, men see him in front established inwardly in the movement. Who is this boy, O young Mother, whom thou carriest in thyself when thou art compressed into form, but when thou art vast thou hast given him birth? Through many years grew the child in the womb, I saw him born when the Mother brought him forth.” The language of the Veda is everywhere a little dense, compact and pregnant with meaning; it tries to express a wealth of significance in a few

words yet without ever impairing the simplicity of the meaning and the harmony of the thought. Historians could not understand this straightforward meaning that when the mother is compressed or contracted, then the boy is also suppressed or covered. They did not notice or seize the harmony between the language and the thought of the Rishi. They understood, by the word *peṣī*, some fiendish woman who stole the power of Agni; the word *mahiṣī* suggested to them 'a queen' and the words *kumāra samubdha* conveyed to them that a young Brahmin was crushed to death under the wheels of a chariot. Quite a long legend based on this interpretation was fabricated, with the result that the meaning of the Riks became unintelligible. Who was the young man? or the Mother? or the fiendish woman? Was it the story of Agni or of the young Brahmin? Who is speaking to whom and about what? Everything is in confusion. Everywhere there is such a torture. Pointless tyranny of imagination has distorted and mutilated the simple yet profound meaning of the Veda and at places where the language and the thought are a little involved, by the grace of the commentator the incomprehensibility has assumed a frightfully hideous appearance.

Let alone this question of individual Riks and metaphors, there was a great deal of controversy in ancient times even regarding the veritable significance of the Veda itself. According to Euhemeros of Greece, the Gods of the Greeks were ever-remembered heroes and kings who with the passage of time were transformed into gods and enthroned in heaven by a different kind of superstition and reckless poetic imagination. There was no dearth of followers of Euhemeros even in ancient India. Here is an example: they said that in fact the two Ashwins were neither gods nor stars but two renowned kings, men of flesh and blood like us, who probably attained godhead after their death. According to

others, everything is a Solar myth, that is to say, the Sun, Moon, Sky, Stars and Rain, etc. — each play of the physical Nature adorned with a poetical name has become a god with a human form. Vritra is the cloud, Vala also the cloud, and the Dasyus (robbers), the Danavas (demons) and the Daityas (titans) are nothing else but the clouds of the sky; the rain-god Indra, interceptor of sunlight, pierces the miserly clouds unwilling to give rain, and by sending down the rain produces the free flow of the five male and the seven female rivers which fertilise the soil and make the Aryans rich and prosperous. Or else Indra, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Vishnu are only different appellations of the Sun. Mitra is the god of day, Varuna the god of night, the Ribhus who by their will-power fashion the horse of Indra and the chariot of the two Ashwins, are, too, only rays of the sun. On the other hand, there existed a great number of orthodox adherents of the Veda who were ritualists. They said that gods have a human figure, and at the same time, they are the all-pervading guardians of the powers of Nature; Agni is simultaneously a god with a body and the fire on the altar of sacrifice; the earthly fire, the undersea fire and the lightning are the three forms of his manifestation. Saraswati is a river as well as a goddess, and so on. They firmly believed that the gods, pleased by the chants and the hymns of the devotee, granted him heaven after death and bestowed on him in this life, strength, children, cows, horses, food and clothing, killed his enemy and crushed with lightning the head of his impertinent and slandering critic; they were always anxious to accomplish such auspicious and friendly acts. This idea was by far the most powerful in ancient India.

Yet thoughtful men were not rare who had faith in the intrinsic value of the Veda, in the Rishihood of the Rishi, and who diligently sought after the spiritual significance of the Rik-Samhita, who looked for the fundamental truth of

the Upanishads in the Veda. They held the opinion that the boon of light for which the Rishis prayed to God was not the light of the material sun but the light of the Sun of Knowledge, the Sun which is mentioned in the mantra of 'Gayatri', the Sun which Vishwamitra had seen. This light is *tatsavitur-vareṇyam devasya bhargah*, that power and light of the Divine Sun, this god is *yo no dhiyah pracodayāt*, he who impels all our thoughts towards the principles of the Truth. The Rishis feared *tamaḥ*, darkness, but not the darkness of night; they feared the dense obscurity of ignorance. Indra is *jīvātmā*, the soul or the life; Vritra is neither cloud nor the demon imagined by the poets but the one who impedes the growth of our manhood by covering it up with the thick night of ignorance, in whom the gods, at first, remain concealed and lost, then rise delivered by the bright light of knowledge emanating from the Divine Word. Sayanacharya has given to these Rishis the name of 'atmavids' or knowers of the Self and he often cites their explanation of the Veda.

As an example we can quote the explanation of the 'atmavids' given for the hymn addressed by Gotama Rohugana to the 'maruts' the Winds. In this Sukta, Gotama invokes the Maruts and prays to them for light:

*yūyam tatsatyaśavaṣa āviṣkarta mahitvanā  
vidhyatā vidyutā rakṣaḥ (I-86-9)  
gūhatā guhyam tamo vi yāta viśvamatriṇam  
jyotiṣkartā yaduśmasi (I-86-10)*

According to the Ritualists, the light mentioned in the two Riks is the light of the physical sun. "The Rakshasa, devourer who has covered up the light of the sun by darkness, O Maruts, destroy that Rakshasa and reveal again the light of the Sun to our eyes." According to the 'atmavids', a different meaning should be given: "O ye who are mighty with the strength of the Truth, manifest that supreme knowledge by your greatness; pierce with your lightning the

Rakshasa. Conceal the darkness reigning in the cave of the heart, that is to say, let the darkness sink and disappear in the flood of the Truth-light. Repel every devourer of manhood, create the light for which we long.”<sup>1</sup> Here the Maruts are not the winds who disperse the clouds but the five vital energies. *Tamaḥ* is the psychological darkness in the heart, the devourers of manhood are the six adversaries<sup>2</sup>,  *jyotiḥ* is the Light of Knowledge, the living form of the Truth. Thus interpreted we find simultaneously in the Veda the spiritual knowledge, the basic idea of the Upanishads, and the Rajayogic system of ‘pranayama’.

Thus far is the story of the indigenous bungle regarding the Veda. In the nineteenth century, the Western Pundits girded up their loins and came into the arena producing a more intense foreign imbroglio. Even to this day, only to keep afloat, we are struggling hard against the huge waves of that flood. The European Pundits have erected their new and brilliant temple of phantasy on the old foundations laid by the ancient lexicographers and historians. They do not much follow the ‘Nirukta’ of Yaska, but explain the Veda with the help of recent lexicons compiled to their liking in Berlin and Petrograd. By giving a novel and bizarre form to the Solar myth of the ancient historians of India, by putting new paint on the old colours, they have dazzled the eyes of the educated community of this country. The Europeans also hold the view that the gods mentioned in the Veda are only symbols representing various activities of physical Nature. The Aryans used to worship the Sun, Moon, Stars, Planets,

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo's own later English translation reads: “O ye who have the flashing strength of the Truth, manifest that by your might; pierce with your lightning the Rakshasa. Conceal the concealing darkness, repel every devourer, create the Light for which we long.”

<sup>2</sup> i.e. lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. (Translator's note)

the Dawn, the Night, the Wind and the Storm, Rivers, Streams, Sea, Mountains, Trees and such visible objects. Filled with awe at the sight of their fascinating movement, the barbarians adored these objects in their chants as poetical personalities. Again, seeing in them the conscious play of multiple Gods, and wishing to establish friendly relations with these Powers, they prayed to them for victory in battle, for prosperity, long life, health or children. Terrified by the darkness of night, they performed rituals and sacrifices for recovering the Sun. They were even afraid of ghosts and solicited the gods in a piteous manner to drive them away. The hope and ambition of gaining heaven by offering sacrifices, and similar ideas, were in fact quite befitting the barbarians of a prehistoric age.

There is victory in the battle, but battle with whom? They say it is the war between the Aryan race which lived in the land of the five rivers, and the true Indians, the Dravidians; it is the constant fighting against the neighbouring people and the internal strife of the Aryans. The Europeans followed the method of the ancient Indian historians who used to fabricate various historical episodes on the authority of separate Riks and Suktas, with the difference that instead of letting their imagination run riot and building up such extraordinary stories full of unnatural and strange incidents as the death of a Brahmin youth crushed under the wheels of the chariot conducted by Jara (son of Jara), Rishi Vrisha, who is then recalled to life by the power of the mantra, and the theft of the force of Agni by some fiendish woman, they tried to reconstruct the ancient history of India with the help of such true or fanciful tales as the battle of the Aryan Tritsuraj Sudas against ten kings of mixed race, the priesthood of Vasistha on one side and the priesthood of Vishwamitra on the other, the theft of cattle of the Aryans and the obstruction of the flow of their rivers by the cave-dwelling

Dravidians, the despatch of the Aryan envoy or royal ambassador to the Dravidians in the parable of Sarama (the Hound of Heaven) etc.

The disorder which these Occidentals have created in their attempt to coordinate mutually contradictory symbols of physical Nature with historical metaphors is beyond all description. It seems in order to justify it, they say, "What can we do? The mentality of those ancient barbarian poets was very confused, that is why we have been obliged to use such contrivances; but as far as our explanation is concerned, it is perfect, genuine and faultless." Anyway the long and short of it is that, in spite of the interpretation offered by the European scholars, the meaning of the Veda remains just as incoherent, confused, incomprehensible and complicated as it had become at one time by the explanation given by the Eastern scholars. Everything has altered and yet remains the same. It is true that hundreds of thunderers hailing from the banks of the Thames, the Seine, and the Neva have poured on our heads the seven celestial rivers of new learning, but none of them have been able to remove the obscurity produced by Vritra.

We are enveloped in the same darkness as before.



## Agni — The Divine Energy

**I**N this sacrifice the conscious being, the lord of the house, is the worshipper, the nature of the being is the consort who shares the dharma of the lord of the house. But who is to be the priest? If it is the being that performs the work of the priest then there is hardly any hope of the sacrifice being well conducted because the being is led by the ego and bound with the triple cord of mind, life and body. Under these conditions if the being becomes the self-appointed vicar, it is the ego which assumes the role of the sacrificer, the Ritwik, and even that of the deity of the sacrifice, and in that case, there is great danger of some untoward happening due to the unlawful performance of the ritual. At first the being wants liberation from its extremely circumscribed condition, and if it wishes to be free from bondage then it has to rely on a power other than its own. Even after the triple cord which binds it to the sacrificial post has been loosened, the knowledge and the power capable of directing the ritual does not appear suddenly nor can they be perfectly acquired so soon. Divine knowledge and divine power are necessary, and it is by the sacrifice alone that they can come and grow perfectly. Even when the being is liberated, full of divine knowledge and divine power, it is the Ishwara and not the worshipper who remains the master, giver of the sanction and enjoyer of the sacrifice. We have to welcome the Divine and install Him on the altar of the sacrifice. Unless the Divine enters the heart of man, manifests and establishes himself there, it is impossible for a human being to attain divinity and immortality. It is also true that before the awakening of the godhead, in order to invoke him the Seers

of the Mantra, the Rishis, accept the priesthood on behalf of the sacrificer; Vashishtha and Vishvamisra become vicars of Sudas, Trasadasyu and the son of Bharat. But it is to invite the Divine to accept the place of the priest and the summoner on the altar of the sacrifice that mantras are chanted and offerings made. Unless the Divine awakes in the heart, no one can liberate the being. God is the deliverer: God is the sole priest who can grant the realisation.

When the Divine becomes the vicar, he is then known as Agni, the mystic Fire, and he has the form of fire. The priesthood of Agni is the most auspicious beginning and the best means of performing a successful sacrifice perfect in every detail. That is why the priesthood of Agni was established in the first Rik of the first Sukta of the Rigveda.

Who is this Agni? The root *ag* means power; one who is powerful is Agni. Again the root *ag* signifies light or burning, the power which is flooded with the burning light of knowledge, the effective force of knowledge; the possessor of that power is like Agni. The root *ag* has also the sense of priority and predominance, the force which is the primordial element of the universe, the basic and pre-eminent force among all the manifested universal forces; the possessor of that force is Agni. The root *ag* also has the meaning 'nayana', to lead, to direct; one who is the possessor of the primal, eternal, ancient and sovereign force in the universe and leads it by the appointed path towards the appointed destination, the youth who is the general of the army of God, the guide on the path who by his knowledge and power props various forces of Nature in their different activities and keeps them on the right path, that puissance is Agni. All these virtues of Agni have been mentioned and hymned in hundreds of Suktas of the Veda. The original cause of this universe, hidden in all its development, the most fundamental of all forces and paramount among them, stay of all gods, regulator

of all dharmas, guardian of the most profound aim and truth of the universe, this Agni is no one else but the omniscient energising power of the Divine, manifest as force, heat and brilliance. The principle of true Existence in the Truth-Consciousness-Bliss contains in itself the Consciousness. That which is the Consciousness of the Existence is also the Force of the Existence. The Consciousness-Force is the sustaining power of the universe, it is the primary cause and creator, the life and the controller of the universe. When the Consciousness hides her face in the bosom of the Being of pure Existence and with her eyes closed contemplates the form of the pure Existence, the infinite Force becomes hushed; this is the state of dissolution in the tranquil ocean of Ananda. Again when the Consciousness lifts her head, opens her eyes and looks lovingly at the face and the body of the Being of pure Existence, meditates on his infinite names and forms, and dwells on the ravishing Lila created by feigned separation and union, the numberless currents of that Ananda give rise to infinite waves of violent pain and universal delight. This variegated concentration, this trance one-pointed yet multitudinous of the Consciousness-Force, is known as the energising Power. When the Being of pure Existence with a view to create some name and form manifests a certain truth or obtains a particular result, assembles and moves his Consciousness-Force and establishes her on his own state, then Tapas, the energising Force is applied.

We find that the Consciousness-Force has two aspects: Consciousness and Energy, the All-Knowledge and the All-Power; but in reality the two are one. The Knowledge of the Divine is omnipotent and His Power is omniscient. When He conceives light, the birth of light is inevitable because His Knowledge is only the conscious form of His Power. Again in all vibrations of matter, for example, in the dance

of an atom or a flash of lightning His Knowledge is involved because His Power is only the dynamism of His Knowledge. Because of our dividing intellect in the Ignorance and the dividing movement of the lower Nature, Knowledge and Power have become separated, unequal, as if fond of quarrelling with each other, exhausted and diminished by discord; or else this simulacrum of dispute is enacted only for the sake of the play. In fact, the All-Knowledge and the All-Power of the Divine are hidden in the minutest act or impulse in the universe; no one has the power to effectuate this act or impulse without the help of that Knowledge and Power or with anything less than them. This All-Knowledge or All-Power works in the same manner in the chanting of the Vedic hymns by the Rishis, in the inauguration of a new cycle by a mighty figure, as in the ravings of an idiot or the agony of a tiny worm which is being assailed. When you and I waste power for want of knowledge, or from a lack of power unsuccessfully apply knowledge, then because the Omniscient and Omnipotent sitting behind the veil rectifies and directs the application of force by His Knowledge and the enjoyment of Knowledge by His Power, that something can still be achieved in this world by such a puny effort. The appointed work is accomplished and the just result obtained. Though it foils the ignorant design and expectation of you and me, by our very failure His secret intention is carried out and that failure brings us a blessing in disguise and produces a little, partial, yet indispensable good in the smallest detail of a noble universal purpose. The evil, the ignorance and the failure are only masks. He realises the good by the evil, the knowledge by the ignorance, the success by the failure and the unforeseen action by the force which remains concealed. The Presence of Agni in the form of Tapas, Energy, makes such an action possible. This inevitable good, indivisible Knowledge and infallible Power reveal the Agni-aspect of

the Divine. As the Consciousness and the Force of the Purusha of pure Existence are one, both of them being vibrations of Ananda, so the Knowledge and the Power of Agni, who is the representative of the Divine, are inseparable and both of them are beneficial and auspicious.

The external appearance of the world is different; there falsehood, ignorance, evil and failure are predominant. However, behind the mask which frightens the child, the Mother's face is hidden. Inconscience, inertia and suffering are only sorcery. That is why in the Veda our normal consciousness is called night. Even the highest development of our intellect is only a moon-lit and star-bedecked play of the divine night. But within the bosom of this night hides her sister Usha carrying the infinity-born light of future Divine Knowledge. Even in the night of earth-consciousness, the force of Agni blazes again and again and with the glow of Usha radiates the light. It is the force of Agni which prepares the hour of the birth of Truth-conscious Usha in this blind world. The Supreme has sent the force of Agni into this world and established it there; remaining concealed in the heart of objects and living beings, Agni regulates all the movements of the universe. In the midst of momentary falsehood, this Agni is the keeper of the eternal Truth; in the inconscient and the inert, Agni is the secret consciousness of the inconscient, the formidable dynamic force of matter. Shrouded in ignorance, Agni is the covert knowledge of the Divine; in the ugliness of sin, Agni is the pristine immaculate purity of the Divine; in the gloomy fog of misery and suffering, Agni is His burning delight of universal enjoyment; clad in soiled rags of weakness and torpor, Agni is his all-bearing, all-accomplishing efficient power of action. If we can once pierce this dark envelope, uncover and kindle this Agni in our hearts, release and direct him upwards, he will bring down Divine Usha into the human consciousness,

awaken the inner gods, remove the black sheath of falsehood, ignorance, sorrow and failure and make us immortal and divine in nature. Agni is the first and the supreme living form of the Divine within us. Let us kindle him on the altar of the heart, welcome him as the priest of the sacrifice and in his burning flame of power and knowledge, in his golden and revealing blaze of knowledge, into his all-consuming and purifying blaze of power, offer all our trivial pleasure and pain, all our limited and petty effort and failure, all falsehood and death. Let the old and the untrue be reduced to ashes; then from the heaven-kissing force of Agni will rise as living Savitri the new and the true.

Do not forget that everything is in our heart; Agni is within man; the altar, the offering and the offerer are within and within also the seer, the Word and the deity; the Vedic chant to the Brahman, the anti-divine demons and titans are within; Vritra and the destroyer of Vritra are also within; the battle between the gods and the titans takes place within; Vashishtha, Vishvamitra, Angira, Atri, Bhrigu, Atharva, Sudas, Trasadasyu — these five types of the Aryan seekers of the Brahman and the Dasyus — are also within. The self of man and the universe are one. The near and the far, the ten cardinal points, the two oceans, the seven rivers and the seven worlds are also within him. Our earthly existence is manifested between these two secret oceans. The lower ocean is the concealed infinite consciousness from which, day and night, at each moment, surge up all these emotions and impulses, names and forms, just as the stars and galaxies shine out on the bosom of the goddess Night. In modern language, this is called the Inconscient or the Subconscient, *apraketam salilam* of the Veda, the subconscient ocean. Though it is subconscient, it is not devoid of consciousness; the transcendent universal is in it, capable of all knowledge, proficient in all action, it diffuses itself in a trance as it were

and creates the universe and its movements. Above pervades the secret free infinite consciousness called the Superconscious of which this 'consciousness-unconsciousness' is the shadow. There in that world the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is fully manifested — in *sat-loka*, the world of true Existence, as infinite Existence; in *tapoloka*, the world of energy of self-conscience, as infinite Consciousness; in *janaloka*, the world of creative Delight, as infinite Felicity; and in *maharloka*, the world of large consciousness, as the vast Truth of the cosmic Self. The intermediate terrestrial consciousness is the Earth mentioned in the Veda. From this earth rises to the skies the climbing mountain of which each plateau is a step in the ascent, one of the seven inner kingdoms. The gods are helpers in our ascent, the titans are enemies who obstruct the path. This mountain climbing is the sacrificial march of the Vedic seeker of the Truth; with the sacrifice, we have to rise to the ocean of light in the supreme ether. Agni is the instrument of this ascent, the leader of the path, the fighter in the battle and the priest of this sacrifice. The Vedic Seer-Poets have established the spiritual knowledge on this fundamental image in the same manner as the Vaishnavas who use the symbol of the enamoured cowherd boys and girls of Vrindavan in their songs on Radha and Krishna. If we remember the significance of this image, the understanding of the truth in the Vedas will then become easy.

# The Rigveda

**A NEW** view of the Rigveda is being published in the 'Arya' under the caption of 'The Secret of the Veda'. The translations here have been done according to that view which maintains that the real meaning of the Veda is spiritual and, being extremely profound and secret, is wrapped in symbolic words, various images, and expressions used in the performance of sacrifice. Though impenetrable to the ordinary person, this covering was, to the initiate in the Veda, only a transparent object which revealed all the limbs of the Truth. We have to look for the spiritual significance behind the images. If we can discover the 'secret name' of the gods and their respective functions, the sense of the code words, '*go, aśva, somarasa* etc., the works of the *daityas* the demons, and their inner meaning, the import of the Vedic metaphors and legends, then the significance of the Veda will become more or less clear. Of course, the true and subtle comprehension of its meaning comes only by a special knowledge and as the result of *sadhana*, and not by mere study of the Veda without any *sadhana*.

I wish to present these Vedic truths to the Bengali readers. For the present I shall talk only about the subject matter of the Veda. It is the eternal theme. The world exists in the Brahman but the truth of the Brahman cannot be seized by the intellect. The Rishi Agastya speaks of It as *tat adbhutam*, above all, beyond all time. Has any one ever known It, now or in the past? It vibrates in the consciousness of every one, yet, the moment the intellect tries to examine It from near, That disappears. The image of the Kena Upanishad has also the same significance: Indra rushes towards the Brahman but when he is quite close, the Brahman vanishes. Yet That is



knowable, as a divine Being.

The Divine is also *adbhuta*, mysterious, but he manifests himself in three fundamentals, that is to say, God is pure Existence, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. It is possible to realise God in the principle of Bliss. Under various different names and forms, God pervades and upholds the universe. These names and forms are the Vedic gods.

The Veda speaks about two seas, one above and the other below the manifested world; below, it is the *apraketa hṛdya* or *hṛtsamudra*, the concealed sea which is known in English as the Subconscient and, above, it is the sea of pure Existence which is called in English the Superconscient. These two are known as caves or hidden truths. Brahmanaspati brings out the manifestation from the Subconscient by the World. Rudra enters the life-principle and illumines it with his mighty power, pulls it upward by Force and drives it violently along the path towards its destination; Vishnu by his pervading power upholds the constantly flowing sea of pure Existence or the seven rivers of life and guides them towards the goal. All the other gods are co-workers in the movement, helpers and agents.

Surya, the Sun, is the god of the Truth-Light, he is 'Savita' when he creates or manifests, 'Pushan' when he nourishes, 'Surya' when he destroys the night of falsehood and gives birth to the light of truth and knowledge. Agni is the *tapas*, the energising power of the Consciousness-Force; he builds the universe and dwells in all its objects: He is fire in the material principle; desire and impulses to enjoy in the life-principle, he devours everything he gets; in the mind-principle, he is the mental inspiration and the will-power; in the principle beyond mind, he is the lord of the conscious force of action.

## Mandala 1, Sukta 1. The Text and Its Explanation

1-1-1

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*agnimīḷe purohitaṁ yajñasya devamṛtvijam  
hotāraṁ ratnadhātamaṁ*

“I adore the flame who is in the vicar, the divine Ritwik of the Sacrifice, the summoner who founds the ecstasy.”

*iḍe* — *bhajāmi, prārthaye, kāmaye*: I adore.

*purohitaṁ* — one who sits in front of the sacrifice; representative of the sacrificer and performer of the sacrifice.

*ṛtvijam* — one who performs the sacrifice according to the time, the place and the occasion.

*hotāraṁ* — one who by invoking the gods accomplishes the sacrifice.

*ratnadhā* — Sayana gives the meaning of ‘beautiful riches’ to the word ‘ratna’; it would be more correct to say ‘delightful wealth.’

*dhā* — one who bears, directs or firmly establishes.

1-1-2

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*agnih pūrvebhirṣibhirīdyo nūtanairuta  
sa devāṁ eha vakśati*

“The Flame adorable by the ancient sages is adorable too by the new. He brings here the Gods.”

The word *sa* gives the hint why they are adorable.

*eha vakśati* — *iha āvahati*: Agni brings the Gods in his own chariot.

1-1-3

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*agninā rayimaśnavat poṣameva divedive  
yaśasaṁ vīravattamaṁ*

“By the flame one enjoys a treasure that verily increases day by day, most full of hero-power.”

*rayim* — *ayiḥ, rāyaḥ* etc. have the same meaning as the word ‘ratna’. But in the word *ratna* the sense of delight is more prominent.

*aśnavat* — *aśnuyāt*, obtains or enjoys.

*poṣam* etc. are adjectives of *rayiḥ*; *poṣam* means that which grows, increases.

*yaśasaṁ* — Sayana translates it sometimes as ‘fame’ and sometimes as ‘food’. Probably its real meaning is success,

attainment of goal, etc. The meaning 'radiance' is also quite just but it does not apply here.

1-1-4

*agne yañ yajñamadhvaram viśvataḥ paribhūraṣi  
sa id deveṣu gaçchati*

“O Flame! the pilgrim sacrifice on every side of which thou art with the envisioning being, that truly goes among the Gods.”

*adhvaram* — the root ‘*dhvṛ*’ means to kill. Sayana translates it as *ahimsita yajña*, a sacrifice with no killings. But the word *adhvara* itself has come to denote sacrifice; such a development is impossible for the word. The word *adhvan* means the path, so *adhvara* must signify the voyager or one having the form of the path. The sacrifice was the path that led to the abode of the gods; at the same time, the sacrifice was well-known everywhere as the pilgrim in the abode of the gods. This meaning is right. The word *adhvara* like the word *adhvan* derives from the root *adh*; as proof, we find that both the words *adhva* and *adhvara* were used in the sense of sky.

*paribhūh-parito jātaḥ*

*deveṣu* — the locative case indicates the destination.

*it-eva*, truly.

## The Spiritual Significance.

### The Universal Sacrifice

The universal life is like an immense sacrifice.

God himself is the lord of the sacrifice. God is Shiva, and Nature is Uma. Though she carries the image of Shiva in her heart, still she misses his visible form; she yearns for his tangible body. This yearning is the deep significance of the universal life.

But by what means can her intention be fulfilled? By which appointed path can Nature attain the Supreme? How

can she recover her own true form and that of the Supreme? Her eyes are tied with the bandage of ignorance and her feet are bound with a thousand chains of matter; as if the physical Nature has imprisoned the infinite existence within the finite and herself become the prisoner, no longer able to find the lost key of the self-made prison; as if the inert vibrations of the life-energy in matter have overpowered the free and unlimited Consciousness-Force and made her dumb, self-oblivious and unconscious; as if the infinite Bliss wandering about in the disguise of an inferior consciousness subject to trivial happiness and sorrow, has forgotten its real nature and unable to remember sinks lower and lower in the bottomless mire of suffering; as if the truth has been drowned under the uncertain waves of falsehood. The supramental principle beyond intellect is the foundation of the infinite Truth. The action of the Supermind is either forbidden in the earth-consciousness or very rare like the momentary glimmer of the lightning from behind the veil. The timid, lame and dull mind is again and again looking for it and by its titanic efforts may even catch a glimpse of it but the authentic, infinite and luminous form of the integral Truth escapes its grasp. The knowledge as well as the action of mind are afflicted with the same strife, indigence and failure. Instead of the smiling and effortless divine dance of the Truth-action, there is the shackled attempt of the will-power of the inferior Nature struggling in agony with the inextricable bonds of truth and falsehood, virtue and vice, poison and nectar, action, inaction and wrong action. The free, unhesitating, desireless, triumphant, blissful and passionate divine power of action, intoxicated with the wine of oneness remains as yet unrealised. Its natural and easy universal movements are impossible for the will-power of the inferior Nature. Can the terrestrial Nature, ensnared in the noose of the finite and untrue ever hope to obtain that limitless Existence, that

boundless Consciousness-Force, and that immeasurable Bliss-Consciousness, and if so, by what means?

The sacrifice is the means. The sacrifice implies surrender, and self-immolation. What you are, what you have, what you become in future by your own effort or by the divine grace, what you can earn or save in the course of your action, pour all like clarified butter, into the fire of divine energy, as offering to the all-Blissful. By giving a tiny whole you will receive the infinite whole. The Yoga is implicit in the sacrifice. The infinity, the immortality and the divine felicity are legitimate results of the practice of yoga. To follow this path is the means of Nature's salvation.

The Universal Nature knows the secret. So with this immense hope, night and day, year in and year out, age after age, sleepless and restless, she performs the sacrifice. All her actions, all her endeavours are part of this cosmic ritual. She immolates everything she produces. She knows that the divine Player who is present in all, tastes the delight without reserve and accepts all effort and askesis as sacrifice. He is the one who is ever slowly leading the cosmic sacrifice on the ordained path towards the ordained goals by detours and zigzags, through rise and fall, across knowledge, ignorance and death. His assurance has made her fearless, unwavering and indiscriminate. Moved by the unceasing and ubiquitous divine impulsion, she consciously throws all that she can lay hands on, creation and killing, production and destruction, knowledge and ignorance, happiness and suffering, the ripe and the unripe, the beautiful and the ugly, the pure and the impure, into that huge eternal conflagration of sacrifice. The subtle arid material objects constitute the clarified butter used in the sacrifice, the Jiva, the being, is the bound animal. The Nature is constantly immolating the Jiva, fastened to the slaying-post with the triple bond of mind, life and body. The bond of mind is ignorance; the bond of life is suffering,

desire and conflict; the bond of body is death.

Nature is shown the path of her salvation; by what means can the Jiva in fetters be delivered? By means of sacrifice, self-surrender and self-immolation. Instead of being under the domination of Nature and being offered by her, the Jiva has to rise, become the sacrificer and offer all that it possesses. This indeed is the profound secret of the universe that the Purusha is not only the god of the sacrifice but the object sacrificed as well. The Purusha has surrendered into the hands of Prakriti his own mind, life and body as offering, as principal means of performing the sacrifice. There is this hidden motive behind his self-surrender that one day, becoming conscious, he will take the Prakriti by the hand, make her his consort and companion in the sacrifice and himself perform the ritual. Man has been created to fulfil this secret longing of the Purusha who wants to play the Lila in a human body. Selfhood, immortality, the multiple infinite bliss, unlimited knowledge, boundless force and immeasurable love must be enjoyed in a human body, in a human consciousness. All these forms of delight exist within the Purusha himself and as the Eternal he enjoys them eternally. But creating man, he is actively engaged in relishing the opposite taste of oneness in the multiplicity, the infinite in the finite, the inward in the outward, the supra-sensible in the senses and the immortal existence in the terrestrial life. Seated at the same time above our mind, beyond our intellect in the hidden Supramental principle of the Truth and in the secret plane of consciousness behind the heart within us, in the cavern of the heart, in the concealed ocean of submerged consciousness where heart, mind, life, body and intellect are only little ripples, the Purusha experiences the delightful taste of the blind effort and search of the Prakriti and her endeavour to establish unity by the shock of duality. Above, he enjoys in knowledge; below, he enjoys in ignorance; he carries on these two actions simultaneously.

But if he is for ever immersed in this condition, then the deep intention, his supreme purpose cannot be fulfilled. That is why the day of awakening is fixed for each human being. The inner godhead will one day give up this mechanical, merit-less, lower self-immolation and begin in knowledge, by chanting his own mantra, the performance of the sacrifice. To perform the sacrifice consciously and with the right mantra is the 'Karma', the work, mentioned in the Veda. It has a double objective; a completeness in the universal plurality, what is known in the Veda as the universal godhead and the universal manhood, and the realisation of immortality in the one self-being of the supreme Divine. The gods mentioned in the Veda under the names Indra, Agni, Varuna are not the inferior small godheads of later days disdained by the common people; they are different forms of the Divine, powerful and luminous. And this immortality is not the puerile heaven described in the Puranas, but the *svar*, the world of Divine Truth desired by the Vedic Rishis, the establishment of the Infinite Existence; the immortality mentioned in the Veda is the infinite Being and Consciousness of the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

## Mandala 1, Sukta 17

1-17-1 

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*indrāvaruṇayorahaṁ samrājorava ā vṛṇe*  
*tā no mṛṣāta idṛṣe*

O Indra, O Varuna, you indeed are emperors; we welcome you as our protectors; you two, rise in us in that state.

1-17-2 

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*gantārā hi stho'vase havaṁ viprasya māvataḥ*  
*dhartārācarṣaṇinām*

Because you come to protect the sacrifice of the wise who can uphold the power, you indeed are supporters of all action.

1-17-3 

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*anukāmaṁ tarpayethāmindrāvaruṇa rāya ā*  
*tā vām nediṣṭhamīmahe*

Enjoy, as you desire, the abundance of delight in the instrument. O Indra, O Varuna, we want to live very close to you.

1-17-4 

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*yuvāku hi śacīnām yuvāku sumatīnām*  
*bhūyāma vājadvnām*

May we remain established under the strong domination of the powers and the helpful thoughts which increase our inner wealth.

1-17-5  
*indraḥ sahasradāvnām varuṇaḥ śamsyānām*  
*kraturbhavatyukthyah*

O Indra, become the desired lord of all that brings power; and you, Varuna, of all that is vast and great.

1-17-6  
*tayoridavasā vayaṁ sanema ni ca dhīmahi*  
*syāduta prarecanam*

Under the protection of you two, may we live happily and peacefully and become capable of deep meditation. May our purification be complete.

1-17-7  
*indrāvaruṇa vāmahaṁ huve citrāya rādhasē*  
*asmān su jigyuṣas kṛtam*

O Indra, O Varuna, we perform sacrifice with the hope to obtain many-hued felicity from you. Make us always victorious.

1-17-8  
*indrāvaruṇa nū nu vām siṣāsantiṣu dhīṣvā*  
*asmabhyam śarma yacchatam*

O Indra, O Varuna, may all the faculties of the intellect submit to you; by establishing yourselves in these faculties, give us peace.

1-17-9  
*pra vāmaśnotu suṣṭutirindrāvaruṇa yām huve*  
*yām ṛdhāthe sadhastutim*

O Indra, O Varuna, may you enjoy the beautiful hymn which we offer you as sacrifice; you indeed nourish and fulfil these words of prayer.

## Commentary

Whenever the ancient Rishis prayed for the help of the gods in the spiritual battle against the formidable attack of the inner enemies, for the establishment of fulness, the durable and compact state of force in the mind as they became aware of their own incompleteness after going a little way on the path of sadhana, or else when they invoked the gods to found, increase and protect the plenitude of inner illumination and delight, we find that, to express their feelings, they often addressed the gods in pairs, in the same hymn and in identical words. The two Ashwins, Indra and Vayu, Mitra and Varuna are typical examples of this combination. In this hymn by combining, not Indra and Vayu, or Mitra and Varuna, but Indra and Varuna, Medhatithi of the line of Kanva is praying for delight, high accomplishment and peace. His mood is now lofty, vast and tranquil. He wants a free and elevated action. He wants a mighty, fiery spirit but a might which will be founded on a pure, deep and



permanent knowledge, and an ardour which shall fly in the sky of action, borne by the two immense wings of peace; even while floating on the infinite ocean of Ananda and being tossed about in the colourful waves of delight, he wants the experience of that tranquillity, greatness and stability. He is unwilling to dive and lose his consciousness in that ocean, unwilling to sink and rise alternately, buffeted by its waves. Indra and Varuna are worthy gods who can help to realise this sublime aspiration. Indra is the king and Varuna is the emperor. The mental ardour and energy from which proceed all the functions of mind, its existence and effectiveness are given by Indra who also protects them from the attacks of the Vritras, the demons. All the noble and generous moods of mind and character, for want of which, arrogance, narrowness, weakness or indolence inevitably result in thought and action, are established and guarded by Varuna. That is why right in the beginning of this Sukta, Rishi Medhatithi welcomes their help and friendship; *indrā-varuṇayorahamava āvṛṇe*, “O Indra, O Varuna, we welcome you as our protectors”, as our *samrājoh*, emperors, because they indeed are emperors. So *īdr̥śe*, in this condition or on this occasion (the state of mind which I have just described), he invoked the delight of the gods for others and for himself, — *tā no mṛḍāta īdr̥śe*.

When all the faculties and efforts of body, life, mind and the supramental part are poised in equality and self-contained in their respective places; when no one has domination over the being, and there is no revolt or anarchy; when each one accepts the sovereignty of its respective godhead of the Higher Nature and is accustomed to execute its special work with joy at the time and in the measure fixed by the Divine; when the Being is Lord of its own dominion, real emperor over the inner kingdom of its instrument; when there is deep peace along with a mighty luminous and

boundless power of action, when all its faculties listen to its order and accomplish the work perfectly with mutual cooperation for the joy of the being, or when it tastes fathomless peace and ineffable delight by plunging into a deep, shadowless inaction at will: such a state of being was called by the Vedantists of the earliest times the kingdom (dominion over self) or the empire (dominion over others). Indra and Varuna particularly are masters of this state; they are emperors. Indra when he becomes emperor sets in motion all the faculties, and Varuna when he becomes emperor governs the faculties and exalts them.

But all are not qualified to receive the help of these two sublime immortals. Only when one has knowledge and is established in tranquillity, can he claim their help. One has to be *vipra*, a *māvān*. The word *vipra* does not mean a brahmin; the root *vi* signifies to manifest, to illumine and the root *vip* means the play or vibration or full flooding of manifestation, illumination; one in whose mind the knowledge has dawned, the door of whose mind is open for the mighty play of knowledge, he is verily the *vipra*. The root *mā* signifies 'to hold'. The mother holds the child in her womb, that is why she is known as *mātā*. The founder and life of all action, the god Vayu, is known as Matarisvan, "he who extends himself in the Mother or the container, the sky" — the sky which holds in its womb the birth, the play and the death of all creatures and beings and yet remains for ever serene and unperturbed. One who is patient like the sky that has the power to contain and endure the wild play and remain silently plunged in its happiness even when the violent cyclone cleaves the horizon with lightnings and roaring madly smites down trees, animals and houses in a furious and destructive dance of divine rapture, one who can turn his own body into an open space for the play of unbearable physical and vital pain and yet remain impassive,

full of self-delight, capable of withstanding it like a witness, he, indeed, is a *māvān*. When such a *māvān* is *vipra*, (illuminated), when such a serene knower offers his body as the altar of sacrifice and calls on the gods, then Indra and Varuna move freely in it, sometimes they come even of their own accord, protect the oblation, become the support and foundation, *dhartārā carṣaṇīnām* ('You are indeed the upholders of all action'), of all his desired actions and bestow upon him great felicity, power and illumination of knowledge.

## Mandala 1, Sukta 75

1-75-1

*juṣasva saprathastamaṁ vaco devapsarastamaṁ  
havyā juhvāna āsani*

O Flame, what I am expressing is very wide and vast, an object of enjoyment for the gods; devour it with love; take all these offerings in thy mouth.

1-75-2

*athā te āṅgirastamāgne vedhastama priyam  
vocema brahma sānasi*

O Divine Energy! thou are the most powerful of all the powers and the highest divinity, may the sacred hymn of my heart which I am uttering become thy favourite, and thou the triumphant enjoyer of what I desire.

1-75-3

*kaste jāmirjanānāmagne ko dāśvadhvaraḥ  
ko ha kasmīnmasi śritah*

O Divine Energy! O Flame! who is thy comrade, who is thy brother in the world? Who is able to extend that friendship which leads to the Divine? Who art Thou? In whose heart has Agni found shelter?

1-75-4

*tvaṁ jāmirjanānāmagne mitro asi priyah  
sakhā sakhībhya īḍyah*

O Agni, thou indeed art brother of all living beings, beloved friend of the world; thou indeed art the comrade, thou art desired by thy comrades.

1-75-5

*yajā no mitrāvaruṇā yajā devāṁ ṛtaṁ bhṛat  
agne yakṣisvaṁ damam*

Sacrifice for us to Mitra and Varuna, sacrifice to the gods, to the vast Truth; O Agni, that Truth is thy own home. Establish the sacrifice in that goal.

## Mandala 3, Sukta 46

3-46-1

*yudhmasya te vṛṣabhasya svarāja ugrasya yūna sthavirusasya ghr̥ṣveḥ  
ajūryato vajriṇo vīryāṅdra śrutasya mahato mahāni*

Very noble are the heroic deeds of mighty Indra, the thunderer, the bearer of the Word, warrior and powerful emperor, the ever young god

resplendent, imperishable and possessor of tranquil strength.

**3-46-2** *mahām asi mahiṣa vṛṣṇyebhirdhanaspr̥dugra sahamāno anyān  
eko viśvasya bhuvanasya rājā sa yodhayā ca kṣayayā ca janān*

O Great, O Puissant, thou art great; by the action of thy expansive power forcefully wrest from others the wealth we desire. Thou art one, king of all that is visible in the whole universe; inspire man in the battle; establish him in the abode of peace, worthy of conquest.

**3-46-3** *pra mātrābhī ririce rocamānaḥ pra devebhirviśvato apratītaḥ  
pra majmanā diva indraḥ pṛthivyāḥ prorormaho antarikṣād ṛjīṣī*

Indra manifesting himself as radiance crosses all measures of the universe surpassing even the gods in every way and infinitely he becomes inaccessible to them. This power that drives straight, by his strength in the mental world, surpasses the wide material universe and the great vital world.

**3-46-4** *urum gabhīraṁ januṣābhyugraṁ viśvavyacasamavataṁ maṭinām  
indraṁ somāsaḥ praḍivi sutāsaḥ samudraṁ na sravata ā viśanti*

Into this wide and deep, violent and powerful from his very birth, all-manifesting ocean-like Indra, the ordainer of all thoughts, enter the intoxicating universal currents of delight like fast-flowing rivers issuing from the mouth of the mental world.

**3-46-5** *yaṁ somamindra pṛthivīdyāvā garbhaṁ na mātā bibhṛtastvāyā  
taṁ te hinvanti tamu te mṛjantyadhvaryavo vṛṣabha pātavā u*

O puissant Indra, for the satisfaction of thy desire, the mental world and the material universe hold this wine of felicity as a mother holds the unborn child. The priest who accomplishes the sacrifice is for thy sake only, O Bull; he drives the flow of delight so that thou mayst drink it; he refines that delight for thy sake only.

## Mandala 9, Sukta 1

**9-1-1** *svādiṣṭhayā madiṣṭhayā pavasva soma dhārayā  
indrāya pātave sutaḥ*

O Soma, flow in most delicious, most intoxicating and pure currents; thou hast been distilled so that Indra may drink thee.

## **IV. THE UPANISHADS**



# The Upanishads

**O**UR dharma is like a giant tree adorned with innumerable branches and twigs. Its roots plunge down into the deepest knowledge; its branches spread out far into the field of action. Like the Ashwattha tree mentioned in the Gita, which has its roots above and its branches below, this dharma is based on knowledge and exhorts one to action. Freedom from attachment is the foundation of this vast tree-mansion, dynamism is its walls and roof, and liberation its tower and summit. The whole life of humanity is sheltered by this immense tree-mansion of the Hindu dharma.

Every one says that the Veda is the basis of the Hindu dharma, but very few know the real form and the fundamental truth of that basis. Often, seated among the top-most branches, we remain lost in ecstasy over the taste of one or more of the savoury and transient fruits, never caring to find out anything about the roots. True, we have heard that the Veda is divided into two sections: the one part dealing with action and the other dealing with knowledge. We may have read the commentaries on the Rigveda by Max Muller or its Bengali translation by Romesh Dutt but we have no acquaintance with the Rigveda itself. We have received the knowledge from Max Muller and Romesh Dutt that the Rishis of the Rigveda worshipped external objects and beings; the incantations and hymns to the Sun, the Moon, the Winds and the Fire constituted the ancient Hindu dharma's eternal fundamental knowledge above the human. By assuming their view to be true and thus belittling the Veda, the Rishis and the Hindu dharma, we consider ourselves highly learned and 'enlightened'. We make no effort to find out what is

truly there in the authentic Veda or why the sages and great souls like Shankaracharya and others revered these eternal invocations and hymns as the complete and infallible Knowledge.

Few people are acquainted with even the Upanishads. When we speak of the Upanishads, we are reminded of the Monism of Shankaracharya, the Qualified Dualism of Ramanuja, the Dualism of Madhwa and similar philosophical expositions. We do not even dream of studying the Upanishads in the original, or finding out their true significance, or asking ourselves how six schools of contradictory philosophies could have grown from the same root, or whether any hidden meaning surpassing those six philosophies could be obtained from this treasure-house of knowledge. For a thousand years we have accepted the meaning given by Shankara; the commentary of Shankara has become our Veda, our Upanishad. Why should we take the trouble of studying the Upanishads in the original? Even when we do so, if ever we come across any commentary which contradicts Shankara, we immediately reject it as false. Yet not only the knowledge gained by Shankara but the spiritual knowledge or truth which has been acquired in the past or will be in the present and the future has been concealed in these profound and significant *ślokas* by the Aryan Rishis and the great Yogis.

What are the Upanishads? They are the treasure-house of the deepest eternal Knowledge without beginning or end which is the root and foundation of the eternal dharma. We find the same knowledge in the Suktas of the four Vedas but covered over with metaphors which give an exoteric meaning to the hymns like that of the descriptive image of the ideal man. The Upanishads unveil for us the supreme Knowledge, the naked limbs of the real man. The poets of the Rigveda, the Rishis, expressed spiritual knowledge in divinely inspired



words and rhythms; the Rishis of the Upanishads had direct vision of the true form of that Knowledge and expressed it in a few profound words. Not only Monism, but all the philosophical thoughts and doctrines that have come into being in Europe and Asia — Rationalism, Realism, Nihilism, the Darwinian theory of evolution, the Positivism of Comte, the philosophy of Hegel, Kant, Spinoza and Schopenhauer, Utilitarianism, Hedonism, all were seen and expressed by the Rishis endowed with the *direct vision*. But what has been elsewhere partially glimpsed, proclaimed as the integral truth — in spite of its being only a fragment of the Truth — and given a distorted description with a mixture of truth and falsehood, has been recorded in its fullness and right perspective, in a pure and unmistakable manner.

Therefore we should endeavour to find the true deep meaning of the Upanishads without being bound by the exposition of Shankara or anyone else.

The word 'Upanishad' means to enter into a secret place. The Rishis did not obtain the knowledge mentioned in the Upanishads by force of argument, extensive learning or from the flow of inspiration, but earned by Yoga the right of entry into the secrecy of the mind where hangs the key to the integral Knowledge, penetrated into the hidden chamber, took down the key and became sovereigns of vast realms of that infallible Knowledge. Unless the key can be secured, it is not possible to have access to the true significance of the Upanishads. Any attempt to discover the meaning of the Upanishads by argument alone is equivalent to investigating a dense forest with a lighted candle from high tree-tops. Direct vision is the sun-light which illumines the entire forest making it visible to the seeker. Direct vision can be attained only by Yoga.

## The Integral Yoga in the Upanishads

**T**HE Integral Yoga, the divine life founded on the Self, in a human body, and the integral Lila conducted by the Divine Power, these we preach to be the supreme goal of our human birth; the fundamental basis of this conclusion does not rest upon a mentally constructed new thought, nor does it derive its authority from the letters of any ancient manuscript, the proof of any written scripture or the formula of any philosophy. It is based upon a spiritual knowledge more integral; it is based upon the burning experience of the Divine Reality in the soul, life, mind, heart and body. This knowledge is not a new discovery but old and indeed eternal. This experience is the experience of the ancient Vedic Rishis, of the supreme Truth-Seers of the Upanishads. It is the experience of those Truth-Hearing Poets. It sounds new in the low-aspiring, fruitlessly busy and despondent life of a fallen India of the Kali-yuga. Where most people are content to lead a semi-human existence, and so few ever make an effort to develop even their full manhood, there cannot be any question about the new godhood. But it was with this ideal that our strong Aryan forefathers shaped the first life of the nation. At the rapturous dawn of the Sun-knowledge, the fervent call of the Vedic chants sung by the bird of felicity, self-lost with Soma wine in its voice, rose to the feet of the Universal Being. The high aspiration of enshrining the glorious image of the immortal Universal being in the soul of man, in the life of man, by shaping an all-round divinity, was the primary mantra of the Indian civilization. Gradual enfeeblement, deformation and forgetting of that mantra are the causes of the decline and the misfortune of this country and the nation. To

utter that mantra again, to strive for that realisation again, are the only perfect path, the only irreproachable means for their revival and progress because this mantra is the eternal truth where both the individual and the collectivity find their fulfilment. This is the profound significance of the effort of man, the building up of nations, the birth and the gradual development of civilisation. All other aims whose pursuit tires our mind and life are minor and partial aims, aids to the true intention of the gods. All other fragmentary realisations which gratify us are no more than rest-houses on the way, fixing of victory flags on the peaks along the path. The true aim, the true realisation is the unfolding of the Brahman, its self-manifestation, the visible diffusion of the Power of the Divine, the Lila of His Knowledge and Ananda, not in a few great souls, but in everybody in the nation and the entire humanity.

We see the first form and stage of this knowledge and this sadhana in the Rigveda, the earliest characters inscribed on the Stupa near the entrance to the temple of the Aryan dharma at the beginning of history. We cannot say with certainty that it finds expression for the first time in the Rigveda, because even the Rishis of the Rigveda admit that those who were before them, the early ancestors of the Aryan race, 'the primeval fathers of the human race', had discovered this path of truth and immortality for the later man. They also say that the new Rishis were only following the path which had been shown to them by the ancient Rishis. We find that the mantra of the Rigveda is the echo of the words of the 'fathers', of the Divine speech they uttered; consequently, the form of the dharma that we see in the Rigveda can be said to be its earliest form. The knowledge of the Upanishads, the sadhana of the Vedanta are only a very noble and generous transformation of this dharma. The knowledge of the supreme Divine and the sadhana for

attaining the Divine life of the Vedas, the Self-knowledge and the sadhana for realising the Brahman of the Upanishads, both of them are based on a synthetic dharma; various aspects of the cosmic Purusha and the cosmic Shakti, the supreme Divine unifying all the truths of the Brahman, the experience and the pursuit of the All-Brahman are its intimate subject-matter. Then started the age of analysis. The Purva Mimansa, the Uttara Mimansa, the Sankhya, the Yoga, the Nyaya, and the Vaisheshika of the Vedantas, each of them took up a partial philosophy of the truth and developed different ways of the sadhana. Finally, the parts of the partial philosophies gave rise to Monism, Dualism, Qualified Monism, the Vaishnava and the Shaiva schools, the Puranas and the Tantras. The attempt at synthesis also never stopped. We find that effort in the Gita, the Tantras and the Puranas; each of them has been successful to a certain extent; many new experiences have been gained but no longer do we find in them the comprehensiveness of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It looks as if the ancient spiritual message of India took its birth in some all-pervading brilliant light of knowledge where even to reach, let alone the question of crossing beyond it, became impossible or difficult for the predominantly intellectual later ages.

# The Isha Upanishad

## I

The main obstacle that stands in the way of accepting the straightforward meaning of the Isha Upanishad and rightly understanding its inner truth about the Brahman, the Self and the Divine, is Mayavada, Illusionism, preached by Shankaracharya and the commentary he wrote on this Upanishad. The one-pointed drive towards withdrawal that is Illusionism and the much-praised inaction of the Sannyasi are completely at variance with the Isha Upanishad. If the meaning of the slokas is strained and tortured to give an opposite sense, the solution of this quarrel becomes impossible. The Upanishad in which it is written: 'Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years', and again: 'Action cleaves not to a man' — the Upanishad which proclaims with courage: 'Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone'; and again says: 'By the Birth one enjoys Immortality', how can that Upanishad be reconciled with Mayavada, Illusionism and the path of withdrawal? A highly erudite person, who was possibly the chief sponsor of Monism in South India after Shankara, expunged it from the list of the twelve Upanishads and installed the Nrisimhatapini in its place. Shankaracharya was not so daring as to alter the prevailing canon. The Upanishad was a 'Sruti' (heard scripture), and Illusionism was a subject for inquiry in the 'Sruti' and as such, he assumed, the meaning of the 'Sruti' could not but be favourable to real Illusionism.

If *jagat* (in *īśa vāsyamidam sarvām yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*) meant the earth, then the meaning would be: 'all that is moving on the earth in motion', that is to say, all men, animals, insects, birds, torrents, and rivers, etc. This meaning is absurd. In the language of the Upanishads, the word *sarvamidam* signifies all the visible objects of the universe, not of the earth. Therefore we must understand by the word *jagati* the Shakti in movement manifested as the universe and by the word *jagat* all that is a movement of motion of the Prakriti whether present as a living being or as matter. The contradiction lies between these two: the Ishwara and all that is in the universe. Unlike the Ishwara who is immobile, the Prakriti, the Shakti, is in movement always engaged in work and world-wide motion; all that exists in the universe is also a small universe in movement which is always, at each instant, the meeting-place of creation, preservation and destruction, the restless and perishable, the opposite of the immutable. The eternal contradiction does not become evident if we place on one side the Ishwara and on the other, the earth and all that is in movement on the earth. This Upanishad opens with the eternal contradiction observed by everybody which puts the immutable Ishwara on one side and on the other the restless Prakriti and all that she possesses in the universe created by her, all ephemeral objects.

The whole Upanishad is constructed upon this contradiction and its resolution. Later on, the author of the Upanishad, while discussing the nature of the Ishwara and the nature of the universe brings up thrice the same problem but each time with a different approach. First when he talks about the Brahman, he demonstrates the opposition of the Purusha and the Prakriti and in these few words, '*anejad*' (unmoving) and *manaso javīyaḥ... tad ejati tannajati* (swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In

that the Master of Life established the Waters. That moves and moves not) he explains that both are Brahman: the Purusha is Brahman, the Prakriti and the universe which is her outward form are also Brahman. Again, while speaking of the Atman, he explains the opposition between the Ishwara and everything concerning the universe. The Atman is the Ishwara, the Purusha...

If it is squeezed, then most surely the true hidden meaning, that is to say, the doctrine of Illusionism, will be forced out because of the pain: this was the conclusion that overpowered Shankaracharya, and he wrote a commentary on the Isha Upanishad.

Let us hear on the one hand what the commentary of Shankara says, and on the other what the Upanishad has truly to say. The author of the Upanishad right in the beginning compares the truth of the Ishwara with the Truth of the universe and indicates their fundamental relation.

*'īśa vāsyamidam sarvam yat kiñca jagatyām jagat'*, 'All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is jagat within jagati or individual universe in movement' — the still all-pervading controller Purusha and the Prakriti in motion — the Ishwara and the Shakti. As the name of Ishwara has been given to the Immutable, we have to understand that the true relation between the Purusha and Prakriti is this: '*jagat*' depends on the Ishwara, is governed by Him and accomplishes all work by His will. This Purusha is not only a witness and giver of sanction but Ishwara, the knower, the director of action; the Prakriti is not the controller of action but she works out the destiny, the mistress but dependent on the master, the obedient active Shakti of the Purusha.

Then we observe that '*jagati*' is not simply the Shakti in movement, not simply the principle which is the cause of the universe; she is also present as the universe itself. The ordinary meaning of the word '*jagati*' is 'the earth', but it

cannot apply here. By combining these two words *jagatyām jagat* the author of the Upanishad has hinted that the root-meaning of these two words must not be neglected. To emphasise it has been his aim.

## 2

The Isha Upanishad introduces to us the integral spiritual realisation and the principle of the integral yoga; within a short space it resolves many difficult problems. It is a *śruti* replete with sublime, profound and fathomless significances. This Upanishad, concluded in eighteen slokas, explains in these small mantras many major truths of the world. Such 'infinite riches in a little room' can be found only in this *śruti*.

Synthesis of knowledge, synthesis of dharma, reconciliation and harmony of the opposites form the very soul of this Upanishad. In Western philosophy there is a law called the law of contradiction, according to which opposites mutually exclude each other. Two opposite propositions cannot hold good at the same time, they cannot integrate; two opposite qualities cannot be simultaneously true at the same place and in the same instrument. According to this law, opposites cannot be reconciled or harmonised. If the Divine is one, then however omnipotent He might be, He cannot be many. The infinite cannot be finite. It is impossible for the formless to assume form; if it assumes form, then it abrogates its formlessness. The formula that the Brahman is at the same time with and without attributes, which is exactly what the Upanishad also says about God who is *nirguṇo guṇī*, with and without attributes, is not admitted by this logic. If formlessness, oneness, infinity of the Brahman are true, then attributes, forms, multiplicity and finiteness of the Brahman are false; *brahma satyam jagannmithyā*, 'the Brahman is the



sole reality, the world is an illusion' — such a totally ruinous deduction is the final outcome of that philosophic dictum. The Seer-Rishi of the Upanishad at each step tramples on that law and in each sloka announces its invalidity; he finds in the secret heart of the opposites the place for the reconciliation and harmony of their contradiction. The oneness of the universe in motion and the immobile Purusha, enjoyment of all by renunciation of all, eternal liberation by full action, perpetual stability of the Brahman in movement, unbound and inconceivable motion in the eternal immobility, the oneness of the Brahman without attributes and the Lord of the universe with attributes, the inadequacy of Knowledge alone or of Ignorance alone for attaining Immortality, Immortality obtained by simultaneous worship of Knowledge and Ignorance, the supreme liberation and realisation gained not by the constant cycle of birth, not by the dissolution of birth but by simultaneous accomplishment of Birth and Non-Birth, — these are the sublime principles loudly proclaimed by the Upanishad.

Unfortunately there has been a great deal of unnecessary confusion regarding the meaning of this Upanishad. Shankara is generally recognised as the most important commentator of the Isha Upanishad, but if all these conclusions are accepted, then Mayavada, the Illusionism of Shankara, sinks in the bottomless ocean. The founder of Mayavada is incomparable and immensely powerful among the philosophers. Just as thirsty Balaram brought to his feet the Yamuna unwilling to alter her course, by dragging and pulling her with a plough, so also Shankara, finding this Upanishad destroyer of Mayavada and standing across the path toward his destination, dragged and pulled the meaning till it agreed with his own opinion. One or two examples will suffice to show the miserable condition to which this Upanishad has been reduced by such treatment.

It is said in the Upanishad, 'Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone'. Shankara says, 'I am not willing to give to the words *vidyā* (knowledge) and *avidyā* (ignorance) their ordinary sense'; *vidyā* signifies here *devavidyā*, 'the science of propitiating the gods'. The Upanishad declares, '*vināśena mṛtyum tīrtvā sambhūtyāmṛtamaśnute*', 'by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality'. Shankara says it has to be read as *asambhūtyāmṛtam*, 'by Non-Birth enjoys Immortality', and *vināśa* (dissolution) as signifying here 'birth'. In the same way a commentator of the Dualistic School, when he came across the word *tattvamasī*, 'Thou art That', indicated that it should be read as *atatvamasī*, 'Thou art that other one'. A prominent teacher of the Mayavada who came after Shankara adopted a different means; he satisfied himself by expelling the Isha Upanishad from the list of the principal authoritative Upanishads and promoting the Nrisimhottaratapini in its place. In fact it is quite unnecessary to impose one's opinions by such physical force. The Upanishad illustrates infinite aspects of the infinite Brahman and, because it does not uphold any particular philosophic view, a thousand philosophic views have sprouted from this single seed. Each philosophy takes up a side of the infinite truth and presents it to the intellect in a systematic way. The infinite Brahman manifests itself in infinite ways; paths leading to the infinite Brahman are also numberless.

## **V. THE PURANAS**



# The Puranas

**I**N the previous article I have written about the Upanishads and shown the method of seizing on their true and complete meaning. Like the Upanishads, the Puranas are authoritative scriptures of the Hindu dharma. Like the 'Sruti' (the audible word), the 'Smriti' (the divine word remembered) is an authoritative scripture though not of the same order. If there is any conflict between the 'Sruti', the direct evidence, on the one hand, and the 'Smriti' on the other, then the authority of the latter is inadmissible. The revelations of the Rishis who were accomplished in Yoga and endowed with spiritual insight, and the Word which the Master of the Universe spoke to their purified intelligence, constitute the 'Sruti'. Ancient knowledge and learning, preserved through countless generations, is known as the 'Smriti'. This kind of knowledge in transmission might have suffered change, even deformation through different tongues, various minds and, under altered conditions, might have been modified by new ideas or assumed new forms suitable to the needs of the times. Therefore, a 'Smriti' cannot be considered to be as infallible as a 'Sruti'. The 'Smriti' is not a superhuman creation but the product of the limited and variable ideas and intelligence of man.

The Puranas are the most important among the 'Smritis'. The spiritual knowledge contained in the Upanishads has, in the Puranas, been transformed into fiction and metaphors; we find in them much useful information on Indian history, the gradual growth and expression of the Hindu dharma, the condition of the society in ancient times, social customs, religious ceremonies, Yogic methods of discipline and ways

of thinking. Apart from this, the composers of the Puranas are either accomplished yogis or seekers of Truth. The Knowledge and spiritual realisations obtained by their sadhana remain recorded in the respective Puranas. The Vedas and the Upanishads are the fundamental scriptures of the Hindu religion, the Puranas are commentaries on these scriptures. A commentary can never be equal to the original. My commentary may be different from yours but none of us have the right to alter or ignore the fundamental scripture. That which is at variance with the Vedas and the Upanishads cannot be accepted as a limb of the Hindu dharma; but a new idea even if it differs from the Puranas is welcome. The value of a commentary depends on the intellectual capacity, knowledge and erudition of the commentator. For example, if the Purana written by Vyasa were still existing, then it would be honoured as a 'Sruti'. In the absence of this Purana and the one written by Lomaharshana, the eighteen Puranas that still exist cannot all be given the same place of honour; among them, the Vishnu and the Bhagwata Purana composed by accomplished yogis are definitely more precious and we must recognise that the Markandeya Purana written by a sage devoted to spiritual pursuits is more profound in Knowledge than either the Shiva or the Agni Purana.

The Purana of Vyasa being the source-book of the later Puranas, there must be, even in the poorest of them, much information unfolding the principles of the Hindu dharma and since even the poorest of the Puranas is written by a seeker of Knowledge or a devotee practising Yoga, the thought and knowledge obtained by his personal effort is worthy of respect. The division created by the English educated scholars who separate the Vedas and the Upanishads from the Puranas and thus make a distinction between the Vedic dharma and the Puranic dharma is a mistake born of ignorance. The Puranas are accepted as an authority on

the Hindu dharma because they explain the knowledge contained in the Veda and the Upanishads to the average man, comment upon it, discuss it at great length and endeavour to apply it to the commonplace details of life. They too are mistaken who neglect the Vedas and the Upanishads and consider the Puranas as a distinct and self-sufficient authority in itself. By doing this, they commit the error of omitting the infallible and supernatural origin and of encouraging false knowledge, with the result that the meaning of the Vedas disappears and the true significance of the Puranas is also lost. The Vedas must ever remain the basis for any true understanding of the Puranas.





## **VI. THE GITA**



# The Dharma of the Gita

**T**HIS question may arise in the minds of those who have carefully studied the Gita, that though Sri Krishna has repeatedly used the word 'Yoga' and described the state of being in yoga, union, yet this is quite unlike what ordinary people understand as 'Yoga'. Sri Krishna has at places praised asceticism and indicated too that the highest liberation can come through the adoration of the Impersonal Divine. But dismissing the subject in a few words, He has explained to Arjuna in the finest portions of the Gita the majesty of the inner renunciation and the various ways of attaining to the supreme state through faith and self-surrender to Vasudeva. There is a brief description of Rajayoga in the sixth chapter but the Gita cannot properly be called a treatise on Raja-yoga. Equality, detachment, renunciation of the fruits of work, complete self-surrender to Krishna, desireless work, freedom from the bondage of the three essential modes of Nature and pursuit of one's own law of works: these are the fundamental truths of the Gita. The Lord has glorified these precepts as the highest knowledge and the most secret mystery.

It is our belief that the Gita will become the universally acknowledged Scripture of the future religion. But the real meaning of the Gita has not been understood by all. Even the great scholars and the most intelligent writers with the keenest minds are unable to seize its profound significance. On the one hand, the commentators with a leaning towards liberation have shown the grandeur of the Monism and asceticism in the Gita; on the other hand, Bankimchandra, well-versed in Western philosophy, finding in the Gita the

counsel to carry out heroically one's duty, tried to inculcate this meaning into the minds of youth. Asceticism is, no doubt, the best dharma but very few people can practise it. A religion to be universally acknowledged must have an ideal and precepts which every one can realise in his own particular life and field of work, yet which if practised fully must lead him to the highest goal otherwise available only to a few. To carry out one's duty heroically is, of course, the highest dharma, but what is duty? There is such a controversy between religion and ethics regarding this complex problem. The Lord has said, *gahana karmaṇo gatiḥ*, 'thick and tangled is the way of works'. 'Even the wise are perplexed to decide what is duty, what is not duty, what is work, what is not work and what is wrong work, but I shall give you such a knowledge that you will have no difficulty in finding the path to follow,' in a word, the knowledge which will amply explain the aim of life and the law which has to be always observed. What is this knowledge? Where can we find this word of words? We believe that, if we look for this rare and invaluable treasure, we shall find it in the last chapter of the Gita where the Lord promises to reveal to Arjuna His most secret and supreme Word. What is that most secret and supreme Word?

*manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru  
māmevaiśyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo'si me (18. 65)  
sarvadharmānparityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja  
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayaiśyāmi mā śucaḥ (18. 66)*

(Become My-minded, My lover and adorer, a sacrificer to Me, bow thyself to Me, to Me thou shalt come, this is My pledge and promise to thee, for dear art thou to Me. Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver thee from all sin and evil, do not grieve).

In brief, the meaning of these two slokas is self-surrender. To the extent that one can make his surrender to Krishna, the Divine Force comes down into his body by the grace of the All-Merciful, delivering him from sin and conferring on him a divine nature. This self-surrender has been described in the first half of the sloka. One has to be *tanmanā*, *tadbhakta*, and *tadyājī*. *Tanmanā* means to see Him in every being, to remember Him at all times, to remain in perfect felicity, being aware of the play of His power, knowledge and love in all works and events. *Tadbhakta* signifies union with Him founded on an entire faith and love. *Tadyājī* means offering of all works big and small as a sacrifice to Krishna and being engaged in doing rightly regulated action to that end, by giving up egoistic interests and the fruits of work.

It is difficult for a human being to make a complete self-surrender, but if he makes even a little effort then God Himself gives him assurance, becomes his guru, protector and friend and leads him forward on the path of Yoga. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*. Even a little of this dharma delivers one from the great fear. He has said that it is easy and delightful to practise this dharma. And in fact it is so, yet the result of the total consecration is an inexpressible joy, purity and acquisition of power. *Māmevaisyasi* (to Me thou shalt come) means the human being will find Me, will live with Me, will acquire My nature. In these words the realisations of *sādṛśya*, God-nature, *sālokya*, living with God, and *sāyujya*, identification with God are mentioned.

One who is free from the bondage of the three essential modes of Nature has indeed acquired *sādṛśya*, the nature of God. He has no attachment yet he works; delivered from all sin, he becomes an instrument of Mahashakti and delights in every action of that Power. *Sālokya*, habitation with God, can be realised not only in the Brahmaloaka, abode of the

Brahman, after the fall of the body but in this very body. When the embodied being plays with the Lord in his heart, when his mind is thrilled by the knowledge coming from Him, when the intellect constantly hears His words and is conscious of His impulsions in each of his thoughts, this indeed is living in a human body with the Lord. *Sāyujya*, the identification with the Lord, can also be achieved in this body. The Gita mentions 'living in the Lord'. When the realisation of the Divine in all beings becomes permanent, when the senses see, hear, smell, taste and touch Him only, when the being becomes accustomed to live in Him as a portion, then there can be the identification even in this body. But this consummation is entirely the result of an askesis (practice of discipline).

However, even a little practice of this dharma gives great power, unalloyed joy, complete happiness and purity. This dharma has not been created only for people with special qualities. The Lord has said that the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, the Sudra, man, woman and all beings of inferior birth can come to Him by adhering to this dharma. Even the greatest sinner, if he takes refuge in Him, is quickly purified. Therefore, every one ought to follow this dharma. In the temple of Jagannath no distinction is made on account of caste. Yet the crowning glory attained through this dharma is in no way less than the supreme state indicated in other religions.

## Asceticism and Renunciation

**I**N the preceding essay it has been said that the Discipline (Dharma) spoken of in the Gita can be followed by everyone; it is open to all. And yet the supreme status in this Discipline is not a whit less than that of any other. The Discipline of the Gita is the Discipline of desireless works. In this country with the resurgence of Aryan Discipline a flood of asceticism has spread everywhere. A man seeking Raja-yoga cannot rest content with the life or the work of a householder. For the practice of his yoga he needs to make tremendously laborious efforts to be able to meditate and concentrate. A slight mental disturbance or contact with the outside upsets the poise of meditation or completely destroys it. Difficulties of this kind one meets abundantly in home-life. Therefore it is quite natural for those who are born with an urge for yoga, derived from past lives, to turn towards asceticism. When such souls with an inborn yogic urge begin to increase in number and by contagion to spread among the youthful generation a strong movement to asceticism, the doors are opened indeed for the good of the country, in one sense; but also along with the good there arise causes for apprehension. It is said that the ascetic discipline is the very best, but very few are competent to follow it. The incompetent who enter the path go a certain distance and then in the midway stop short through a kind of satisfaction arising from lethargy and inertia. One can in this way pass one's life upon earth in ease, but then one does no good to the world and also it becomes very difficult for such a one to rise to the higher reaches of the world. The time and the circumstances in which we are at present demand that we awaken the

qualities of dynamic energy (Rajas) and luminous poise (Sattwa), that is to say, activity and knowledge, discarding the qualities of inertia and devote ourselves to the service of the country and the world so that we may rejuvenate the moral and spiritual strength of our land. This is our foremost duty today. We have to re-create an Aryan people rich with knowledge and power and wide catholicity, from out of the womb of this people weak and worn out, weighed down with inertia, narrowed into selfish bounds. It is for this reason that so many souls, full of strength and yogic power, are being born in Bengal. If such people attracted by the charm of asceticism abandon their true law of life and their God-given work, then with the destruction of their true law the nation too will perish. The younger generation seems to imagine that the stage of the student (Brahmacharya) is the time fixed for the acquisition of education and character. The next stage as fixed is that of the householder. And when one has assured the preservation of the family and the future building of the Aryan race and thus freed oneself from the debts to the ancestors and also when one has paid off one's debts to society by the acquisition of wealth and by useful service and when one has paid off one's debts to the world by spreading knowledge and beneficence and love and strength and finally when one has been able to satisfy the Mother of the worlds by one's unstinted labour and high service for the good of Mother India, then it will not be amiss to retire from the world into the forest (Vanaprastha), and take to the ascetic life. Otherwise there arises confusion of social values and growing dominance of the wrong law. I do not speak of young ascetics who have been freed from all debts in a previous life; but it would be wrong for one who has not made himself ready for asceticism to take to it. Great and magnanimous Buddhism has done no doubt immense good to the country, yet no less harm, because of asceticism



spreading everywhere and the warrior class (Kshatriya) renouncing their appointed function; and in the end, itself was banished from the country. In the new age the new dispensation must not admit this error.

In the Gita Sri Krishna has time and again directed Arjuna not to follow asceticism. Why? He admits the virtue of Sannyasa and yet, in spite of the repeated questionings of Arjuna overwhelmed as he was with the spirit of asceticism, abnegation and altruism, Sri Krishna never withdrew his injunctions with regard to the path of action. Arjuna asked, "If desireless Intelligence, founded in Yoga, is greater than karma, then why do you engage me in this terrible work of slaying my elders?" Many have repeated the question of Arjuna, some even have not hesitated to call him the worst Teacher, one who shows the wrong way. In answer, Sri Krishna has explained that renunciation is greater than asceticism, to remember God and do one's appointed work without desire is far greater than freedom to do as one likes. Renunciation means renunciation of desire, renunciation of selfishness. And to learn that renunciation one need not take refuge in solitude. That lesson has to be learnt through work in the field of work; work is the means to climb upon the path of yoga. This world of varied play has been created for the purpose of bringing delight to its creatures. It is not God's purpose that this game of delight should cease. He wants the creatures to become his comrades and playmates, to flood the world with delight. We are in the darkness of ignorance; that is because, for the sake of the play the Lord has kept himself aloof and thus surrounded himself with obscurity. Many are the ways fixed by him which, if followed would take one out of the darkness, bring him into God's company. If any one is not interested in the play and desires rest, God will fulfil his desire. But if one follows His way for His sake, then God chooses him, in this world or elsewhere

as His fit playmate. Arjuna was Krishna's dearest comrade and playmate, therefore he received the teaching of the Gita's supreme secret. What that supreme secret is I tried to explain in a previous context. The Divine said to Arjuna, "It is harmful to the world to give up work, to give up work is the spirit of asceticism. And an asceticism without renunciation is meaningless. What one gains by asceticism one gains also by renunciation, that is to say, the freedom from ignorance, equanimity, power, delight, union with Sri Krishna. Whatever the man worshipped by all does, people take that as the ideal and follow it. Therefore, if you give up work through asceticism, all will follow that path and bring about the confusion of social values, and the reign of the wrong law. If you give up the desire for the fruit of action and pursue man's normal law of life, inspire men to follow each his own line of activity, then you will unite with my Law of life and become my intimate friend". Sri Krishna explains furthermore that the rule is to follow the right path through works and finally at the end of the path attain quietude, that is to say, renounce all sense of being the doer. But this is not renunciation of work through asceticism, this is to give up all vital urge to action involving immense labour and effort through the rejection of egoism and through union with the Divine — and transcending all gunas, to do works as an instrument impelled by His force. In that state it is the permanent consciousness of the soul that he is not the doer, he is the witness, part of the Divine; it is the Divine Power that works through his body created for action by his own inner law of being. The soul is the witness and enjoyer, Nature is the doer, the Divine is the giver of sanction. The being so illumined does not seek to help or hinder any work that the Divine Power undertakes. Submitted to the Shakti, the body and mind and intellect engage themselves in the work appointed by God. Even a terrible massacre like that of

Kurukshetra cannot stain a soul with sin if it is sanctioned by God, if it occurs in the course of the fulfilment of one's own dharma (Inner Law), but only a few can attain to this knowledge and this goal. It cannot be the law of life for the common man. What then is the duty for the common wayfarers? Even for them the knowledge that 'He is the Lord, I am the instrument' is to a certain extent within their reach. Through this knowledge to remember always the Divine and follow one's inner law of life is the direction that has been given.

"Better is one's own law of works, swadharma though in itself faulty, than an alien law well wrought out; death in one's own law of being is better, perilous is it to follow an alien law."<sup>1</sup>

One's own law of life (swadharma) means the work governed by one's own nature (swabhava); one's own nature evolves and develops in the course of time. In the process of Time man develops a general nature of his own; the works determined by this formulation of nature is the law of that age. In the process of a nation's life-movement the nation's own nature is built up and the works determined by that nature are the nation's law of life. And in the course of the life-movement of an individual, the special nature he develops, determines the work that becomes the individual's law of life. These various laws of life are united together, organised in a common ideal which is that of the Eternal Law. This law is one's own law for all who seek to follow the true law. As a spiritual student (brahmachari) one follows this law to gather knowledge and strength. As a householder also one follows this law. And when one has completely fulfilled this law, then one becomes eligible for the final stages, Vanaprastha or Sannyasa. Such is the eternal movement of the eternal law.

<sup>1</sup> *Gita*: III. 35.

# The Vision of the World Spirit

**O**UR honourable friend Bepin Chandra Pal speaking about the Vision of the World Spirit by Arjuna in an article entitled 'Bandematram' has written that the vision of the World Spirit described in the eleventh chapter of the Gita is entirely fictitious, that it is purely and simply poetic imagination. We are obliged to refute this statement. The vision of the World Spirit is a very necessary element of the Gita. Sri Krishna dispersed the doubt and the hesitation that rose in the mind of Arjuna with logic and words pregnant with knowledge. But the foundation of the knowledge derived from logic and good counsel is not solid. It is only when the knowledge is realised that it becomes firmly established. For this reason, invisibly impelled by the Divine within, Arjuna expressed his desire to see the World Spirit. Once he had this vision of the World Spirit, his doubt vanished for ever. His mind then became cleansed and purified, worthy to receive the supreme secret of the Gita. The knowledge described in the Gita prior to the vision of the World Spirit is the external form of knowledge useful to any spiritual seeker. But the knowledge unfolded after the vision is the most hidden Truth, the supreme secret, the eternal precept. If we characterise the description of the vision as a poetical metaphor, then the truth, the depth and solemnity of the Gita are destroyed and the most profound instructions obtained by Yoga are reduced to a few philosophical views and a collection of poetical fancies. The vision of the World Spirit is neither a fiction nor a poetical metaphor but truth; it is not even a supernatural truth. The universe being included in

Nature, the World Form cannot be a supernatural phenomenon. The World Spirit is a truth of the causal world, and the forms of the causal world are visible to the eye of Yoga. Arjuna endowed with the eye of Yoga saw the form of the Universal Spirit in the causal world.

### **The Form and The Formless**

The worshippers of the formless Brahman without qualities dismiss any statement about its qualities and form as being only metaphors and similes. The worshippers of the formless Brahman with qualities deny its lack of attributes by explaining the Shastras in a different way and dismiss any statement about its form as being only metaphors and similes. The worshippers of the Brahman with form and attributes are up in arms against both of them. We hold all the three views to be narrow, incomplete and born of ignorance. For, those who have realised the formless Brahman and the Brahman with form, how can they hold one view to be true and discard the other as being false and imaginary, and thus abrogate the ultimate evidence of knowledge and confine the infinite. Brahman within the finite? It is true that if we deny the formlessness and the lack of attributes of the Brahman we belittle God. But it is equally true that if we deny the qualities and the form of the Brahman we belittle Him again. God is the Master, the Creator and the Lord. He cannot be tied down to any form; as He is not limited by His form, so also He is not limited by His formlessness. God is all-powerful. If we feign to catch Him in the net of the laws of the physical Nature or of Time and Space and then tell Him, "Though you are infinite, we shall not allow you to be finite, try as you may, you will not succeed, you are bound with our irrefutable logic and arguments like Ferdinand with Prospero's magic." What

could be more ludicrous, impertinent or ignorant? God is bound neither by His form nor by His formlessness; He reveals Himself in a form to the seeker. God is there in His fullness in that form, yet at the same time pervades the whole universe. For God is beyond time and space, unattainable by any argument; time and space are His toys. He is playing with all beings caught in his net of time and space. But we shall never be able to catch Him in that net. Every time we try to achieve this impossibility with logic and philosophical argument, the Jester eludes the net and stands smiling in front of us, behind us, near us and far from us, spreads out his World Form, and the Form beyond the universe, defeating the intellect. He who says, "I know Him," knows nothing. He who says, "I know Him yet I do not know Him," has true knowledge.

### **The World Form**

The vision of the World Form is very necessary for an adorer of Shakti, a Karmayogi or one who is missioned to do a specific work as an instrument of the Mover of instruments. He might receive the divine mandate even before he has the vision of the World Spirit but as long as he does not have the vision the mandate is not fully endorsed; it has been registered but not yet authorised. Until that moment, it is a period of training and preparation for his work. Only when he has the vision of the World Spirit, does the real work begin. This vision comes to the sadhaks in different ways according to their nature and their sadhana. In the vision of Kali as the World Spirit, the sadhak perceives a feminine form of incomparable beauty pervading the universe, one yet in multitudinous bodies; her jet black hair spreads out like a compact darkness over the entire sky; the lustre of her scimitar dripping with blood dances everywhere dazzling the

eyes; the continuous peal of her dreadful laughter resounds, smashing and crushing world after world in the universe. These words are not simply poetical imagination or a futile attempt to describe a supernatural experience in inadequate human terms. This is self-revelation of Kali; it is the true form of our Mother, the true and simple description without any exaggeration of what has been seen by the eye of Yoga. Arjuna did not have the vision of the World Form of Kali; he had the vision of the World Spirit as Time the Destroyer. It amounts to the same thing. He saw it with his eye of Yoga and not in a trance insensible to the outer consciousness. Rishi Vyasa has described, without any exaggeration, exactly what Arjuna has seen. It is not a dream or imagination but the truth, the living truth.

### **The Form of the Causal World**

Three different states of the Self are mentioned in the Scriptures: Prajna, the spirit of the secret superconscient omnipotence whose place is in perfect slumber; Taijasa, the Inhabitant in Luminous Mind, the spirit of the subtle and internal whose place is in dream; Virat, the spirit of the gross and external whose place is in wakefulness. Each status of the spirit is a world in itself: the causal world is in perfect slumber; the subtle and internal world in dream state and the physical world in wakefulness. Whatever is decided in the causal world is reflected in the subtle world beyond our time and space and partially enacted in the physical world according to the laws of the physical world. Sri Krishna told Arjuna, "The sons of Dhritarashtra are already slain by me," yet there they were on the battlefield, standing in front of him, alive and engaged in fighting. The words of the Godhead are neither a false statement nor a metaphor. He has already slain them in the causal world, otherwise it is

impossible to slay them in this world. Our real life is in the causal world; only a shadow of it falls on the physical world. But the laws, time and space, name and form are different on the causal plane. The World Spirit is a form of the causal world which became visible in the physical world to the eye of Yoga.

### **The Eye of Yoga**

What is the eye of Yoga? It is not imagination or poetical symbolism. Three different powers of perception are obtained by Yoga: the subtle vision, the direct spiritual awareness and the eye of Yoga. With the subtle vision we see mental images in dream or in wakefulness. By the direct spiritual awareness we see in trance the images and symbolical figures of the names and forms belonging to the subtle and the causal worlds reflected in our inner mental sky. With the eye of Yoga we perceive the names and forms of the causal worlds in trance as well as with our physical eyes. If anything invisible to the physical eye becomes visible to it then it must be understood as an effect of the eye of Yoga. Arjuna saw the World Spirit in the causal world in waking state with the eye of Yoga and was delivered from doubt. The vision of the World Spirit, though not a truth perceptible to the senses of the physical world, is greater than any physical truth — it is not a fiction or an illusion, neither is it a poetical symbol.



# The Gita: An Introduction

(These essays, originally written in Bengali, were published first in serial form in the Weekly Review, *Dharma*, and later in a book entitled *Gitar Bhumika*. The book is divided into three sections. The first of these sections has been translated here. The *Dharma* articles were published in 1909-10 and were not revised since).

## Foreword

The Gita ranks first among the world's scriptures. The knowledge that has been briefly explained in the Gita is the highest and most secret knowledge. The law of right living, *dharma*, propounded in the Gita includes within its scope and is the basis of all other law of right living. The way of works shown in the Gita is the eternal path for the world's march to the heights.

The Gita is as if the bottomless sea, the source of a myriad gems. One may spend a whole life-time fathoming its depths and still not touch the bottom or gauge how deep it is. One may search for a hundred years and still find it difficult to gather even a hundredth part of the riches contained in this endless store of gems. And yet, if one can recover one or two of these gems, the poor man may become rich, the deep thinker acquire wisdom, the hater of God become a devotee, the mighty and powerful hero of action come back to his field of work fully equipped and ready for achieving his life's purpose.

The Gita is an inexhaustible mine of jewels. Even if the jewels are gathered from this mine for ages, the coming generations will always be delighted and astonished by their acquisitions of new and priceless ones.

Such is this Book, replete with deep and occult lore. And yet the language is perfectly clear, the style is simple, the surface meaning easily grasped. By simply gliding along the surf of this bottomless sea without taking a deep plunge, there is a certain gain in strength and joy. By taking a walk around the peripheries without entering the deep recesses of this mine illumined with jewels, there can be found strewn among the grass bright jewels which will keep us rich throughout life.

The Gita may well have a thousand commentaries, but a time will never come when a new one will not be needed. There can be no such world-renowned scholar or man of deep knowledge as can write a commentary on the Gita on reading which we can say, this is enough, it will not now be necessary to add another commentary on the Gita, everything has been grasped. After expending all our intellectual powers, we can hope to understand and explain only a few facets of this knowledge. On being engrossed in Yoga or by rising from height to greater height on the way of desireless works, all we shall be able to say is that we have had experience of some of its truths, or have applied in the course of this life one or two of the Gita's teachings in actual practice.

Whatever little the present writer has realised in experience, whatever little he has practised in the way of works, the meaning he has found by reasoning and thought based on that experience and practice, to elucidate that as an aid to others will be the aim of these essays.

### **The Speaker**

In order to understand the meaning and object of the Gita,

it is at first necessary to consider the Speaker, the listener and the time and circumstance. The Speaker is Lord Sri Krishna; the listener is His friend Arjuna, the most heroic of men; the circumstance is the prelude to the terrible slaughter of Kurukshetra.

There are many who say that the Mahabharata is only a symbol; Sri Krishna is God, Arjuna the human soul, the sons of Dhritarashtra the inner enemies of the soul's progress, the Pandava army represents the forces that help towards liberation. This is to relegate the Mahabharata to a low position in the world of letters and at the same time to minimise and bring to nought the deep seriousness of the Gita, its utility for the life of the man of action and its high teaching that makes for the progress of mankind. The war of Kurukshetra is not simply a frame for the Gita picture; it is the prime motive and the best occasion for carrying out the law given in the Gita. To accept a symbolic meaning for the great war of Kurukshetra is to reduce the law of the Gita to a law of ascetic quietism inapplicable to life in this world, not a law of the heroic man, a law to be followed in life.

Sri Krishna is the Speaker. The scriptures say that Sri Krishna is God Himself. In the Gita too, Sri Krishna has proclaimed Himself as God. It has there been declared, on the basis of the Avatara doctrine in the fourth chapter and the theory of the Vibhuti in the tenth, that God dwells hidden in the bodies of all creatures, shows Himself to a certain extent through the manifestations of power in some particular beings, and is fully incarnated in the person of Sri Krishna. According to many, Sri Krishna, Arjuna and Kurukshetra are mere metaphors, and in order to recover the true meaning of the Gita these metaphors are to be ignored. But we cannot reject this part of the teaching. If the Avatara doctrine is there, why should Sri Krishna be ignored? Therefore, God Himself is the propounder of this knowledge and the teaching.

Sri Krishna is an Avatara. He has accepted in human form the law of man's body and mind and spirit and has played his game, *lilā*, accordingly. If we can grasp the obvious and the occult meaning of that play, we shall be able to grasp the meaning, the aim and the method of this world-game. The main feature of this great game was action impelled by total knowledge. What was the knowledge underlying that action and that play has been revealed in the Gita.

Sri Krishna of the Mahabharata is a hero of action, a great yogin, a great man of the world, a founder of empire, statesman and warrior, a knower of *brahman* in the body of a Kshatriya. In his life we see an incomparable manifestation and mysterious play of the Supreme Power, *mahāśakti*. Of that mystery, the Gita is an explanation.

Sri Krishna is Lord of the worlds, universal Vasudeva; and yet, by shrouding His greatness he has entered into play by establishing with men relations like those of father and son, brother and husband, intimate associate and friend and enemy. In His life is implied the supreme secret of the Aryan knowledge and the highest meaning of the way of devotion. Their essential principles are also part of the Gita's teaching.

Sri Krishna's incarnation is at the juncture of the Dwapara and the Kali age. In each of the evolutionary cycles, *kalpa*, God incarnates in full at such junctures. The Kali age is the worst as well as the best among the four epochs. This age is the reign period of Kali, the impeller of sin and the principal enemy of man's progress; the utmost degradation and downfall of man occur during Kali's reign. But there is a gain in strength by fighting against obstacles and new creation comes through destruction of the old; this process is seen in the Kali age too. The elements of evil that are going to be destroyed in the course of the world's evolution are precisely the ones that are eliminated through an inordinate growth; on the other hand, seeds of new creation are sown and

sprout, these seeds become trees in the Satya age that follows. Moreover, as in astrology all the planets enjoy their sub-periods in the period of a particular planet, so, in the period of Kali, each of the four ages, Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali repeatedly enjoys its sub-period. Through this cyclic movement, there is in the Kali age a great downfall followed by an upward trend, another great downfall and again an upward surge; these serve the purposes of God. At the juncture of Dwapara and Kali, God through His incarnation allows an inordinate growth of evil, destroys the evil, sows the seeds of good and prepares favourable conditions for their sprouting; then begins the period of Kali. Sri Krishna has left in the Gita the secret knowledge and the method of work that would be useful for bringing in the age of Truth, *satyayuga*. When the time comes for the Satya subperiod of Kali, the world-wide propagation of the law of the Gita is inevitable. That time is now come, that is why the recognition of the Gita, instead of being confined to a few men of wisdom and learning, is spreading among the generality of men and in foreign lands.

Therefore it is not possible to distinguish Sri Krishna the Speaker from His Word, the Gita. Sri Krishna is implied in the Gita, the Gita is Sri Krishna in His form of the Word.

### **The Listener**

The recipient of the knowledge given in the Gita is the mighty hero, Arjuna, son of the great god Indra and the best of the Pandavas. Just as it is difficult to discover the aim of the Gita and its hidden meaning by ignoring the Speaker, similarly that meaning would suffer by ignoring the listener.

Arjuna is Sri Krishna's intimate associate. Those who are Sri Krishna's contemporaries and have come down to the same field of work establish various kinds of relations with

the Supreme Purushottama in human form, in accordance with their respective capacity and previous acts. Uddhava is Sri Krishna's devotee, Satyaki is a faithful follower and companion, king Yudhishthira is a relative and friend who is moved by His counsel, but none could establish with Sri Krishna a relation as intimate as Arjuna. All the close and endearing relations possible between two men of the same age were present in the case of Sri Krishna and Arjuna. Arjuna is Sri Krishna's brother, His closest friend, and husband of His sister Subhadra dear to Him as His own heart. In the fourth chapter the Lord has pointed to this intimacy as the reason for choosing Arjuna as the one person fit to hear the supreme secret of the Gita:

*sa evāyaṁ mayā te'dya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ  
bhakto'si me sakhā ceti rahasyaṁ hyetaduttamam (4. 03)*

“I have revealed this old and forgotten yoga to you this day, because you are my intimate friend and devotee; for this yoga is the best and the ultimate secret of the world.” In chapter eighteen too, there has been a repetition of this statement while explaining the keynote of Karmayoga which is as if the pivotal point of the Gita:

*sarvaguhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ  
iṣṭo'si me dṛḍhamiti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam (18. 64)*

“Once again you listen to my supreme Word, the most secret of all. You are extremely dear to me, therefore I shall speak to you about this, the best of all paths.” These two verses are in their substance on the lines of the Vedic scriptures, as for example, the Katha Upanishad, which says:

*nāyamātma pravacanena labhyo  
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena  
yameva eṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas —  
tasyaiṣa ātmā vṛṇute tanūṁ svām*

“This Supreme Self is not to be won through the philosopher's commentary, nor by brain-power, nor again through a wide knowledge of scripture. He alone can win Him who is chosen by God; to him alone this Supreme Self reveals His own body.” Therefore, it is he who is capable of establishing with God sweet relations like those of friendship and the rest that is the fit recipient of the knowledge given in the Gita.

This implies another thing of great importance. God chose Arjuna because he embodied in himself both devotee and friend. There are many kinds of devotees. Normally, a devotee brings to mind a teacher-disciple relationship. Love is no doubt there behind such devotion, but ordinarily obedience, respect and a blind devotedness are its special characteristics. But friend does not show respect to friend. They joke and play and have fun together, use endearing terms; for the sake of the play they may taunt and even show disrespect, use abusive language, make undue demands on each other. Friend is not always obedient to friend; and even though one may act according to a friend's advice out of admiration for his deep wisdom and sincere goodwill, that is not done blindly. One argues with him, expresses doubts, at times even protests against his views. The first lesson in the relation of friends is the giving up of all fear; to give up all outward show of respect is its second lesson; love is its first and last word. He is the fit recipient of the knowledge given in the Gita who understands this world-movement as a sweet and mysterious game full of love and bliss, elects God as his playmate and can bind Him to himself in a tie of friendship. He is the fit recipient of the knowledge given in the Gita who realises the greatness and the power of God, the depth of His wisdom and even His awfulness, and yet is not overwhelmed and plays with Him without fear and with a smiling face.

The relationship of friendship may include as part of the game all other kinds of relationship. The teacher-disciple relation — if based on friendship becomes a very sweet one; such precisely was the relation which Arjuna established with Sri Krishna at the commencement of the Gita's discourse. "You are my best well-wisher and friend, in whom else shall I take refuge? I have lost my power of thought, I am frightened by the weight of responsibility, I am swayed by doubts as to what I should do, overwhelmed by acute sorrow. You save me, give me advice. I leave in your hands all responsibility for my weal in this world and beyond." In this spirit did Arjuna approach the Friend and Helper of mankind with the object of receiving knowledge. The relation of mother and child too becomes part of friendship. One older in age and superior in wisdom loves a younger and less enlightened friend as a mother does, gives him protection and care, always holds him in his lap and saves him from danger and evil. Sri Krishna manifests his side of motherly love as well to one who establishes friendship with Him. Friendship may bring with it not only the depths of motherly love but also the keenness and acute joy of married love. Friends crave each other's companionship always, pine at separation, are delighted at the endearing touch, and feel a joy in even giving up one's life for the other's sake. The relation of service too becomes very sweet when it forms part of friendship. As has been said above, the more the endearing relationships one can establish with the Supreme Godhead, the more does the friendship blossom, the more does one gain in capacity to receive the knowledge of the Gita.

Arjuna, the friend of Krishna, is the principal actor in the Mahabharata; in the Gita the teaching about the yoga of works is the primary teaching. Knowledge, devotion and works, these three paths are not mutually contradictory. In the path of works, to do works founded on knowledge and in



the power given by devotion, to act for the purpose of God, at His bidding and in union with Him, this is the teaching of the Gita. Those who are frightened by the sorrows of the world, tormented by the distaste for life, *vairāgya*, those who have lost interest in this play of God, are desirous of hiding themselves in the lap of Infinity and leave this play, theirs is a different path. No such feeling or desire was there in Arjuna, the mighty warrior and the bravest of heroic men. Sri Krishna has not revealed this supreme secret to a quiet ascetic or wise philosopher, has not elected any Brahmin vowed to non-violence as the recipient of this teaching; a Kshatriya warrior of tremendous might and prowess was considered to be the fit receptacle for obtaining this incomparable knowledge. He alone is capable of entry into the deepest secrets of this teaching who can remain undisturbed by victories or defeats in the battle of life. This Self is not to be won by one who lacks in strength: *nāyam-ātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*. He alone who cherishes an aspiration to find God in preference to a desire for liberation, *mu-mukṣutva*, can have a taste of the proximity of God, realise himself as eternally free in his true nature, and will be capable of rejecting the desire for liberation as being the last resort of the Ignorance. He alone is capable of passing beyond the modes of Nature, *gunātīta*, who after rejecting the tamasic and rajasic forms of egoism is unwilling to remain bound even by an egoism of the sattwic type. Arjuna has fulfilled his rajasic propensities by following the law of the Kshatriya, and has, at the same time, given the power of *rajas* a turn towards *sattva*, by accepting the sattwic ideal. Such a person is an excellent receptacle for the Gita's teaching.

Arjuna was not the best among his great contemporaries. In spiritual knowledge, Vyasa was the greatest; in all kinds of worldly knowledge of that epoch, Bhishma was the best; in the thirst for knowledge king Dhritarashtra and Vidura led

the rest; in saintliness and sattwic qualities Yudhishtira was the best; in devotion there was none equal to Uddhava and Akrura; his eldest brother Kama, the mighty warrior led in inborn strength and courage. And yet, it was Arjuna whom the Lord of the worlds elected; it was in his hands that He placed divine weapons like the Gandiva bow and gave to him eternal victory; it was through him that thousands upon thousands of India's world-renowned fighters were made to fall; and he founded for Yudhishtira his undisputed empire as a gift of Arjuna's prowess. Above all, it was Arjuna whom He decided as being the one fit recipient of the supreme knowledge given in the Gita. It was Arjuna alone who is the hero and the principal actor in the Mahabharata, every section of that poem proclaims the fame and the glory of him alone. This is no undue partiality on the part of the Supreme Divine or of the great Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata. This high position derives from complete faith and self-surrender. He who surrenders to the Supreme with complete faith and dependence and without making any claims, all responsibility for his own good or harm, weal or woe, virtue or sin; he who wants to act according to His behests instead of being attached to works dear to his own heart; who accepts the impulses received from Him instead of satisfying his own propensities; who puts to use in His work the qualities and inspirations given by Him instead of eagerly hugging at the qualities admired by himself — it is that selfless and faithful Kar mayogin who becomes the Supreme's dearest friend and the best vehicle of His Power; through him is accomplished flawlessly a stupendous work for the world. Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was a supreme yogin of this type. Arjuna too was ever on the alert to make an effort at this self-surrender; this effort was the cause of Sri Krishna's love and satisfaction. He alone who makes a serious effort at self-surrender is the best fitted to receive the

Gita's teaching. Sri Krishna becomes his Teacher and Friend and takes over all responsibility for him in this world and in the next.

### **The Circumstance**

In order to understand fully the motives and causes of the acts and words of a man, it is necessary to know under what circumstances the acts were done or the words spoken. When at the start of the great war of Kurukshetra the exchange of missiles had begun, *pravṛtte śāstra-sampāte*, it was at that moment that the Lord revealed the Gita. To many this has occasioned surprise and annoyance; they say it must have been due to the author's carelessness or faulty intelligence. But in actual fact, Sri Krishna revealed the knowledge contained in the Gita, at that particular moment and in that situation to a person in that frame of mind, with full knowledge of the time, place and circumstance.

The time was at the commencement of the war. Those who have not developed or put to a test their heroic qualities or strength in a mighty flood of action can never be fit to receive the knowledge given in the Gita. Moreover those who have embarked on a great and difficult endeavour, an endeavour which automatically gives rise to many obstacles and obstructions, many enmities, fears of many setbacks, when in the course of that great endeavour there is acquired a divine strength, to them at that moment in order to take the endeavour to its final conclusion, for the successful carrying out of the divine's work is this knowledge revealed. The Gita lays down in the Yoga of works the foundations of the path to God. It is through works done with faith and devotion that knowledge is born. Therefore the traveller on the path indicated by the Gita does not leave the path and have the vision of God in a remote and quiet hermitage or hill or in a

secluded spot; that heavenly Light illumines the world for him, that sweet and powerful Word comes within his hearing, all of a sudden in midway, amidst the noise and bustle of works.

The place was a battlefield, between two armies where missiles were flying. To those who travel on this path, take the lead in works of this nature, often the realisation, yoga-siddhi, comes and the supreme knowledge dawns, all of a sudden at a critical and momentous hour which determines the march of destiny in this direction or that, depending on the nature of their acts. That knowledge is no bar to action, it is intimately connected with action. It is no doubt true that knowledge also dawns in meditation, in loneliness, when one turns back on one's self; that is why the sages love to be alone. But the traveller on the path of the Gita's Yoga can so divide his instruments of mind, life and body that he experiences loneliness in the midst of a crowd, peace amidst noise, supreme repose while engaged in a whirl of activities. He does not regulate the inner being by outward circumstances, he controls the outer by the inner state. The ordinary Yogin is afraid of life, he escapes from it and takes to Yoga in the shelter and protection of an Ashram. Life itself is the Ashram for the Karmayogin. The ordinary Yogin desires an outward peace and silence, a disturbance of the peace impedes his inner askesis. The Karmayogin enjoys a vast peace and silence within; this state becomes deeper in the midst of external noise; any external disturbance does not harm that inner askesis, it remains undisturbed. People say, how was the Sri Krishna-Arjuna dialogue possible in the middle of armies going in for battle? The answer is, it was possible through the power of Yoga. Through that power of Yoga, amidst the din of battle, at one particular spot, with Sri Krishna and Arjuna peace reigned within and without; the noise of war could not affect these two. In this is implied

another spiritual teaching applicable to works. Those who practise the Gita's yoga are the most capable workers and yet remain unattached to their work. Right in the midst of their work they may hear the inner call of the Self, desist from the work and plunge themselves in yoga and do the inner askesis. They know that the work is God's, the fruit is His, we are instruments; hence they have no anxiety about the fruit of their work. They also know that the inner call comes for facilitating the yoga of works, for an improvement in the working, for the increase of knowledge and power. Therefore they do not fear to desist from their work; they know that in the spiritual effort there can never be an unnecessary waste of time.

The attitude of Arjuna comes from a rising of the last doubts of the Karmayogin. There are many who, perplexed by world-problems, the problem of suffering and pleasure, the problem of sin and virtue, declare an escape or flight as the only pathway to the good, and proclaim the virtues of an ascetic withdrawal from life, *vairāgya* and the renunciation of works. Lord Buddha has taught that the world is impermanent and full of suffering, and has shown the way to attaining Nirvana. Others like Jesus and Tolstoy have been staunchly opposed to war which has been the ancient law of the world and to the system of marriage which maintains the continuity of humankind. The ascetics say, work itself is the product of ignorance, reject ignorance, reject all work, be quiet and actionless. The Advaitin says, the world is false, utterly false, merge yourself in *Brahman*. Then why this world? Why this life? If God exists, then why does He undertake this useless meaningless labour like that of an immature boy? Why did He start this arid joke? If the Self alone exists, if the world is nothing but an illusion, why again does this Self impose this ugly dream on its pure existence? The atheist says, there is neither God nor Self, there is only

the blind action of a blind force. But what kind of view is that? Whose is this force, from where is it born, and why again is it blind and insane? No one has been able to give a satisfactory answer to these questions, neither the Christian nor the Buddhist, nor the Advaitin, the atheist or scientist. All are silent on these points and are at the same time eager to shirk the issue by evading the question. Only the Upanishads and the Gita following their line have been unwilling to shirk the issue in this way. That is why the Gita has been chanted during the war of Kurukshetra. Acts terribly worldly — the killing of one's teachers and brothers and kin — these were the objects of the war. At the commencement of that war which destroyed thousands of creatures, Arjuna throws away the divine bow from his hands knowing not what to do, says in a pitiable tone:

*tatkiṃ karmaṇi ghore māṃ niyojayasi keśava (Gita 3. 01)*

“Then why do you engage me in this terrible work?” In answer there arises, amidst the din of battle, in tones of thunder, the mighty song uttered by the mouth of God:

*kuru karmaiva tasmāttvaṃ pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṃ kṛtam (4. 15)*

*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhananjaya (2. 48)*

*buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte  
tasmādyogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam (2. 50)*

*asakto hyācarankarma paramāpnoti pūruṣaḥ (3. 19)*

*mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi samīnyasyādhyātmacetasā  
nirāśīrnirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ (3. 30)*

*gatasāṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ  
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagraṃ pravilīyate (4. 23)*

*ajñānenāvṛtaṁ jñānaṁ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ (5. 15)*

*bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasāṁ sarvalokamaheśvaram  
suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā mām śāntimṛcchati (5. 29)*

*mayā hatāṁstvaṁ jahi māvyathishṭhā  
yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān (11. 34)*

*yasya nāhaṁkrto bhāvo buddhiryasya na lipyate  
hatvā'pi sa imāṁl lokān na hanti na nibadhyate (18. 17)*

“Therefore you go on doing works; the kind of work your ancestors have been doing, that work you too have to perform.... Do works in a state of union with the Divine, by giving up attachment.... He whose will and intelligence are fixed in yoga passes beyond virtue and sin in the field of work itself. Therefore strive for the yoga, yoga is the best means to work.... If a man works in a spirit of detachment, he will certainly find God.... With a heart filled with knowledge, entrust to Me all your works; get rid of sorrow by giving up desire and by rejecting egoism; enter the fray.... He who has no attachments left and is free, whose mind lives always in knowledge, he who does works for the sake of sacrifice, all the works of such a man instead of being a cause of bondage at once get completely dissolved in Me.... The knowledge that lies hidden within all creatures is covered up by ignorance. That is why they fall into delusion by creating the dualities like joy and sorrow, sin and virtue.... A supreme peace can be obtained by knowing Me as the Lord of all the worlds, the enjoyer of all kinds of works like sacrifice and askesis, and the friend and beloved of all beings.... It is I who have killed your enemies,

you destroy them as a mere instrument, do not grieve; get into the fight, you will conquer the adversary in war.... He who has an inner being free from egoism, whose will and intelligence remain unattached even if he destroys the whole world, still he does not kill, does not undergo any bondage of sin...”

There is no sign here of an evasion of the question, of shirking the issue. The issue has been set forth in clear terms. What is God, what is the world, what is life, what is the way to right living? These questions have been answered by the Gita in brief. And yet the Gita's aim is not to teach asceticism but to teach the way of works. Herein lies the universal utility of the Gita.



# The Gita: Text — Translation

## Chapter One

*dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca  
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ  
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāścaiva kimakurvata sañjaya (1. 01)*

Dhritarashtra said,

O Sanjaya, gathered together for war on the holy field of Kurukshetra, what did my partisans and those of the Pandavas do?

*sañjaya uvāca  
dr̥ṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānikāṃ vyūḍhāṃ duryodhanastadā  
ācāryamupasāṅgamyā rājā vacanamabravīt (1. 02)*

Sanjaya said,

Thereupon, King Duryodhana on seeing the Pandava army arranged in battle order approached the preceptor and said these words:

*paśyaitāṃ pāṇḍuputrāṅāmācārya mahatīm camūṃ  
vyūḍhāṃ drupadaputreṇa tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā (1. 03)*

“Look, O Teacher, look at this huge Pandava army arranged in order of battle by your clever disciple Dhrishtadyumna, the son of Drupada.

*atra śūrā maheṣvāsā bhīmārjunasamā yudhi  
yuyudhāno virāṭaśca drupadaśca mahārathaḥ (1. 04)*

*dhr̥ṣṭaketuścekitānaḥ kāśirājaśca vīryavān  
purujitkuntibhojaśca śaibyaśca narapuṅgavaḥ (1. 05)*

*yudhāmanyuśca vikrānta uttamaujāśca vīryavān  
saubhadro draupadeyāśca sarva eva mahārathāḥ (1. 06)*

In this enormous army there are courageous men and mighty wielders of bow like unto Bhima and Arjuna — Yuyudhana, Virata, and Drupada, the great chariot-warrior.

There are Dhrishtaketu, Chekitana and the man of great might, the king of Kashi, there are Purujit and Kuntibhoja and Shaibya, the best of men. The powerful Yudhamanyu is there and the mighty Uttamauja, Abhimanyu the son of Subhadra, and the sons of Draupadi, great warriors all.

*asmākaṁ tu viśiṣṭā ye tānnibodha dvijottama  
nāyakā mama sāinyasya sañjñārthaṁ tānbravīmi te (1. 07)*

Those among us who are possessed of extraordinary strength, those who are the leaders of my troops, of them I recount the names that you may remember them, note:

*bhavānbhīṣmaśca karnaśca kṛpaśca samitinijayaḥ  
asvatthamā vikarnaśca saumadattir jayadrathaḥ (1. 08)*

*anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā madarthe tyaktajīvītāḥ  
nānāśastrapraharaṇāḥ sarve yuddhaviśāradaḥ (1. 09)*

Yourself and Bhishma, Karna and Kripa, the winner in battle, Aswatthama, Vikarna, Bhurisrava, the son of Somadatta, and Jayadratha, and many another man of courage have given up their attachment to life for my sake. All of

them are skilled in warfare and are accoutred with many kinds of weapons.

*aparyāptam tadasmākaṁ balaṁ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam  
paryāptam tvidameteṣāṁ balaṁ bhimābhirakṣitam (1. 10)*

The strength of this army of ours is unlimited, on top of that Bhishma is our defender; the strength of that army of theirs is limited and Bhima alone is their hope and protection.

*ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu yathābhāgamavasthitāḥ  
bhīṣmamevābhirakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi (1. 11)*

Therefore all of you should protect Bhishma alone by remaining at your appointed stations among the troops at all the entries to the battle-field.”

*tasya saṁjanayanharṣaṁ kuruvṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ  
sīrīhanādaṁ vinadyoccaiḥ śaṅkhaṁ dadhmau pratāpavān (1. 12)*

Giving rise to joy in Duryodhana's heart, grandfather Bhishma the oldest of the Kauravas uttered a loud battle-cry that resounded through the field and blew with great power into his conch.

*tataḥ śaṅkhāśca bheryaśca paṇavānakagomukhāḥ  
sahasaiṅbhryahanyanta sa śabdastumulo'bhavat (1. 13)*

Then suddenly there arose the sounds of conches and horns and war-drums of all kinds, the battle-field was filled with loud noises.

*tataḥ śvetairhayairyukte mahati syandane sthitau  
mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaścaiva divyau śaṅkhau pradaghamatuh (1. 14)*

Thereupon, standing on their huge chariot drawn by white horses, Krishna and Pandu's son Arjuna blew their divine conches.

*pāñcajanyaṁ hṛṣīkeśo devadattaṁ dhanarijayaḥ  
pauṇḍraṁ dadhmau mahāśaṅkhaṁ bhīmakarmā vṛkodaraḥ  
(1. 15)*

Hrishikesha blew his Pancajanya, Arjuna his conch named Devadatta, and Bhima of terrifying deeds blew his mighty conch named Paundra.

*anantavijayaṁ rājā kuntīputro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ  
nakulaḥ sahadevaśca sughoṣamaṇipuṣpakau (1. 16)*

King Yudhishtira, the son of Kunti, blew his conch Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva blew theirs named Sughosha and Mani-pushpaka.

*kāśyaśca parameśvāsaḥ śikhāṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ  
dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaśca sātyakiścāparājitaḥ (1. 17)*

*drupado draupadeyāśca sarvaśaḥ pṛthivīpate  
saubhadraśca mahābāhuḥ śaṅkhāndadhmuḥ pṛthakpṛthak  
(1. 18)*

Kashi's king, the supreme archer, the great chariot-fighter Shikhandi, Dhristadyumna and the unbeaten warrior Satyaki, Drupada and Draupadi's sons, the long-armed son of Subhadra, all blew their respective conches from every direction.

*sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām hṛdayāni vyadārayat  
nabhaśca pṛthivīm caiva tumulo vyanunādayan (1. 19)*

That mighty report sent tumultuous echoes  
through earth and sky and rent asunder the  
hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons.

*atha vyavasthitāndrīṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrān kapidhvajaḥ  
pravṛtte śastrasaṃpāte dhanurudyamya pāṇḍavaḥ  
hṛṣīkeśam tadā vākyamidamāha mahīpate (1. 20)*

Then, after the missiles had begun to fly, Pan-  
du's son Arjuna raised his bow and said these  
words to Hrishikesha:

*arjuna uvāca*

*senayorubhayormadhye ratham sthāpaya me'cyuta  
yāvadetānnirikṣe'ham yoddhukāmānavasthitān (1. 21)*

*kairmayā saha yoddhavyamasminraṇasamudyame (1. 22)*

*yotsyamānānavekṣe'ham ya ete'tra samāgatāḥ  
dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddheryuddhe priyacikīrṣavaḥ (1. 23)*

Arjuna said:

“O sinless one, place my chariot at a mid-point  
between the two armies, that I may gaze for  
sometime at these adversaries seized with the  
desire for battle. Let me see who are they who  
want a fight, who have come together here with  
the object of performing in the battle-field acts  
dear to Duryodhana, the misguided son of Dhri-  
tarashtra.”

*sañjaya uvāca*

*evamukto hṛṣīkeśo guḍākeśena bhārata  
senayorubhayormadhye sthāpayitvā rathottamam (1. 24)*

*bhīṣmadroṇapramukhataḥ sarveṣāṃ ca mahīkṣitām  
uvāca pārtha paśyaitānsamavetāṅkurūṇi (1. 25)*

Sanjaya said:

On hearing these words of Arjuna, Hrishiksha placed that excellent chariot at a mid-point between the two armies, and arriving in front of Bhishma, Drona and all the other princes, said, “O Partha, watch all the Kurus gathered here.”

*tatrāpaśyatsthitānpārthaḥ pitṛnatha pitāmahān  
ācāryānmātulānbhrātṛṇputrānpautrānsakhīmstathā  
śvaśūrānsuhṛdaścaiva senayorubhayorapi (1. 26)*

In that field of battle, Partha saw standing among the two opposing forces, fathers and grandfathers, teachers, uncles, brothers, sons and grandsons, friends, fathers-in-law and intimate companions, all his kith and kin.

*tānsamikṣya sa kaunteyaḥ sarvānbandhūnavasthitān  
kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo viṣḍānidamabravīt (1. 27)*

On seeing all those friends and relations thus standing before him, Kunti's son was overtaken by an acute sense of pity and said these words, his heart stricken with grief:

*arjuna uvāca*

*dr̥ṣṭvemaṃ svajānaṃ kṛṣṇa yuyutsuṃ samupasthitam*

*sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṃ ca pariśuśyati (1. 28)*

*vepathuśca śarīre me romahaṛṣaśca jāyate  
gāṅḍīvaṃ sraṃsate hastāttvakcaiva paridahyate (1. 29)*

Arjuna said:

“O Krishna, on seeing all these my own people ranged for battle, the limbs of my body are feeling weary, my mouth is getting parched, all over the body there is shivering and the hairs stand on edge, the Gandiva bow is slipping out of my hand without control, my skin is as if burning with fire.

*na ca śakno myavasthātum bhramatīva ca me manaḥ  
nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava (1. 30)*

I can no longer keep standing, my mind is beginning as if to whirl, O Keshava, I am seeing evil omens.

*na ca śreyo'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajanamāhava  
na kāṅkṣe vijayaṁ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca (1. 31)*

I do not see any good from killing my own people in battle. O Krishna, I do not wish for victory, nor do I want a kingdom nor seek happiness either.

*kiṁ no rājyena govinda kiṁ bhogairjīvitena vā  
yeṣāmarthe kāṅkṣitam no rājyaṁ bhogāḥ sukhāni ca (1. 32)*

*ta ime'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāṁstyaktvā dhanāni ca  
ācāryāḥ pitarāḥ putrāstathaiva ca pitāmahāḥ (1. 33)*

Tell me, O Govinda, what do we gain from kingdom? what profit is there in enjoyment? of what use is life itself? Those for whom kingdom and enjoyment and life become desirable are themselves present in this battlefield after renouncing their life and wealth — they who are teachers and fathers, sons and grand-fathers,

*mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautṛāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinastathā  
etānna hantumicchāmi ghnato'pi madhusūdana (1. 34)*

*api trailokyarājyasya hetoḥ kim nu mahīkṛte  
nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrānnaḥ kā prītiḥ syājjanārdana (1. 35)*

uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives. O Madhusudana, if they kill me, even then I do not wish to kill them, not even for the sake of dominion over the three worlds, what to say of the lordship of earth. What, O Janardana, can be our happiness of mind by killing the sons of Dhritarashtra?

*pāpamevāśrayedasmānhatvaitānātātāyinaḥ  
tasmānnārḥā vayaṁ hantuṁ dhārtarāṣṭrānsvabāndhavān  
svajānaṁ hi kathaṁ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādharma (1. 36)*

They are out to kill, nevertheless, to kill them would be to give shelter in our mind to sin. Therefore, since the sons of Dhritarashtra are our kin, we are not the persons fit to destroy them. In what way, O Madhava, shall we be happy by killing our own people?

*yadyapyete na paśyanti lobhopahatacetasah  
kulakṣayakṛtaṁ doṣaṁ mitradrohe ca pātakaṁ (1. 37)*

Under the influence of greed they have lost their understanding, and they do not appreciate the evils arising from a deterioration of the clans and the heinous sin of doing harm to one's friends.

*kathaṁ na jñeyamasmābhiḥ pāpādashmānnivartitum  
kulakṣayakṛtaṁ doṣaṁ prapaśyadbhirjanārdana (1. 38)*

But we, O Janardana, realise the harm caused by the deterioration of clans. Why should we not wake to the



knowledge, why should we not desist from this sin?

*kulakṣaye praṇaśyanti kuladharmāḥ sanātānāḥ  
dharme naṣṭe kulam kṛtsnam adharmo'bhivhavatyuta (1. 39)*

With a deterioration of the clan, all the established laws of right living come to an end, and with that, unrighteousness overtakes the entire clan.

*adharmābhibhavātkṛṣṇa praduśyanti kulastriyaḥ  
strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇasaṁkaraḥ (1. 40)*

Under the influence of unrighteousness, O Krishna, the women of the clan lose their virtue; when the women lose their virtue, there is admixture of castes.

*saṁkaro narakāyaiva kulaghnānām kulasya ca  
patanti pitaro hyeṣām luptapiṇḍodakakriyāḥ (1. 41)*

The admixture of castes is the cause of the clansmen and the destroyers of clans going to hell, because the ancestors are thereby deprived of the food and water given them as offerings and they fall from the world of the fathers.

*doṣairetaiḥ kulaghnānām varṇasaṁkarakāraakaiḥ  
utsādyante jātidharmāḥ kuladharmāśca śāśvatāḥ (1. 42)*

As a result of all these evils caused by the destroyers of clans and leading to the admixture of castes, the old established laws of the nation and the clan come to naught.

*utsannakuladharmāṇām manuṣyāṇām janārdana  
narake niyataim vāso bhavatītyaniśuśrūma (1. 43)*

In hell is assigned the abode of those the laws of whose clans have come to naught; this is what we have heard from of old.

*aho bata mahat pāpaṁ kartuṁ vyavasitā vayam  
yad rājyasukhalobhena hantuṁ svajanam udyatāḥ (1. 44)*

Lo! the extremely heinous sin we had determined to commit, that we were making efforts to kill our own people out of greed for the pleasure of dominion.

*yadi māmāpratīkārāmaśāstraṁ śāstrapāṇayah  
dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyustanme kṣemataraṁ bhavet (1. 45)*

It were better for me if the sons of Dhritarashtra accoutred in arms should kill me when I am without arms and make no effort to resist.”

*sañjaya uvāca  
evamuktvārjunah saṅkhye rathopastha upāviśat  
visjya saśaram cāpaṁ śokasaṁvignamānasaḥ (1. 46)*

Sanjaya said:

With these words, his mind stained by the upsurge of grief, Arjuna threw away his bow with the arrow fixed on it and sat down in his chariot.

## Sanjaya's Gift of Divine Vision

**T**HE Gita was spoken on the eve of the Great Mahabharata War. Therefore we find in the very first verse of the Gita, King Dhritarashtra seeking information about the War from Sanjaya who had received the gift of divine vision. The two armies are gathered on the battlefield; what are their first moves, this is what the old king is eager to know. In the eyes of the educated man in modern India, educated that is on the English pattern, Sanjaya's gift of divine vision is no more than a poetic fancy. If we had said that such and such a person gifted with clairvoyance and clairaudience was able to present before his senses the frightful scenes and war-cries of the great heroes in a distant battlefield, then perhaps the statement would not have been so unworthy of credence. And one is inclined to dismiss as a still more absurd story that this power had been given to Sanjaya by the great Vyasa. Had we said that a famous European scientist having hypnotised such and such a person came to have some description of that distant event from his mouth, then perhaps those who have studied with care something about hypnotism in the West might have lent some credence. And yet, hypnotism is simply one of those undesirable elements of Yogic power that have to be rejected. There are hidden within man many such powers as were known to civilised peoples in ancient times and developed by them. But that knowledge has been washed away in the flood of ignorance born of Kali, the Age of Darkness, it has been preserved only in part within a limited circle as a secret lore that should be kept a secret.

There is a power of subtle vision beyond the gross physical sense organ, in a subtle organ through which we can bring within our ken objects and knowledge inaccessible to the gross organs of sense, can have vision of subtle things, can listen to subtle sounds, smell imperceptible smells, touch subtle physical objects, and have taste of subtle foods. The utmost development of subtle sight is what is called divine vision, through its power objects that are at a distance, secret objects or those belonging to another world come within the scope of our knowledge. We see no reason to disbelieve that the great sage Vyasa possessing supreme Yogic powers was capable of imparting this divine vision to Sanjaya. If we are not incredulous about the wonderful power of Western hypnosis, why should we be incredulous about the power of the great Vyasa with his incomparable knowledge? In every page of history and in every activity of human life there is available ample evidence that a powerful man can impart his power to another. Heroic men of action like Napoleon and Ito prepared collaborators in their work by imparting their own power to fit recipients. Even a very ordinary Yogin having obtained some special power can impart his power to another for a little while or for a special purpose, what to speak of the great Vyasa who was the world's most accomplished genius and a man of extraordinary Yogic realisation.

In fact, the existence of this divine vision far from being an absurdity must be a scientific truth. We know that the eye does not see, it is not the ear that hears nor the nose that smells, the skin does not experience the sense of touch nor the tongue the feeling of taste; it is the mind that sees, the mind that hears, smells, feels the sense of touch or taste. This truth has been accepted by philosophy and psychology for a long time. In hypnotism it has been proved by practical scientific tests that the function of the organ of sight can be performed by any of the sensory nerves even when the eyes

are shut. This goes only to prove that the gross organs of sense like the eye are simply convenient means for the acquisition of knowledge. We have become their slaves bound by a long habit of the gross physical body. But in reality we can convey the knowledge to the mind through any of the channels in the body, as the blind can get by the touch an accurate idea of the nature and shape of things.

But this difference may be noticed between the blind man's "sight" and that of a man in a state of dream, namely, that the latter sees an image of the thing in his mind. This precisely is what is called seeing. In actual fact, I do not see the book in front of me, it is on seeing the image of the book reflected within my eyes that the mind says, "I have seen a book". But this too is proved by the seeing and hearing of a distant object or event by one in a dream-state that in order to obtain a knowledge of an object there is no necessity for any of the physical channels in the body; we can see through a subtle power of vision. Every day there are growing in number such examples as seeing mentally from a room in London events taking place at the time in Edinburgh. This is what is called subtle sight.

There is this difference between subtle sight and divine vision that one possessing subtle sight sees the image of things invisible in his mind, whereas in divine vision, instead of seeing the things in our mind, we see them in front of the physical eye, instead of hearing the sounds as a current of thought we hear them with the physical ear. A simple instance of this is the seeing of contemporary events in a crystal or ink. But for a Yogi endowed with divine vision there is no need of such material aids, he can on developing this power become aware of events in another time and space by removing the bondage of space and time without any material aid. We have obtained enough evidence of this removal of the barrier of space; numerous and satisfactory

proofs that the barrier of time too can be removed, that man can be a seer of the past, present and future have not yet been presented before the world. But if it is possible to remove the space barrier, it cannot be said that to remove the barrier of time is impossible.

In any case, with the divine vision given him by Vyasa, Sanjaya while remaining in Hastinapur saw with his eyes as if he were standing in the battlefield of Kurukshetra the partisans of Dhritarashtra and the Pandavas gathered there, heard with his ears the words of Duryodhana, the fierce battle-cry of grandfather Bhishma, the mighty sound of Panchajanya proclaiming the destruction of the Kurus, and the dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna bringing out the import of the Gita.

In our opinion, the Mahabharata is not a metaphorical piece nor are Krishna and Arjuna the creations of poetic fancy, the Gita too is not the speculation of a modern logician or philosopher. Therefore we have to prove that anything said in the Gita is not impossible or against reason. It is for this reason that we have discussed at such length the question of possessing the divine vision.

### **The Cunning of Duryodhana's Speech**

Sanjaya began his description of those initial acts of war. Duryodhana on seeing the battle formations of the Pandavas presented himself before Dronacharya. Why he went to Drona needs an explanation. Bhishma was the commander-in-chief, it was he who should have been informed of matters concerning the war. But Duryodhana with his crooked mind had no faith in Bhishma. Bhishma had a fondness for the Pandavas, was the leader of the peace-party in Hastinapur. Had it been only a war between the Pandavas and Dhritarashtra's sons, he would never have taken up arms. But on seeing

the Kuru kingdom threatened by the Panchala nation the old enemy of the Kurus and their equal in the greed for empire, the most outstanding personality, warrior and statesman of the Kuru nation was determined to preserve till the end the glory and the supremacy of his own people by being appointed their commander-in-chief, even as he had guarded them for long with the strength of his arms. Duryodhana on his part was of an Asuric nature, to him the measure and motive of all acts were the feelings of attraction and repulsion, hence he was incapable of understanding the point of view of the great man and his devotion to duty. He could never believe that this man of hard austerity carried in his heart the strength to kill in the battlefield out of a sense of duty even the Pandavas who were to him as if his own self. One who has the good of his country at heart tries his utmost to make his people desist from injustice and evil by expressing his views in council, but once the injustice and the evil are accepted by the people he defends his nation and subdues its enemies even in unrighteous war without caring for his own personal opinions. Bhishma too had taken this line. But this attitude was beyond Duryodhana's comprehension. Therefore instead of approaching Bhishma he thought of Drona.

Drona personally was a staunch enemy of the Panchala king, prince Dhrishtadyumna of the Panchalas was determined to kill his preceptor Drona. In other words, Duryodhana thought that if reminded of this personal enmity the teacher would give up all leanings towards peace and fight with all enthusiasm. He did not say this in so many words. He only mentioned Dhrishtadyumna by name, then in order to please Bhishma as well, described the latter as the defender of the Kuru kingdom and the hope of their victory. First he mentioned the names of the principal fighters among the enemy, then he uttered the names of some and not all of

the commanders in his army; the names of Bhishma and Drona alone were enough for the success of his scheme, but he added four or five other names to hide his true purpose. Then he said, “My army is enormously big, Bhishma is my commander-in-chief, the Pandava army is comparatively small, their hopes centre round the strength of Bhishma. Therefore why should not victory be ours? But as Bhishma is our mainstay, it devolves on everybody to protect him from enemy assaults. If he is there our victory is inevitable.” Many take the word “*aparyāpta*” in an opposite sense, this does not stand to reason. Duryodhana had a comparatively bigger army, the commanders of his troops were not inferior to any in courage or prowess. Why should the boastful Duryodhana go out of the way to create misgivings by deprecating his own strength?

Bhishma understood the secret motive behind Duryodhana's words and the ideas he had in his mind; to remove his doubts he uttered the battle-cry and sounded his conch-shell. This gave rise to joy in the heart of Duryodhana. He thought that his object had been met, Drona and Bhishma would give up their hesitation and fight.

### **The First Hints**

As soon as the battlefield was shaken by the heaven-splitting sound of Bhishma's conch, there sounded on all sides of the huge Kaurava host the instruments of war music and the men in their chariots began to feel elated by the excitement of battle. On the other side, the greatest hero of the Pandavas and his charioteer Sri Krishna sounded their conches as an answer to Bhishma's call to the fray, and Yudhisthira and the other heroes on the Pandava side awakened the war-lust in the hearts of their troops by blowing their own conches. That mighty report resounded



over earth and sky as if rending the hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons. This does not mean that it frightened men like Bhishma. They were heroic men, why should they be afraid of the fierce call to battle? In these words the poet has described the first powerful impact on the body of extremely high-pitched sound; just as the clap of thunder makes the hearer feel as if it were rending his head in two exactly alike was the impact of this mighty report spreading over the field of battle. And this was as if an announcement of the impending doom of Dhritarashtra's men; the hearts that would be pierced by the Pandava missiles were rent asunder first by the sound of Pandava conches.

The war began. Missiles began to fly from both sides. At this juncture Arjuna said to Sri Krishna, "You please place my chariot at a point between the two armies. I wish to see who are our antagonists, who are they who have come to this war to act according to the pleasure of the misguided Duryodhana, who are those with whom I have to fight." Arjuna's idea was that the Pandavas centred their hopes on him alone and it was for him to kill the principal fighters on the opposite side, therefore he must see who these were. So far, Arjuna's attitude was entirely that of a Kshatriya, there is not a sign of pity or weakness. Many of India's most heroic men were present in the opposing army; Arjuna was keen on giving to elder brother Yudhishthira undisputed empire by killing them all. But Sri Krishna knew that Arjuna harboured a weakness in his mind; if this mind were not cleansed now, that weakness might suddenly come up from there and occupy the higher intelligence at any moment and this would cause great harm to the Pandavas, perhaps even lead to their ruin.

For this reason, Sri Krishna placed the chariot in such a place that those dear to Arjuna, like Bhishma and Drona, were just in front and at the same time all the other princes

on the side of the Kauravas were within sight. And he said to Arjuna, "See and have a look at the Kuru clan gathered here." It has to be recalled that Arjuna himself belonged to the Kuru clan, was a pride of the Kuru family; all his relatives, the men dear to him, the companions of his childhood belonged to the same Kuru clan; that will make one realise the profound idea and significance of these few ordinary words from Sri Krishna's mouth. Arjuna could now see that those whom he has to kill in order to found the undisputed empire of Yudhisthira were none other than his own dear relatives, teachers, friends, the objects of love and devotion. He saw that the Kshatriya families of the whole of India were bound together by ties of affection and yet had come to that terrible field of battle to kill one another.

### **The Root Cause of Dejection**

What is the source of Arjuna's dejection? Many people are full of praise for this dejection of Arjuna and decry Sri Krishna as a supporter of unrighteousness and as showing the wrong path. The peaceful attitude of Christianity, the non-violence of Buddhism and the spirit of love in Vaishnava religion are alone the highest and best laws of right living, war and the killing of men are sins, the killing of one's brothers and teachers are grievous sins: it is under the spell of ideas such as these that they make this improper statement. But all these modern ideas never even entered the mind of the great Pandava hero of that remote Dwapara epoch; there is in Arjuna's words no inkling of any signs that he even considered whether non-violence was to be preferred to war, or whether one should desist from war because the killing of brothers and teachers or homicide in general were grievous sins. He did indeed say that it would be better to live by begging than to slaughter one's elders, he said

indeed that the sin of killing the relatives and friends would fall on them. But he said these words not from a consideration of the nature of these works, but by judging them by the results. That is why in order to break his gloom, Sri Krishna taught him this lesson that one should not look to the fruit of works, one has to decide whether a particular act is right or wrong by looking into its nature.

Arjuna's first thoughts were that these were his relatives, elders, friends, companions of childhood, all were the objects of his affection, love or devotion; to obtain undisputed empire by slaughtering them and the enjoyment of such empire could never be a source of pleasure, on the contrary one would burn with life-long repentance and sorrow, for nobody would care to have dominion over earth bereft of all friends and kin. His second idea was that to kill the dear ones was against the right law of living, to kill in battle those who were the objects of enmity was the law of the Kshatriya. His third point was that to perform such acts to gain one's own ends was against the right law and improper for a Kshatriya; and the fourth was that this antagonism and slaughter of brothers would lead to the destruction of clans and ruin of nations; to be the occasion for such untoward results was a grievous sin for a Kshatriya hero, the protector of the clan and nation. Apart from these four notions, there was none other behind the despondency of Arjuna. Not to understand this is to miss the purport of Sri Krishna's teaching and his aim. We shall speak later of the conflict or harmony between the Gita's law and that of Christianity, Buddhism and Vaishnavism. Here we shall elucidate Arjuna's attitude of mind by looking into the purport of his words by a careful scrutiny.

### **Invasion of the Divine Maya**

Arjuna first describes the state of his dejection. By the sudden revolt of affection and self-pity, the mighty hero

Arjuna is overwhelmed and vanquished. All the strength of his body has dried up in a moment, his limbs have grown weary, he has no power to move about, his strong arm is incapable of holding the Gandiva bow. The sensation of heat produced by grief exhibits the signs of fever. The body feels weak, the skin is burning as if in flames, the mouth has dried up within, the body trembles violently all over, the mind is as if whirling under that attack. On reading the description of this state, we are at first satisfied only by enjoying its poetic beauty and regard it as an inordinate expression of the poets imaginative power. But on looking at it with close scrutiny, a deeper meaning of this description comes to mind.

Arjuna has fought the Kurus before this, but such ideas have never occurred to him. Now, at Krishna's will, suddenly there is this inner disturbance. There are lying hidden within Arjuna's heart many of the most powerful instincts of mankind dominated and restrained by his Kshatriya training and high ambition. The heart is not purified by repression, the purification comes through self-control with the help of discrimination and a purified understanding. All the repressed instincts and feelings come up some day from the heart, either in this life or in another, invade the understanding and on winning it over drive all action along paths favourable to their own self-expression. This is the reason why one who in this life is full of kindness becomes cruel in another life, one who in this life is a vicious lustful man becomes pure and saintly in the next. Instead of repression, the impulses have to be rejected with the help of the discrimination and a purified understanding; this is how the heart can be purified. This is what is called self-control. Self-control becomes impossible until the tamasic feelings are discarded through the influence of knowledge. That is why Sri Krishna is wanting to purify the heart by removing the ignorance and awakening the dormant power of discrimination. But if the undesirable movements are not raised up

from the heart and presented before the understanding the latter does not get a chance to reject them. Besides, it is only through a struggle that the inner enemies, the Daityas and Rakshasas, are killed and then the discrimination makes the understanding free.

In the first stages of Yoga, all the evil propensities that have taken root in the heart invade the understanding with great force and overwhelm the unwary seeker with fear and grief. This is what is known in the West as the temptations of the devil, these are the attacks of Mara, the Evil One. But the fear and the grief are the products of ignorance, the temptation is not of the devil but of God. The World-Teacher dwelling within us calls on those propensities to attack the aspirant, not for doing harm but for his good, for the purification of the heart.

Just as Sri Krishna in his physical body and in the visible world is the friend and charioteer of Arjuna, so he is within him the formless Godhead and the indwelling Lord. It is he who threw with great force the hidden movements and feelings all at once upon the understanding. At that terrific blow the understanding lost its balance and the acute mental disturbance was revealed instantly through the symptoms in the physical body described by the poet. We know that an acute unexpected grief or pain manifests thus in the body, this is not beyond the common experience of mankind.

Arjuna was overwhelmed in a moment by the divine Maya of the Lord with its entire force, hence this acute disturbance. When evil takes on the guise of tender feelings like love and kindness, when ignorance comes masquerading as knowledge, when the thick darkness of the Tamasic mode pretends to a bright and clear purity and says, "I am Sattwic, I am knowledge, I am virtue, I am the cherished messenger of God, I am virtue incarnate, I come to establish the reign of Law", then it is to be understood that the divine Maya of the Lord has shown itself in the understanding.

## The Signs of the Divine Maya

The main weapons of this divine Maya are affection and pity. In the human race, love and affection are impure movements; owing to distortions produced by the body and the vital sheath the purity of the love and compassion is tarnished and deformed. The inner movements have their seats in the basic mindstuff (*citta*), the vital being (*prāṇa*) is the field of enjoyment, the body is the instrument of action, the understanding (*buddhi*) is the domain of thought. In a state of purity, all of these have their separate and yet mutually uncontradictory movements. Ideas and feelings arise in the mind, action takes place accordingly through the body, in the understanding there are thoughts in that connection, the vital being takes the pleasure of those feelings, action and thought, the soul (*jīva*) remains a witness and feels joy in looking on this delightful play of the outer nature (*prakṛti*). In the impure state, the vital becoming eager for physical or mental pleasure makes the body a means of enjoyment, the body becomes attached to enjoyment and clamours again and again for physical pleasures, the mind becomes engrossed with the desire for physical enjoyment and can no longer accept pure ideas and feelings, impure ideas and feelings stained with desire create disturbances in the mind-ocean, the understanding is overwhelmed and perplexed by that clamour of desires and is no longer capable of receiving pure and calm infallible thought, comes under the control of the unquiet mind-stuff and becomes blinded by delusions, confused thinking and the power of falsehood. The soul too forfeits its Knowledge through this failure of the understanding, is deprived of the poise of witness and its sense of pure delight; it accepts its identity with the outer man, and under the mistaken notion that “I am the life-being, I am the *citta*, I am the understanding”, it takes

pleasure and feels pain in mental or physical pain and pleasure. It is the unpurified *citta* that lies at the root of this confusion, hence the purification of *citta* is the first step to progress. This state of impurity does not stop with spoiling the tamasic and rajasic movements alone, it pollutes the sattwic movements as well. Such and such a person provides material for my physical and mental enjoyment, he pleases me, I must have him and no other, I feel unhappy in his absence — all this is impure love, it is a distortion of pure love through a pollution of the mind, body and life. As a result of this impurity, the understanding becomes confused: it says, “Such and such is my wife or brother or sister, relative, friend or close companion, they alone should be the objects of love, that love is sacred, if I act contrary to that love, it is sin, it is cruelty, it is unlawful.” This kind of impure love gives rise to such a strong sense of pity that it seems preferable to throw overboard the law of right living rather than let the dear ones be aggrieved or harmed. In the end, we come to justify our weaknesses by calling the law of right living an injustice because it deals a blow to this sense of pity. The proof of this kind of Divine Maya can be had in every word of Arjuna.

### **The Littleness of Divine Maya**

The first words of Arjuna are, “These are our ‘own people’, they are our kin and objects of our love, what good of ours will be served by killing them in battle? The pride of the victor, the glory of kingship, the rich man's joy? I do not wish for all these hollow selfish ends. Why do kingship and enjoyment and life become dear to men? All these pleasures and greatnesses are tempting things because there are the wives and sons and daughters, because these will enable us to maintain in comfort our dear ones and relatives, because

we shall be able to share our days with friends in the joy and comfort of wealth. But the very persons for whom we want kingship and enjoyment and pleasure are come as our foes in war. They would much rather kill us in battle than share the kingship and pleasure together with us. Let them kill me, but I can never kill them. Could I obtain possession of the kingdom of the three worlds, by killing them, even then I would not do it; undisputed empire on earth is a mere trifle.”

A superficial observer, enchanted with the words,

*na kāṅkṣe vijayaṁ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca (1. 31)*

and

*etānna hantumicchāmi ghnato'pi madhusūdana (1. 34)*  
*api trailokyarājyasya hetoḥ kiṁ nu mahīkṛte (1. 35)*

would say, “Oh, how noble and high, how unselfish an attitude on the part of Arjuna, how full of love! To him defeat, death and eternal suffering are more desirable than an enjoyment and pleasure tainted with blood.” But if we examine Arjuna's state of mind, we come to know that this attitude of his is extremely mean, a sign of weakness, fit only for a coward. To give up one's personal interests for the benefit of the clan, for the love of dear ones, under the influence of pity or for fear of bloodshed may be a high and noble attitude for one who is not an Aryan man; but for an Aryan, it is not the best attitude, to give up one's interests for the sake of the right and for the love of God is the highest attitude. On the other hand, to give up the right law of living for the benefit of the clan, for the love of dear ones, under the influence of pity, for fear of bloodshed is the worst attitude. To keep the feelings of affection, pity and fear under control for the sake of the right law and for love of God is the true Aryan way.

In order to defend this low attitude of mind, Arjuna says again pointing to the sin of killing one's kin, “What pleasure,



what satisfaction of mind can be ours by the killing of Dhritarashtra's sons? They are our friends, our kith and kin. Even if they commit injustices and act as our enemies, rob us of our kingdom, break their promises, to kill them would bring us sin, will not give us happiness." Arjuna had forgotten that he was fighting a righteous war, was engaged by Sri Krishna in the slaughter of Dhritarashtra's sons not for his own happiness or for the happiness of Yudhishtira; the object of this war was to establish the rule of law, the fulfilment of the Kshatriya's duties, the founding of a great empire in India based on the law of right living. To achieve these ends by forsaking all happiness, even by undergoing life-long suffering and pain was Arjuna's duty.

### **The Question of the Ruin of Clans**

But Arjuna finds another, a nobler argument in support of his weakness. "This war will lead to the ruin of clans and nations, therefore this war is not a righteous war but an unrighteous war. This fratricide implies an animosity towards friends; that is, it means doing harm to those who are naturally in our favour and help us. Moreover, it will lead to the destruction of that clan of ours, that is, the Kshatriya family and clan-nation named Kuru from which both sides have sprung." In ancient times, the nation was frequently based on blood-relationships. A large clan when it expanded grew into a nation. For example, particular clans such as the Kurus and the Bhojas included within the Bharata nation became each a powerful nation. The internal strife and mutual wrong-doing within the clan were what Arjuna described as the animosity of friends. On the one hand, this kind of animosity is a heinous sin from the moral point of view; on the other hand, from the economic point of view, this great evil is the inevitable fruit of the deterioration of clans implied in such animosity.

The proper observance of the old established laws of the clan is the mainstay of its progress and continuity. The clan undergoes a downfall through a departure from the high ideals and a slackening of the disciplines which the ancestors have laid down and maintained with regard to the life of the householder and in the political field. These ideals and disciplines are maintained as long as the clan remains fortunate and strong. When it suffers deterioration and becomes weak, there is a slackening of the great ideals through the spread of tamasic ideas; as a result, evils like immorality and anarchy enter the clan, the women of the clan lose their virtue and the clan loses its purity, to the noble clan are born sons of persons of a low character and birth. In consequence of this cutting off of the ancestors from the true line of their progeny, the destroyers of the clan find themselves in hell. And through the spread of unrighteousness, the moral degradation following the admixture of castes, the pervasion of low qualities and because of anarchy and such other evils, the entire clan is ruined and becomes fit for hell. With the ruin of the clan, both the law of the nation and the law of the clan come to an end; by the law of the nation is meant the old established ideals and disciplines come down through the generations among the great collectivity of the nation formed of all the clans.

Arjuna thereupon threw up at the very moment of battle his Gandiva bow and sat down in the chariot, having proclaimed once again his initial decision and the resolution as to how he should act. In the last verse of this chapter, the poet has left a hint that Arjuna was determined to act in this un-Aryan manner unworthy of a Kshatriya because there had been a confusion in his understanding on account of grief.

### **The Knowledge and the Ignorance**

In Arjuna's words about the ruin of clans, we find the trace of a very high and large idea; it is extremely important

for the interpreter of the Gita to consider the serious question involved in that idea. On the other hand, if we look only for the spiritual significance of the Gita, if we make a complete break between the law of living propounded by the Gita and our national, domestic and personal, our mundane acts and ideals, we shall be denying the greatness and importance of that idea and that question, it will be to limit the universal application of the Gita's law.

Shankara and others who have interpreted the Gita were men of knowledge or devotion, other-worldly philosophers intent on spiritual knowledge; they were content with seeking in the Gita and finding therein whatever knowledge or ideas that were important to them. Those who are at once men of knowledge, devotion and works are alone fit for the innermost teaching of the Gita. The speaker of the Gita, Sri Krishna, was a man of knowledge and works, the recipient of the Gita, Arjuna, was a devotee and man of action; it was in order to open his eye of knowledge that Sri Krishna propounded this teaching in Kurukshetra. A mighty political conflict was the occasion for the propagation of the Gita, its object was to induce Arjuna to fight as an agent and instrument for the carrying out of a great political purpose in this conflict, the battlefield itself was the venue of the teaching. Sri Krishna was a supreme fighter and master of political science, to establish the rule of law was the prime object of his life; Arjuna too was a Kshatriya prince, war and politics were works proper to his nature. How should it be possible to interpret the Gita by ignoring the purpose of the Gita, its speaker, the recipient of the knowledge, the reason for its propagation?

There are always present in human life its five principal supports: the individual, the family, the clan, the nation and the human collectivity. The law of right living is also based on these five supports. The object of that law is to reach

God. There are two paths to reach God: to possess the Knowledge and to possess the Ignorance. Both are means to Self-knowledge and God-realisation. The path of the Knowledge is to reject this Creation full of Ignorance though a manifestation of the Supreme, and to realise Sachchidananda or merge in the Supreme Self. The path of the Ignorance is to see the Self and God everywhere and to realise the Supreme Lord who is Knowledge, Power and Good incarnate, as friend and lord, teacher, father and mother, son and daughter, and servant, lover, husband and wife. Peace is the object of the Knowledge, love the object of the Ignorance. But the Divine Nature is made of both the Knowledge and the Ignorance. If we follow the path of the Knowledge alone, we shall realise the Supreme in his form of Knowledge; if we follow only the path of the Ignorance, we shall realise the Supreme in his form of Ignorance. He who can possess both the Knowledge and the Ignorance alone realises Vasudeva in his entirety; he crosses beyond the Knowledge and the Ignorance. Those who have reached the final goal of the Knowledge have possessed the Knowledge with the help of the Ignorance.

This great truth has been revealed in the Isha Upanishad in very clear terms, as follows:

*9. andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'vidyāmupāsate  
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyām ratāḥ*

*10. anyadevāhurvidyayā'nyadāhuravidyayā  
iti śuśrūma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire*

*11. vidyāccāvidyācca yastadvedobhayaṁ saha  
avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā vidyayāmṛtamāśnute*

“Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the

Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone.”

“Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Knowledge, other that which comes by the Ignorance; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.”

“He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality.”

The entire human race is progressing towards the Knowledge through its experience of the Ignorance; this is the true evolution. Those who are the best, the aspirant and the yogin, the man of knowledge and devotion, the doer of the Yoga of works, are in the vanguard of this march. They reach the far goal at a quick pace, they come back and make the human race hear the gospel, show it the path, distribute power. The incarnations and emanations of God come and make the path easy to tread, create favourable conditions, destroy the obstacles. To realise the Knowledge in the midst of the Ignorance, renunciation in the midst of enjoyment, the ascetic spirit while living in the world, all beings within the Self, the Self in all beings, — to have this realisation is the true knowledge, this precisely is the path laid down for the human race to march to its destination. The limitations of one's self-knowledge are the main obstacles to progress; the identification of self with the body and the sense of egoism are root causes of those limitations; hence, to look upon others as one's own self is the first step to progress. Man's first preoccupation is with the individual, he is engrossed in his own individual bodily and mental progress, he devotes himself to his own body and mind, to their progress, enjoyment, and the development of their powers. “I am the body, I am the mind and vital being; the aim of life and the highest condition of progress are to

secure the strength and beauty and happiness of the body, swiftness and clarity and delight of the mind, prowess, enjoyment and cheerfulness of the vital being” — this is the first egoistic form of knowledge in man. This too has a utility; it is after achieving the development and fullness of body, mind and life in the first instance that one should use that fully developed power in the service of others. That is why the egoistic development of power is the first stage of human civilisation; the animal, the oger, the demon and the titan, even the goblin find their play in human mind, action and character, express themselves through these. Afterwards man widens his self-knowledge and begins to see others as his own self, learns to submerge his self-interest in the interests of others. At first, he looks upon his family as his own self, gives up his life for saving the lives of his wife and children, throws away his own happiness to secure the happiness of his wife and children. Thereafter, he comes to regard the clan as his self, gives up his life in order to save the clan, sacrifices himself, his children and his wife, throws away his own happiness and that of his wife and children. Afterwards, he considers the nation as his own self, gives up his life for the safety of his nation, sacrifices himself, his wife and children, his family and clan, even as the Rajput clans of Chitore sacrificed themselves repeatedly of their own accord for the safety of the entire Rajput nation; out of regard for the happiness and glory of the nation he throws away the happiness and glory of his clan, his wife and children and himself. Finally, he sees the entire human race as himself, gives up his life for the progress of the human race, sacrifices himself, his wife and children, his clan and nation, throws away for the happiness and progress of mankind, the happiness, glory and advancement of himself, his wife and children, his clan and nation. Thus to see others as one's own self and to sacrifice himself and his happiness for the sake of others have

been the main teachings of Buddhism and of Christianity which had Buddhism for its parent. The moral progress of Europe has been along these lines. The men of ancient Europe learnt to submerge the individual in the family, the family in the clan; the modern Europeans have learnt to submerge the clan in the nation, to submerge the nation in the human collectivity is considered by them as a difficult ideal. Thinkers like Tolstoy and supporters of the new ideal like the Socialist and the Anarchist parties are now anxious to put this ideal into practice. Europe has been able to move thus far. Europeans are devoted to the Ignorance, they are not aware of the true Knowledge. "Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance."

In India the sages have mastered both the Knowledge and the Ignorance. They know that apart from the five bases of the Ignorance, there is God who is the foundation of the Knowledge; unless we know Him, the Ignorance too is not known, cannot be mastered. Therefore, instead of seeing only others as self, they have seen God in others as within themselves, *ātmavat paradeheṣu*. "I shall better myself, my betterment will lead to the betterment of my family; I shall help improve the family, with the improvement of the family the clan will be improved; I shall help advance the cause of the nation, the advancement of the nation will make for the advancement of the human race": this knowledge lies at the root of the Aryan social system and the Aryan discipline. Renunciation of personal self is for the Aryan a habit ingrained in his very bones — renunciation for the sake of the family, renunciation in the interests of the clan, the society, the human race, renunciation for God. The deficiencies or faults that are observed in our education are the results of certain historical causes. For instance, we see the nation as a part of society, we are used to submerge the interests of the individual and the family in those of the society, but the development of the political life of the nation was not accepted as a

main element included in our law of right living. This teaching had to be imported from the West. Nevertheless, the teaching was there in our country itself, in our ancient education, in the Mahabharata, the Gita, in the history of Rajputana, in Ramdasa's *Dasabodha*. We could not develop that teaching because of excessive devotion to the Knowledge, for fear of the Ignorance. Because of this fault, we were overcome by *tamas*, we deviated from the right law of national life, fell a prey to abject slavery, suffering and ignorance. We could not master the Ignorance, were on the point of losing the Knowledge as well. *tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyān ratāḥ*.

### **Sri Krishna's Political Objectives**

The clan and the nation become differentiated in course of the gradual development of human society. That differentiation did not become so well-marked in ancient times in India or in other countries. A nation would grow out of the conglomeration of a few large clans. Each of these different clans either claimed descent from a common ancestor, or even though growing out of different families was accepted as born of a single ancestry through the establishment of friendly relations. The whole of India did not become a single big nation, but among the large nations that spread themselves all over the land there prevailed a common civilisation, a common religion, a single language, Sanskrit, and relationships like those of marriage. From ancient times however there had been attempts at unification. Now it was the Kurus, now the Pancalas, sometimes the Kosalan, sometimes the Magadhan nation who held empire over the land as its chief or overlord. But the ancient tradition of the clans and their love of independence would create such powerful obstacles to unity that these attempts could never



last for long. In India, this attempt towards unity, the effort at undisputed empire was counted among the acts of piety and the duties of a king. This movement towards unity had become so strong that even a powerful and turbulent Kshatriya like Sishupala the king of the Chedis agreed to take part in the founding of Yudhishtira's empire.

To establish such a unity, empire or rule of law was Sri Krishna's political objective. The Magadhan king Jarasandha had already made this attempt, but his power was founded on tyranny and unrighteousness, would therefore be short-lived. Hence Sri Krishna baffled that attempt by getting him killed at the hands of Bhima. The main obstacle to Sri Krishna's work was the proud and powerful family of the Kurus. The Kuru people had for a long time been among the leading peoples of India. To what is called "hegemony", that is, a position of pre-eminence and leadership among a number of independent peoples of equal status — to that the Kurus had an ancestral right. As long as the pride and power of this people remained intact, unity would never be established in India. Sri Krishna came to realise this. Therefore he was determined to destroy the Kuru people. But the Kuru people had a hereditary right to the empire of India; Sri Krishna did not forget this fact. To deprive one of his rightful due would be an act of unrighteousness, so he chose for appointment to the future position of emperor Yudhishtira who was legally the king and chief of the Kuru people. Sri Krishna was supremely righteous; he did not out of affection attempt to set up his beloved clan of the Yadavas in place of the Kuru people even though capable of doing it; he did not nominate for that position his dearest friend Arjuna by ignoring the eldest born of the Pandavas, Yudhishtira. But there is possibility of harm in considering only the age or previous title. If Yudhishtira had been unrighteous, tyrannical or incapable, Sri Krishna would have been obliged to

look for another candidate. Yudhishtira was as well fitted to be emperor by birth, rightful title, and the old established tradition of the land, as he was the proper claimant to that title by virtue of his qualities. There were many great and heroic kings more powerful and talented than him, but strength and talent alone do not give one a title to kingship. The king was to safeguard the rule of law, keep the subjects contented, protect the land. In the first two of these qualities, Yudhishtira had no peer; he was the son of the Lord of Righteousness, he was kind and just, he spoke the truth, he kept his truth, his acts were based on the truth, he was extremely dear to his subjects. The deficiency he had in the last of the requisite qualities mentioned, his heroic brothers Bhima and Arjuna were capable of making good. Contemporary India did not possess kings as powerful or men as heroic as the five Pandavas. Therefore, once the obstacle was removed by the killing of Jarasandha, King Yudhishtira on the advice of Sri Krishna performed the Rajasuya sacrifice in accordance with the ancient tradition of the land, and became its emperor.

Sri Krishna was a follower of the right law and a master of the science of politics. If there was a possibility of carrying to fruition his great objective by working within the framework of the law of the land, its tradition, the rules of its society, then why should he deviate from that law, go against that tradition, break those rules? To bring about such revolutions in politics and society is harmful to the country. For this reason, he at first directed his attempts to gain his objective by maintaining the ancient tradition. But there was this defect in the ancient tradition of the land that even if the attempts made in accordance with it were successful, there was very little chance of the success being permanent. One who had the advantage in military strength could no doubt become emperor by performing the Rajasuya sacrifice, but

as soon as his descendant became weak the imperial crown slipped automatically from his head. Why should the powerful and heroic peoples who had come under the control of his father or grandfather accept the vassalage of the conqueror's son or grandson? Not hereditary right but the Rajasuya sacrifice itself, that is, an extraordinary military strength was at the root of that empire, he alone who had the greatest strength would be emperor by performing the sacrifice. Hence there was no hope for the permanence of the empire, there could only be a temporary hegemony. Another defect of this system was that the sudden augmentation of strength and the hegemony of the new emperor kindled the fire of jealousy in the hearts of the intolerant powerful Kshatriyas of the land so proud of their strength. "Why should he become the chief? why not ourselves?" — such thoughts could easily rise in their minds. This kind of jealousy on the part of Kshatriyas belonging to Yudhishtira's own clan made them oppose him. The sons of his uncle taking advantage of this jealousy deprived him of his position and sent him to exile. The defect in the tradition of the land became manifest within a short while.

Sri Krishna was as much a master of political science as he was righteous. He would never draw back from altering a traditional method or rule if it was defective, harmful or unsuitable to the needs of the time. He was the principal revolutionist of the age. King Bhurisravas gave voice to the angry feeling of many contemporary Indians of the old school when he said while taking Sri Krishna to task, "Krishna or the Yadava clan which acts under his guidance never shrinks from acting against the right law or distorting it. Whoever acts on Krishna's advice will surely fall into sin before long." For, in the view of a conservative with his attachment to the old ways a novel venture is in itself a sin. Sri Krishna realised on Yudhishtira's downfall — not realised but knew from the beginning, for he was God — that a

custom suited to the Dwapara epoch should never be preserved in the Kali age. Therefore, he made no further attempts on those lines; he followed the line of statecraft proper to Kali, with its emphasis on war and strife and directed his efforts towards making the future of empire free of obstacles by destroying the power of the insolent and proud Kshatriya race. He incited the Panchala people, ancient and equally powerful rivals of the Kurus, to destroy the latter; all the other peoples who could be attracted out of hatred towards the Kurus, for the love of Yudhishtira or out of desire for unity and the rule of law were attracted to that side, and he got the preliminaries of war made ready. In the attempts that were made towards peace Sri Krishna had no faith. He knew that peace was not possible, even if it were made it could not last. Still, out of regard for the right law and from considerations of policy, he devoted himself to attempts at peace. There is no doubt that the Kurukshetra war was the result of Sri Krishna's policy, and that to destroy the Kurus, to destroy the power of the Kshatriyas, to establish an undisputed imperial authority and the unity of India were his objectives. The war that was fought in order to establish the rule of law was a righteous war. The God-appointed victor in that righteous war was the mighty warrior Arjuna driven by a divine Power. If Arjuna were to give up his arms, Sri Krishna's labours would have come to nought, the unity of India could not be achieved, a great evil would soon have overtaken the future of the land.

### **Fratricide and the Ruin of Clans**

All the arguments of Arjuna were set forth with a view to the interests of the clan, thoughts about the good of the nation had been effaced from his mind by the force of personal affection. He had forgotten about the good of India

in considering the good of the Kuru family, he was preparing to throw away the right law for fear of unrighteousness. We all know that to kill one's brothers out of self-interest is a heinous sin. But it is a greater sin to be a party to bringing about a national calamity, to desist from doing good to one's nation out of love for one's brothers. If Arjuna gave up his arms, it would be a victory for unrighteousness, Duryodhana would become the paramount king of India and the leading man in the whole country, he would by his bad example put a stain on the national character and the code of behaviour of Kshatriya families, the strong and mighty Indian clans would turn to each other's destruction under the impulse of jealousy, self-interest and love of antagonism, there would be no undisputed state power guided by the rule of law to unify, govern and keep the country well defended by a concentration of power. Under such conditions, that foreign invasion, which even at that time was preparing like a sea held by the dykes to come upon India and inundate it, would, arriving before its time, have destroyed the Aryan civilisation and rooted out all hopes of the future good of the world. The political upheaval that began in India two thousand years later on the fall of the empire set up by Sri Krishna and Arjuna would have commenced right then.

They say that the ills for fear of which Arjuna had raised those objections did actually come as a result of the Kurukshetra war. Fratricide, the ruin of clans, even the ruin of the peoples were the fruits of the Kurukshetra war. This war was the occasion for the onset of Kali. It is true, this war led to a terrible fratricide. The question arises: by what other means could the great objectives of Sri Krishna be met? Precisely for this reason did Sri Krishna, knowing well the futility of seeking the peace, make considerable attempts to find a way to peace. Yudhishtira would have desisted from war had he got back even the five villages, if he could secure even that

much space as a foothold, Sri Krishna could have established the rule of law. But Duryodhana was firmly determined not to give an iota of land without war. Where the future of the whole country depended on the results of war, it had been unrighteous to desist from the war because it would lead to fratricide. The good of the family had to be submerged in the good of the nation, the good of the world. Brotherly affection and attachment to family ties could not justify the ruin of millions of people, a sacrifice of the future happiness or the amelioration of suffering of millions of people; that too would lead to perdition of the individual and the clan.

That there was a ruin of the clans in the Kurukshetra war is also a fact. As a result of this war, the family of the Kurus of great might practically disappeared. But if by the disappearance of the Kuru people the whole of India came to be saved, then the destruction of the Kurus meant not a loss but a gain. Just as there is the blind attachment to family ties, so is there a blind attachment to the clan. Not to say anything to our fellow-countrymen, not to oppose them, even though they may cause harm or be intent to kill, even though they cause the country's ruination, they are brothers, objects of affection, they should be borne in silence: this kind of unrighteousness born of the Divine Maya that posing as the right law makes us fall from a true understanding is produced by the delusion of attachment to the clan. It is unrighteous to oppose or quarrel with a fellow-countryman without cause, from self-interest or in the absence of dire need or utility. But to bear in silence the mischiefs of a fellow-countryman who is determined to take the life of the common mother or to do her harm, — to tolerate this matricide or that harmful act would be a still greater sin. When Sivaji set out to murder his countrymen who were partisans of the Mughals, if someone had said, "Lo! what is this you are doing? They are your own countrymen, bear up with them in silence. If

the Mughals occupy the Maharashtra country, let them do it. If Maratha loves Maratha, that will be enough” — would not these words appear entirely ridiculous? When the Americans in order to abolish slavery created dissensions in the land and by starting a civil war took the lives of thousands of fellow-citizens, were they doing wrong? It may so happen that civil strife and the slaughter of fellow-citizens in battle are the only way to the good of the country and the good of the world. If it involves a danger of the ruination of clans, even then we cannot desist from effecting the good of the nation and the good of the world. Of course the problem becomes complicated if the good of the nation demands the preservation of the clan. In the age of the Mahabharata, the nation-unit had not been established in India, everybody regarded the clan itself as the pivot of the human race. It was precisely because of this that men like Bhishma and Drona who were steeped in the old tradition fought against the Pandavas. They were aware that right was on the side of the Pandavas, they realised that to bind the whole of India round a single centre through the establishment of an empire was a necessity. But they also knew that the clan alone was the pivotal point of the nation and in it lay the foundation of the right law; to maintain the law and found a nation by destroying the clan was an impossibility. Arjuna too fell into that error. In this age, the nation is the foundation of the law, the pivot of human society. To preserve the nation is the primary duty of this age, to cause the ruin of the nation the great unforgivable sin. But there can possibly be the advent of an age when a great society of the nations can be established. At that time perhaps the world's eminent men of knowledge and action would take up arms in defence of the nation, and on the other side Sri Krishna as a maker of revolutions would start a new Kurukshetra war and effect the good of the world.

## **The Political Results of Sri Krishana's Work**

Under the first impulse of pity, Arjuna had laid most emphasis on the ruin of clans, for on looking at that huge massing of troops thoughts of the clans and peoples automatically came to mind. We have said that concern about the good of the clan was natural to the Indian of that age, even as for the modern race of men thoughts about the good of the nation come naturally. But was it a baseless fear to suppose that the foundations of the nation would be destroyed on the ruin of the clans? There are many who say that what Arjuna had feared actually came to pass, that the Kurukshetra war was the root cause of the downfall of India and her long period of subjection, that great harm has been done to India by the disappearance of the powerful race of Kshatriyas and the weakening of the war-like spirit. A well-known lady of foreign extraction at whose sacred feet many Hindus are at the moment bowing their heads as disciples,<sup>1</sup> has not hesitated to say that to make the path easy for the British to found their empire was the real object of God Himself incarnating on earth. We feel that those who speak in such irrelevant terms are finding fault with Sri Krishna's policy without going deep into the matter and under the influence of wholly inconsequent political theories. These political theories are the contributions of foreigners and are the results of an un-Aryan way of thinking. The un-Aryan owes his strength to a titanic power, he knows of that power as the only foundation of freedom and national greatness.

National greatness cannot be founded solely on the strength of the Kshatriya, all the fourfold power of the four orders of society is the basis of that greatness. The sattwic

<sup>1</sup> Translator's Note: The reference here is probably to the late Mrs. Annie Besant and her Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras.



power of the Brahmin keeps alive the rajasic Kshatriya power with its sweet elixir of knowledge, humility and thought for the good of others; the Kshatriya power gives protection to the power of the Brahmin. Brahmin power bereft of the strength of the Kshatriya is affected by tamasic attitudes and gives umbrage to the ignoble qualities of the Shudra; hence it is forbidden for a Brahmin to live in a country where there is no Kshatriya. If the race of Kshatriyas comes to an end, to create the Kshatriya anew is the first duty of the Brahmin. Kshatriya power bereft of the Brahmin's strength turns into a violent uncontrollable titanism, turns at first to the destruction of others' good, finally destroys itself. The Roman poet was right when he said that the titans fall from the excess of their own strength and are utterly destroyed. Sattwa should create Rajas, Rajas should protect Sattwa, should engage itself in sattwic works; that makes possible the good of the individual and the nation. If Sattwa engulfs Rajas or if Rajas engulfs Sattwa, the quality thus victorious is itself vanquished by the emergence of Tamas, there is a reign of the Tamasic mode. The Brahmin can never be king; if the Kshatriya is destroyed, the Shudra becomes king; the Brahmin becoming tamasic will distort knowledge out of greed for money and take to the service of the Shudra; spirituality will encourage inaction, will itself fade away and be the occasion for a fall from the right law. The subjection of a nation without Kshatriyas and run by the Shudra is inevitable. This is what has come to pass in India. While on the other hand it is possible that there is an influx of power and greatness from a temporary excitement under the influence of titanic power, yet the country soon begins to languish from weakness, inertia and the draining of strength, from rajasic indulgence, pride and the increase of selfishness the nation becomes unfit and cannot keep up its greatness, or else as a result of civil strife, immorality and tyranny the

country breaks to pieces and becomes an easy prey to the enemy. The history of India and of Europe affords ample illustration of all these eventual results.

In the age of the Mahabharata the earth was groaning under the load of titanic power. Neither before nor after, was there in India such an outbreak of strong and powerful and violent Kshatriya power, but there was little chance of that terrible power being turned to good purpose. Those who were the vehicles of this power were all of them of an asuric nature, vanity and pride, selfishness and self-will were in their very bones. If Sri Krishna had not established the rule of law by destroying this power, then one or the other of the three types of results described above would certainly have happened. India would have fallen prematurely into the hands of the barbarian. It should be remembered, that the Kurukshetra war took place five thousand years ago,<sup>1</sup> it was after two thousand five hundred years had elapsed that the first successful invasion of barbarians could reach up to the other side of the Indus. The rule of law founded by Arjuna was therefore able to protect the country under the influence of a Kshatriya power inspired by that of the Brahmin. Even at that time there was in the country such an accumulation of Kshatriya power that a fraction of itself has kept the country alive for two thousand years. On the strength of that Kshatriya power great men like Chandragupta, Pushyamitra, Samudragupta, Vikrama, Sangramasingha, Pratap, Rajasingha, Pratapaditya and Sivaji fought against the country's misfortunes. Only the other day in the battle of Gujarat and on the funeral pyre of Lakshmibai was the last spark of that power extinguished; with that ended the good fruit and the virtue of Sri Krishna's political work, there came necessity of

<sup>1</sup> Translator's Note: This was the view traditionally held in India before it was disputed by recent scholarship.

another full Incarnation for the saving of India and the world. That Incarnation has rekindled the vanished power of the Brahmin, that power will create the Kshatriya power. Sri Krishna did not extinguish the Kshatriya power of India in the blood-bath of Kurukshetra; on the contrary by destroying the titanic power he saved both the power of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya. It is true that by the slaughter of Kshatriya families drunk with the strength of the titan, he reduced to tatters the violence of rajasic strength. Such mighty revolutions, putting this kind of check on internecine strife by effacing it through acute suffering, the slaughter of violent Kshatriya clans is not always harmful. Civil strife saved the Roman aristocracy from the clutches of destruction, as the establishment of monarchy saved the huge empire of Rome from the clutches of premature death. In England, through the ruin of the aristocratic families in the Wars of the Roses, Edward IV, Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth were able to lay the foundations of modern England, so well defended and powerful conqueror of the world. India too was saved in that manner by the war of Kurukshetra.

That India has undergone a downfall in the Kali age no one can deny. But God never descended on earth to bring about a downfall. The Incarnation is for saving the Law, the world and men. Particularly in the Kali age does God incarnate Himself in full. The reason is that in Kali there is the greatest danger of man's downfall, there is a natural increase of unrighteousness. Therefore, in order to save mankind, destroy unrighteousness and establish the Right by barring the way of Kali, there are incarnations again and again in this age. When Sri Krishna incarnated, it was already time for the beginning of Kali's reign. It was through fear of His advent that Kali could not set his feet on his own kingdom. It was through His grace that Parikshit could hold

up the exercise of Kali's sovereignty in his own age, by granting him five villages. From the beginning to the end of this Kali age, a fierce battle has been raging and will continue to rage between man and Kali. As helpers or leaders in that battle, the emanations and incarnations of God come down frequently during this period. God took on a human form at the opening of Kali in order to maintain the power of the Brahmin, the knowledge, devotion and desireless works, and teach these things that they might be of use in that battle. On the safety of India rest the hope and foundation of man's well-being. God saved India in Kurukshetra. In that ocean of blood, the Great Being in the form of Time the Destroyer began to take his delight in the sporting Lotus of a new world.

# The Gita: Text — Translation (2)

## Chapter Two

*sañjaya uvāca*

*tañ tathā kṛpayāviṣṭamaśrupūrṇākulekṣaṇam  
viṣḍantamidañ vākyamuvāca madhusūdanaḥ (2. 01)*

Sanjaya said:

To him thus besieged with pity and his eyes full bewildered with crowding tears, to him weak with sorrow, Madhusudana spake this word.

*śrībhagavān uvāca*

*kutastvā kaśmalamidañ viṣame samupasthitam  
anāryajuṣṭamasvargyamakīrtikaramarjuna (2. 02)*

The Lord said:

Whence has this stain of darkness come upon thee in the very crisis and the stress, O Arjuna, this weakness unheavenly, inglorious, quality of un-Aryan minds?

*klaibyañ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha naitattvayyupadyate  
kṣudrañ hṛdayadaurbalyaṃ tyaktvottiṣṭha parañtapa  
(2. 03)*

Fall not into coward impotence, O Partha; not on thee does that sit well; fling from thee the miserable weakness of thy heart, O scourge of thy foes.

**Sri Krishna's Answer**

Sri Krishna saw that Arjuna had been seized with pity, dejection had overcome him. To chase away this tamasic state, He who was aware of the innermost feelings gave His dear friend a rebuke befitting a Kshatriya, that it might awaken the rajasic sentiments and drive away Tamas. He said in effect, "Look, this is a time of crisis for those who are on your side. If you give up your arms now, there is every possibility of danger and destruction for them. The idea of renouncing your cause in the field of battle should not occur to one like you who is best among Kshatriyas. Whence this sudden perversion of mind? Your attitude is full of weakness, it is sinful. Un-Aryan men can laud such an attitude, may subject themselves to it. But it is unworthy of an Aryan. It means an end to fame and glory in this world, it stands in the way of heaven in the next." Thereafter, he administered a still more severe rebuke: "This is an attitude fit for a coward. You are the foremost among courageous men, you are a conqueror, you are the son of Kunti. Such words can come from your mouth? Give up this weakness of the vital being, get up. Give yourself to the work to be done."

**Pity and Compassion**

Pity and compassion are different kinds of feeling, pity can be a feeling even contrary to compassion. Moved by compassion we do good to the world, remove the sufferings of men, of the nation, of others. If I shrink from doing that good from inability to bear my own sufferings or those of any particular individuals, then I have no compassion, I have only been seized by pity. I take upon myself the task of removing the sufferings of my country or of the entire human race: that is the attitude of compassion. From fear of

bloodshed, from fear of doing violence to living beings, I desist from that sacred task, acquiesce in the permanence of the nation's sorrows: this is the attitude of pity. The strong impulse to remove the sufferings of men out of sorrow for their sufferings is called compassion. To feel a sense of helpless weakness at the sight or thought of others' sufferings is known as pity. Weak helplessness is not compassion, it is pity. Compassion is the way of the strong, pity the manner of the weak. Moved by compassion the Lord Buddha left his wife and child, parents and friends and relatives to pine for him in sorrow with everything taken away, and set out to remove the sufferings of the world. Mad-dened by intense compassion, Kali went about the worlds killing the titans and flooded the earth with their blood in order to free all from sorrow. Arjuna had renounced arms under the influence of pity.

This is an attitude lauded by the un-Aryan, the un-Aryan acts accordingly. The Aryan teaching has nobility, it is fit for heroes, it is a divine teaching. The un-Aryan falls into a delusion, he describes ignoble sentiments as the right law and forsakes the noble path. The un-Aryan moved by rajasic feelings considers the good of himself, his dear ones, his family or clan, does not see the larger good. He turns his face away from the right law out of pity, boasts of himself as a man of piety, calls the Aryan of austere vows a cruel and impious man. Losing his senses under a tamasic delusion, the un-Aryan describes inaction as disinterestedness in works, assigns to the interested pursuit of virtue the highest position among the rules of right living. Compassion is an Aryan attitude, pity an un-Aryan sentiment.

Moved by compassion, man engages heroically in battle with evil in order to destroy the evils and sufferings of others. Moved by compassion, woman pours all her heart and energies into the service of loving care and in the attempt to

do good to others and lighten their sorrows. One, who under the influence of pity gives up his arms, turns away from the right path, starts weeping and thinks he is doing his duty and is virtuous, such a one is an impotent coward. This is a mean sentiment, it is an attitude of weakness. Despondency can never be the right law. He who gives umbrage to despair gives umbrage to sin. To reject this clouding of the mind, this impure and weak attitude, to join in the fray and carry out one's duty, to save thereby the world, to protect the Law, to lighten the burden of earth, this is the better way. This is the purport of these words of Sri Krishna.

*arjuna uvāca*

*kathaṁ bhīṣmamahaṁ saṁkhye droṇaṁ ca madhusūdana  
iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi pūjārhāvarisūdana (2. 04)*

Arjuna said:

How shall I combat Bhisma in the fight and Drona, O Madhusudana, how shall I smite with arrows those venerable heads?

*gurūnahatvā hi mahānubhāvān  
śreyo bhoktuṁ bhaiṣyamapiha loke  
hatvārthakāmāṁstu gurūnihaiva  
bhuñjīya bhogān rudhirapradigdhān (2. 05)*

Better were it, not piercing these great and worshipped hearts, to eat even a beggar's bread on this our earth. I slay our earthly wealth and bliss when I slay these; bloodstained will be the joys I shall taste.

*na caitad vidmaḥ kataran no garīyo  
yad vā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ*



*yān eva hatvā na jijīviṣāmas*  
*te'vasihitāḥ pramukhe dhārtarāṣṭrāḥ (2. 06)*

Therefore we know not which of these is better, that we should be victors or that we should be vanquished: for they whom slaying we should have no heart to live, lo, they Dhritarashtrians face us in the foeman's van.

*kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ*  
*prcchāmi tvāṁdharmasānimūḍhacetāḥ*  
*yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me*  
*śiṣyas te'haṁ sādhi mām tvāṁ prapannam (2. 07)*

Pain and unwillingness have swept me from natural self, my heart is bewildered as to right and wrong; thee then I question. Tell me what would surely be my good, for I am thy disciple; teach me, for in thee I have sought my refuge.

*na hi prapaśyāmi mamāpanudyād*  
*yacchokamucchoṣaṇamindriyāṅām*  
*avāpya bhūmāvasapatnamṛddhaṁ*  
*rājyaṁ surāṅāmapi cādhipatyam (2. 08)*

I see not what shall banish from me the grief that parcheth up the senses, though I win on earth rich kingship without rival and empire over the very gods in heaven.

## Arjuna's Prayer to be Taught

Arjuna understood the purpose behind Sri Krishna's words. He refrained from raising the objection on political grounds, but on receiving no answer to his other objections, he took refuge with Sri Krishna for being instructed. He said,

“I admit I am a Kshatriya, to desist from this great work under the influence of pity is for me an act of cowardice, an infamy, against the Law. But neither the mind nor my heart would admit it. The mind says, ‘The killing of elders is a heinous sin, to kill them for the sake of one’s own happiness would be to fall into impiety, it would be to lose everything, virtue and release from bondage and the other worlds. The desires would be satisfied, the hankering after wealth would be met, but for how long? Enjoyments obtained through unrighteous means can last only until death, after that there is indescribable suffering. And when in the course of enjoyments you taste the blood of your elders in them, what is the peace or happiness you will get?’ The heart says, ‘These are my dear ones. If they are killed, I shall not be able to enjoy happiness in this life, nor would I want to live. If you give me the enjoyment of empire over the whole earth or give me the pleasure of Indra’s riches by the conquest of heaven, even then I will not listen. The grief that will be overtaking me will overcome and weaken all the organs of action and knowledge and make them slack and incapable in their respective work. What will then be your enjoyment?’ I am faced with a great unwillingness of mind, the nobility of my Kshatriya nature has been drowned in that unwillingness. I take refuge with thee. Give me knowledge, strength and faith, show me the path to the good, save me.”

To see in God one’s entire refuge is the way of the Gita’s yoga. This is called the surrender or offering of one’s self. One who accepts God as the teacher, lord, friend and guide and is prepared to throw away all other rules of living, one who hands over to Sri Krishna all responsibility for one’s knowledge, work and the spiritual endeavour without caring for sin and virtue, what is to be done or not to be done, all right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good or evil, he alone is fit for the Gita’s yoga. Arjuna said to Sri Krishna, “If you

ask me to kill even my preceptors, if you make me understand that this is the right and the thing to be done, I shall act accordingly.” On the strength of this intense faith, Arjuna was accepted as the best recipient of the Gita's teaching, having overpassed all the great men who were his contemporaries.

In his reply, Sri Krishna first disposed of two of Arjuna's objections, then he took charge as teacher and began to impart the real knowledge. The disposal of the arguments takes us to verse 38, after that begins the teaching of the Gita. But we find in the answer to the objections some invaluable teachings; unless these are grasped the Gita's teaching cannot be understood. It is therefore necessary to consider these few words in detail.

*sañjaya uvāca*

*evamuktvā hr̥ṣīkeśaṁ guḍākeśaḥ param̐tapaḥ  
na yotsya iti govindamuktvā tūṣṇīm babhūva ha (2. 09)*

Sanjaya said:

Thus Gudakesha to Hrishikesha, the scourger of his foes said unto Govinda, “I will not fight”, and ceased from Words.

*tamuvāca hr̥ṣīkeśaḥ prahasanniva bhārata  
senayorubhayormadhye viṣīdantamidam̐ vacaḥ (2. 10)*

On him thus overcome with weakness in the midmost of either battle, Krishna smiled a little and said:

*śrībhagavanuvāca*

*aśocyānavaśocastvaṁ prajñāvādām̐śca bhāṣase  
gatāsūnagatāsūm̐śca nānuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ (2. 11)*

The Lord said:

Thou grievest for whom thou shouldst not grieve  
and yet speakest wise-seeming words, but the  
wise grieve not, whether for the dead or for the  
living.

*natvevāhaṃ jātu nāsaṃ na tvaṃ neme janādhipāḥ  
na caiva na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayamataḥ param (2. 12)*

It is not that I was not before, nor thou nor these  
lords of the folk, nor yet that we shall not be  
again hereafter.

*dehino'sminyathā dehe kaumāraṃ yauvanaṃ jarā  
tathā dehāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati (2. 13)*

Even as the embodied spirit passes in this body  
to boyhood and youth and age, so also it passes  
away from this body to another; the strong man  
suffers not his soul to be clouded by this.

*mātrāsparśāstu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ  
āgamāpāyino'nityāstāṃstitikṣasva bhārata (2. 14)*

But the things of material touch, O son of Kun-  
ti, which bring cold and warmth, pleasure and  
pain, they come and they pass; transient are they,  
these seek to abandon, O Bharata.

*yaṃ hi na vyathayantyete puruṣaṃ puruṣarṣabha  
samaduḥkhasukhaṃ dhīraṃ so'mṛtatvāya kalpate (2. 15)*

The man whom these vex not, O lion of men,  
who is strong and receiveth sorrow and bliss as  
one, that man is ready for immortality.

*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ  
ubhayaorapī dṛṣṭo'ntastvanayostattvadarśibhiḥ* (2. 16)

For that which is not there is no coming into being, and for that which is there is no ceasing to be; yea, of both of these the lookers into truth have seen an end.

*avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidam tatam  
vināśamavyayasyāsya na kaścitkartumarhati* (2. 17)

But That in which all this universe is extended, know to be imperishable; none hath force to bring to nought the One who decays not neither passes away.

*antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ  
anāśino'prameyasya tasmādyudhyasva bhārata* (2. 18)

Transient are these bodies of the embodied Spirit; the Spirit is infinite and imperishable; arise therefore, and fight, O son of Bharata.

*ya enaṁ vetti hantāraṁ yaścainaṁ manyate hatam  
ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate* (2. 19)

Who knoweth the Spirit as slayer and who decreeth Him to be slain, both of these discern not. He slayeth not, neither is He slain.

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin  
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ*

*ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo  
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre* (2. 20)

He is not born nor dieth ever, nor having once been shall

not be again. He is unborn, for ever and perpetual. He is the Ancient One who is not slain with the slaying of the body.

*vedāvināśīnaṃ nityaṃ ya enamajamavyayam  
kathaṃ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṃ ghātayati hanti kam (2. 21)*

He who knoweth Him to be imperishable, eternal, unborn and undecaying, whom doth that man, O Partha, slay or cause to be slain?

*vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya  
navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi*

*tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni  
anyāni saṃyāti navāni dehī (2. 22)*

As a man casteth away from him his worn-out robes and taketh to him other and new raiment, so the embodied Spirit casteth away its worn-out bodies and goeth to other and new casings.

*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ  
na cainam kledayantyāpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ (2. 23)*

Him the sword cleaveth not, Him the fire cannot burn, Him the water wetteth not, and the hot wind withereth not away.

*acchedyo'yamadāhyo'yamakledyo'śoṣya eva ca  
nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalo'yaṃ sanātanaḥ (2. 24)*

Indivisible, unconsumable, unmergible, unwitherable is He. He is for ever and everywhere, constant and moveth not, He is the One Sempiternal Being.

*avyakto'yamacintyo'yamavikāryo'yamucyate  
tasmādevaṃ viditvainaṃ nānuśocitumarhasi (2. 25)*

He is unmanifest, unthinkable, unchangeable. If thou knowest Him as such, thou hast no cause to grieve.

*atha cainaṃ nityajātaṃ nityaṃ vā manyase mṛtam  
tathāpi tvaṃ mahābāho naivaṃ śocitumarhasi (2. 26)*

And now if yet thou deemest of the Spirit as ever born or ever dying, even so thou hast no cause to grieve for him, O Strong-armed.

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyurdhruvaṃ janma mṛtasya ca  
tasmādaparihārye'rthe na tvaṃ śocitumarhasi (2. 27)*

For of that which is born the death is certain, and of that which is dead, the birth is sure; therefore in a thing inevitable thou oughtest not to grieve.

*avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamadhyāni bhārata  
avyaktanidhanānyeva tatra kā paridevanā (2. 28)*

Unmanifested in their beginning are creatures, manifested in the middle, O Bharata; they become but unmanifest again at death; what room is there for lamentation?

*āścaryavatpaśyati kaścidenam  
āścaryavadvadati tathaiva cānyaḥ*

*āścaryavaccainamanyaḥ śṛṇoti  
śrutvāpyenaṃ veda na caiva kaścit (2. 29)*

As a Mystery one seeth Him, as a Mystery another

speaketh of Him, as a Mystery a third heareth of Him,  
but even with revelation not one knoweth Him.

*dehī nityamavadhyo'yaṁ dehe sarvasya bhārata  
tasmātsarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvam śocitumarhasi (2. 30)*

The embodied One is for ever unslayable in the body  
of every man, O Bharata; and from Him are all crea-  
tures; therefore thou hast no cause for grief.

### **The Unreality of Death**

On hearing Arjuna's words, Sri Krishna's face betrayed signs of a smile, a smile that was amused yet happy. The Knower of the hearts of men recognised in Arjuna's delusion the old delusion of mankind, so He smiled. That delusion is born of Sri Krishna's own Maya; He has made man subject to this Maya in order to end the evils, the sorrows and weaknesses in the world through their experience and control. The attachments of the heart, the fear of death, the subjection to happiness and sorrow, the feeling of likes and dislikes, — ignorant movements such as these have found expression in Arjuna's words. It is precisely these movements that have to be removed from the minds of men and the world made free of evil. To create favourable conditions for that auspicious work has Sri Krishna come and is going to reveal the Gita. But first the delusion that has been born in Arjuna's mind has to be destroyed through an experience of it. Arjuna is Sri Krishna's friend, the representative of humanity; to him will the Gita be revealed, he is the best recipient. But humanity has not yet become fit to grasp the meaning of the Gita, even Arjuna could not grasp the full meaning. The grief, sorrow and weakness that came to his mind have been experienced in full by men in the Kali age.



Christianity has brought love, Buddhism has brought compassion, Islam has brought power; they have come in order to mitigate that experience of suffering. Now will begin the first phase of the Satya sub-period of Kali. The Lord is once again imparting the Gita to India, to the descendants of the Kuru race. If we prove ourselves capable of receiving it and holding to it, then the good of India, the good of the world will be its inevitable fruit.

Sri Krishna said, "Arjuna, you are counting virtue and sin like a pedant, you are talking about principles of life and death, trying to expound what will cause the nation good or harm; but your words do not bear evidence of any real knowledge, on the contrary, every word of yours is full of the deepest ignorance. Why not say frankly your heart is weak and overcome by grief, your mind turns away from what is to be done? There is no reason why you should argue like an ignoramus in the language of a man of knowledge in order to justify your weakness. Grief comes to the heart of every man, everyone regards death and separation as extremely frightful, life as of great value, grief as unbearable, duty as hard, achievement of self-interest as sweet; these make everyone feel happy or lament, laugh or weep, but no one can call these movements as sprung from knowledge. You are grieving for those for whom it is wrong to grieve. The wise man does not grieve for anyone, not for the dead nor for the living. He is aware of these facts: there is no death, no separation, no sorrow, we are immortal, eternally the same, we are the children of delight, children of immortality; we have come to this earth to play at hide and seek with life and death, with joy and sorrow, we are enacting a drama of laughter and weeping in the huge play-house of Nature, are tasting the delight of war and peace, love and dispute in our guise of friend and foe. This short period for which we live, not knowing where we shall go tomorrow or the day after on

leaving the body, is but a moment in our eternal play, a short game, the sentiment of a few moments. We have been, we are, we shall be, eternally, for ever indestructible. We are the lords of Nature, masters of life and death, portions of God, inheritors of the past, present and future. Just as the body has its childhood, youth and old age, so is the getting of a new body. Death is only a name, we get afraid on hearing the name, feel sorrow; did we know the thing in itself, we would neither be afraid nor feel sorrow. If we wept over a boy on his becoming a youth as if he were dead, and cried. 'Alas, where has he gone, that dear boy of ours, this young man is not that boy, where is my darling gone', our behaviours would be described by everybody as ludicrous and caused by rank ignorance, because this change of condition is a law of Nature, one and the same conscious being remains unmoved within the body of the boy and the youth beyond all outer change. The man of knowledge on seeing the common man's fear of death and sorrow at death considers his behaviour as equally ludicrous and caused by dark ignorance, because the change to another body is a law of Nature, in the gross and the subtle body one and the same conscious being remains unmoved beyond all external change. Children of immortality are we; who is to die, who can kill? Death cannot touch us, death is an empty report, death is a delusion, death is not."

### **The Objects of Sense Perception**

The conscious being is immobile, Nature is in movement. The immovable conscious being is seated within the movements of Nature. What the conscious being seated within Nature sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches with the five organs of sense, — he depends on Nature to take the delight of all that. We see forms, hear sounds, smell odours, taste the

flavour, feel the touch. Sound, touch, form, flavour, smell, these are the five objects of sense enjoyment. The particular field of the sixth sense, the mind, is the impression of things. The field of the intelligence is thought. The mutual delight and eternal play of conscious being and nature are for having the experience and enjoyment of the five objects of sense, the impressions of mind and the thoughts. This enjoyment is of two kinds, pure and impure. In pure enjoyment there is no pleasure or pain, there is simply the delight that is the eternal principle of conscious being, is natural to it. In impure enjoyment pain and pleasure are there, dualities like heat and cold, hunger and thirst, grief and joy move and harass the impure enjoyer. Desire is the cause of impurity. Whoever has desire is impure, he is pure who has no desires. Desire creates likes and dislikes, under the influence of likes and dislikes, conscious being gets attached to objects of sense, the fruit of attachment is to become bound. Due to the bad habit of attachment the conscious being, when moved and harassed, even when grieved or suffering pain, is unable to renounce the cause of his pain, grief or harassment.

### **The State of Equality**

Sri Krishna first made reference to the eternity of the Spirit, then he showed the way to loosen the bonds of ignorance. The various touches of the objects of sense are the cause of dualities like pain and pleasure. These touches are impermanent, they have both a beginning and an end, their attachment has to be renounced because of the impermanence. If we become attached to impermanent things, we feel pleased at their coming, their absence or loss gives us pain and sorrow. This is called the state of ignorance. There is a clouding of the eternal poise and ever-present delight of

the undying Spirit, we remain engrossed in transient states and objects, drown ourselves in a sea of grief while pining at their loss. He who instead of being thus overcome can bear the touches of the objects of sense, that is, he who, while experiencing the dualities does not feel joy or sorrow, that man is freed from like and dislikes, by breaking the bonds of ignorance becomes capable of realising the eternal state and its delight, *amṛtatvāya kalpate*.

### **The Value of Equality**

This equality is the first teaching of the Gita. Equality is the very basis of the spiritual discipline of the Gita. The school of the Stoics in Greece received this teaching from India and propagated the doctrine of equality in Europe. The Greek philosopher Epicurus caught another side of Sri Krishna's teaching, propounded the doctrine of Epicureanism which teaches calm enjoyment. These two doctrines, of equality and enjoyment, were known as the highest moral doctrines of ancient Europe, and have given rise to the endless quarrel between Puritanism and Paganism in modern Europe. But in the Gita's discipline, the doctrines of equality and calm or pure enjoyment come to the same thing. Equality is the cause, pure enjoyment is the result. Equality destroys attachment, calms down likes and dislikes; with the destruction of attachment and the calming down of likes and dislikes, purity is born. The enjoyment of the pure conscious being is free of desires and attachment, is therefore pure. Herein lies the virtue of equality that attachments and likes and dislikes cannot remain in the same person along with equality. Equality is the seed of purity.

### **The Conquest of Sorrow**

The Stoic school of Greece made this mistake that they were unable to grasp the true means of conquering sorrow.

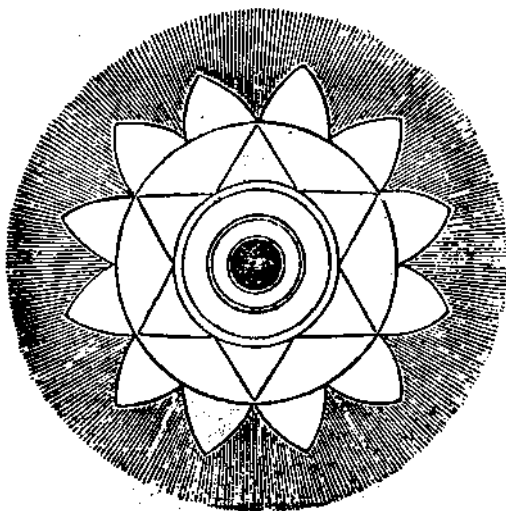
They tried to conquer sorrow by suppressing it, pressing it down, treading it under the feet. But in the Gita it has been said elsewhere, *prakṛtiṃ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kim kariṣyati*<sup>1</sup>, all beings follow their natures, what will suppression do? By the suppression of sorrow, human heart becomes dry, hard and loveless. “I shall not shed tears in sorrow, not acknowledge the feeling of pain, say, ‘this is nothing’ and bear it in silence, will look on the sorrows of wife, children, friends, the sorrows of the nation with an unmoved heart”, — this is an attitude of asuric austereness proud of its strength. It has a greatness, also an utility in helping towards man's progress, but this is not the right means to conquer sorrow, not the last or supreme teaching. The true way to conquer sorrow is knowledge, peace, equality. To receive both joy and sorrow calmly is the right path, not to stop the coming of joy and sorrow into the heart but to keep unmoved the understanding. When there is equality in the understanding the mind and heart automatically have equality, at the same time natural movements like love do not get dried up, man does not become like a stone, dull and insensitive. *prakṛtiṃ yānti bhūtāni* — movements like love are the eternal movements of Nature, the only way to escape from them is to get merged in the Supreme Reality. To get rid of Nature while living within Nature is an impossibility. If we reject softness of heart, hardness will overcome it, if we forbid the vibrations of sorrow outside, sorrow will remain stored up within and will imperceptibly dry up the heart. There is no possibility of progress in an austerity of this kind. Austerity will no doubt bring power, but what is held down in this life will break all barriers and gush forth with redoubled force in the next.

<sup>1</sup> The Gita 3. 33

Registered No. C. 550

# धर्म

नगद मुल्य दुई परस। मात्र।



नगद मुल्य दुई परस। मात्र।

साप्ताहिक पत्र।

सम्पादक—श्रीमुक्त अरविन्द घोष।

१२ वर्ष।] सोमवार. १८ई माघ १९१७ साल। (२२संख्या।

वदा वदा हि धर्मश्च ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।

अत्राश्विनमधर्मश्च तदास्यानं कुलास्यहं ।

परिदोषाय साधूनां विनाशाय च ह्यकृतांतं ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सङ्गमामि युगे युगे ।

गीता

Facsimile of the cover page of Dharma, 1909-1910

## **VII. DHARMA**





# The Chariot of Jagannath

**T**HE ideal society is the vehicle of the indwelling Godhead of a human aggregate, the chariot for the journey of Jagannath. Unity, Freedom, Knowledge and Power constitute the four wheels of this chariot.

The society, created by human intellect or by the play of the impure life-impulses of Nature, belongs to a different order: here it is not the chariot of God who directs the destiny of the collectivity, but a masquerading deity who deforms the divine intuition by covering up the God within; it is rather the vehicle of the collective ego. It wanders aimlessly along the path heaped with numerous pleasures, pulled by the immature and incomplete resolutions of the intellect, and the old and new dull urges of the lower nature. As long as ego is the master, it is not possible to find the goal — even when the goal is seen it is not possible to drive the chariot straight in that direction. The truth that the ego is an obstacle to the divine fulness applies not only to the individual but holds equally good in the case of the collectivity.

Three main divisions of the ordinary human society are noticeable. The first is the well-built chariot, polished, shining, clean and comfortable, fashioned by skilled artisans; drawn by strong well-trained horses, it goes forward cautiously at an easy pace without any haste along a good road. The Sattwic ego is its owner-passenger. This chariot goes round the temple of God situated on a high region above it. Unable to go very close to the high ground, it circles it at a distance. If any one wants to go up, the rule is to get down from the chariot and climb on foot. The ancient Aryan

society which came after the Vedic age can be called a chariot of this type.

The second is the motor-car of the luxury-loving efficient worker. It rushes forward restless and tireless, at a breakneckspeed, roaring through the storm of dust and shattering the street beneath it. Ears are deafened by the noise of its horn; it relentlessly pursues its way knocking down and crushing anybody that happens to be in its path. Danger to the life of the passengers is great; accidents are frequent; the car is often smashed and repaired with difficulty, yet proudly it continues. There is no fixed goal but whenever a new vista is seen not too far away, immediately the owner of the car, the rajasic ego, drives in that direction shouting, 'This is the goal, this is the goal.' One derives much pleasure and enjoyment in riding this car; yet peril is unavoidable, and to reach the Divine impossible. Modern society of the West is a car of this nature.

The third is the dirty, old, dilapidated bullock cart, slow as a tortoise, drawn by emaciated, starving and half-dead bullocks, and going on the narrow country roads; inside the car is sitting a lazy, blind, pot-bellied, decrepit man in shabby clothes; smoking with great pleasure his mud-stained *hukkah* and listening to the harsh creaking of the cart, he is lost in the profusion of the lazy and distorted memories of bygone days.

The name of the owner is tamasic ego and that of the cartman book-knowledge. He consults an almanac to fix the time and direction of his departure. His lips repeat the slogan, 'All that is or has been is good and any attempt to introduce something new is bad.' By this chariot there is a bright and early prospect of reaching, though not the Divine, at least the Void of Brahman.

The bullock-cart of tamasic ego is safe as long as it rolls on the dusty unpaved village roads. We shudder to think what

might happen to it if one day it got on to the broad streets of the world where fleets of rapid automobiles rush about. The danger lies in the fact that it is beyond the knowledge and capacity of the tamasic ego to recognise or admit the time for changing the vehicle. It has no inclination to do so, for, then its business and ownership would be undone. When a difficulty arises, a few among the passengers say: 'No, let it alone. It is good because it is ours.' These are orthodox or sentimental patriots. Some say: 'Why don't you repair it here and there?' — as if by this simple expedient, the bullock-cart could be immediately transformed into a perfect and priceless limousine. Such patriots are known as reformers. Others say: 'Let us have once more our beautiful chariot of yore.' At times, they even try to find ways and means of accomplishing this impossibility. There is no particular indication anywhere to warrant that their hopes would ever be fulfilled.

If we must choose one of these three vehicles, giving up still higher endeavours, then it is logical to construct a new chariot of the Sattwic ego. But so long as the chariot of Jagannath is not built, the ideal society will also not take shape. That is the ideal and ultimate image, the manifestation of the highest and profoundest truth. Impelled by the Universal Godhead, the human race is striving to create it, but owing to the ignorance of Prakriti it only succeeds in creating a different image either deformed, crude and ugly or, if tolerably fair, incomplete in spite of its beauty. Instead of creating Shiva, it fashions either a dwarf or a demon or an inferior deity of the intermediate worlds.

Nobody knows the true form or design of the chariot of Jagannath, no artist of life is capable of drawing it. Hidden under many layers, this picture shines in the heart of the Universal Godhead. To manifest it, gradually through the effort of many divine Vibhutis, seers and creators, and establish it in the material world is God's intention.

The real name of the chariot of Jagannath is not society but commune. Not a loose human association with diverse tendencies or merely a crowd but an unfettered indivisible organisation, the gnostic community created by delight and the unifying power of self-knowledge and divine knowledge.

Society (*samāj*) is the name given to the organisation, that device which allows a human collectivity to work together. By understanding the root of the word, we can also seize its meaning. The suffix *sama* means united, the root *aj* signifies to go, to run, to fight. Thousands of people come together for the sake of work and to satisfy their desires. They pursue numerous aims in the same field — who can come first? Who can get to the top? — and because of this there is struggle and competition, quarrel and fighting not only among themselves but with other societies as well. To bring about order into this chaos, obtain help and satisfy mental tendencies, various relations and ideals are established; the result is something temporary, incomplete and achieved with difficulty. This is the image of society, of the lower existence.

The inferior society is based upon division. A partial, uncertain and short-lived unity is constructed upon that division. The structure of the ideal society is entirely the opposite. Unity is the foundation; there is a play of differentiation, for the sake of multiform delight, not for division. In the society we find a hint of physical and mentally conceived unity arising from work; but unity based on the self is the soul of the spiritual commune.

There have been a number of partial and unsuccessful attempts to establish a commune in a limited field, whether inspired by the intellectual ideas of the West or in order to follow unhindered the discipline of inaction leading to Nirvana as among the Buddhists or because of the intensity of spiritual feeling like the early Christian communities. But

before long all the defects, imperfections and normal tendencies of society infiltrated into the spiritual commune and brought it down to ordinary society. The idea of a restless intellect cannot endure; it is washed away by the irresistible current of old and new life-impulses. An intensity of emotion cannot bring about success in this endeavour; emotion is worn out by its own impetus. One ought to seek Nirvana all alone; to form a commune for the love of Nirvana is a contradictory action. A spiritual commune is by its very nature a field for the play of work and mutuality.

The day the Self-born unity will come into being by the harmony and integration of knowledge, devotion and work, as impelled by the Will of the Virat Purusha, the Universal Person, on that day the chariot of Jagannath will come out on the avenues of the world, radiating its light in all directions. Satya Yuga, the Age of Truth will descend upon earth; the world of mortal man will become the field for the play of the Divine, the temple-city of God, the metropolis of Ananda.

## Three Stages of Human Society

**H**UMAN knowledge and power manifest in many ways in the course of evolution. Three stages of it can be noticed — a natural state dominated by the body and controlled by the life-force, an intermediate and more advanced state preeminently rational, and the last and highest state in which the soul is predominant.

Man, when he is dominated by the body and driven by the life-force, is a slave of desire and interests. He knows only inherent selfishness, ordinary instinct and impulse. And he prefers whatever social arrangement seems to be convenient and is brought about by the chain of events resulting from the clash of desires and interests; he calls the collection of a few or many such regulations his dharma or way of life. Customs that run in the tradition or family or in society are the Dharma or Law of this lower natural state. The natural man has no idea of liberation, he does not know about the soul. The place where he can indulge without restraint his physical and vital impulses is an imaginary Paradise. To attain such a heaven after physical death is his salvation.

The man who is primarily intellectual always tries to regulate his desires and interests by reason. Where lies the fulfilment of desires, which particular interest among many different ones should have precedence, what is the nature of the ideal life, how and which discipline, as determined by reason to be followed so that nature may be cleansed and the ideal realised — he is ever engaged in thinking about these matters. He is willing to establish as his dharma a certain

regulated cultivation of that nature and ideal principle. Such a sense of dharma is indeed the regulator of an advanced society enlightened by rational knowledge.

The dominantly spiritual man is aware of the secret soul beyond the intellect, the mind, the life, and the body and bases his life movement on self-knowledge. He directs all his activities towards liberation, self-realisation and the attainment of God, knowing these to be the culmination of life. And he regards as his dharma that way of life and the cultivation of that ideal which are conducive to self-realisation and which leads the movement of evolution towards that goal. The highest type of society is led by such ideal and such dharma.

From dominance by life to reason, from reason to the suprarational love, these are the steps of man's ascent to the peaks of God.

There is not just one line of evolution in a particular society. All these three types of men exist in almost all societies and the community consisting of such a collection of people is a mixed one.

There are also in a natural society people ruled by reason as there are others ruled by the spirit. If these are few in number, disorganised or imperfect, then they make very little impact on society. Still some progress they are able to effect, have a hold on the society; however their influence becomes strong only if they can organise the many. But the natural men are far greater in number; the Law of the rational or spiritual man often becomes distorted, that of reason degenerates into mere convention, that of the spiritual man under the pressure of personal fancy and external custom oppressed, overwhelmed, made lifeless and diverted from its goal. Such is the end, we always observe.

We see that when reason is dominant, it assumes the leadership of society and tries to found a dharma enlightened

by intellectual knowledge after changing or even destroying irrational taste and structure.

The enlightenment of the West — equality, liberty, fraternity — is only a form of this attempt. Success is impossible. Even the rational man, owing to want of spiritual knowledge, himself distorts his own ideal under the pressure of the impulses of mind, life and body. This stage is intermediate and there cannot be stability here — either there is a fall or an ascent towards the heights. Reason vacillates between these two pulls.



# Ahankara

**T**HE meaning of the word, *ahaṅkāra*, has become so distorted in our language that often a confusion arises when we try to explain the main principles of the Aryan Dharma. Pride is only a particular effect of the rajasic ego, yet this is the meaning generally attributed to the word *ahaṅkāra*; any talk of giving up *ahaṅkāra* brings to the mind the idea of giving up pride or the rajasic ego. In fact, any awareness of 'I' is *ahaṅkāra*. The awareness of 'I' is created in the higher knowledge Self and in the play of the three principles of Nature, its three modes are revealed: the sattwic ego, the rajasic ego and the tamasic ego. The sattwic ego brings knowledge and happiness. 'I am receiving knowledge, I am full of delight' — these feelings are actions of the sattwic ego. The ego of the sadhak, the devotee, the man of knowledge, the disinterested worker is the sattwic ego which brings knowledge and delight. The rajasic ego stands for action. 'I am doing the work, I am winning, I am losing, I am making effort, the success in work is mine, the failure is mine, I am strong, I am fortunate, I am happy, I am unhappy' — all these feelings are predominantly rajasic, dynamic and generate desire. The tamasic ego is full of ignorance and inertia. 'I am wretched, I am helpless, I am lazy, incapable and good for nothing, I have no hope, I am sinking into the lower nature, my only salvation is to sink into the lower nature' — all these feelings are predominantly tamasic and produce inertia and obscurity. Those afflicted with the tamasic ego have no pride though they have the ego in full measure but that ego has a downward movement and leads to death and extinction in the void of the Brahman. Just as pride has ego,

in the same way humility also has ego; just as strength has ego, in the same way weakness also has ego. Those who have no pride because of their tamasic nature are mean, feeble and servile out of fear and despair. Tamasic humility, tamasic forgiveness, tamasic endurance have no value whatsoever and do not produce any good result. Blessed indeed is he who perceiving Narayana everywhere is humble, tolerant and full of forgiveness. Delivered from all these impulsions coming from the ego, one who has gone beyond the spell of the three modes of Nature has neither pride nor humility. Satisfied with whatever feeling is given to his instrumental being of life and mind by the universal Shakti of the Divine and free from all attachment, he enjoys invariable peace and felicity. The tamasic ego must be avoided in every way. To destroy it completely by awakening the rajasic ego with the help of knowledge coming from 'sattwa' is the first step towards progress. Growth of knowledge, faith and devotion are the means of liberating oneself from the grip of the rajasic ego. A person predominantly sattwic does not say, 'I am happy'; he says, 'Happiness is flowing in my heart'; he does not say, 'I am wise' he says 'Knowledge is growing in me.' He knows that this happiness and this knowledge do not belong to him but to the Mother of the Universe. Yet when in all kinds of feelings there is bondage to the enjoyment of delight, then the feeling of the man of knowledge or the devotee is still proceeding from the ego. Simply by saying 'It is happening in me' one cannot abolish the ego-sense. Only the person who has gone beyond the modes of Nature has completely triumphed over the ego. He knows that the 'Jiva', the embodied being, is the witness and enjoyer, the Supreme is the giver of sanction, and that Nature is the doer of works, and that there is no 'I', all being a play in knowledge and ignorance of the Shakti of the sole Brahman without a second. The sense of ego is only a feeling born of

illusion in the nature established in the 'Jiva', the embodied being. In the final stage this feeling of egolessness merges into Sachchidananda, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. But having gone beyond the modes of Nature one who still stays in the divine play by the will of the Lord respects the separate existence of the Lord and the 'Jiva', the embodied being, and, considering himself a portion of the Divine in Nature, he accomplishes his work in the Lila, the divine play. This feeling cannot be called the ego. Even the Supreme has this feeling. There is no ignorance or attachment in Him, but His state of beatitude instead of being self-absorbed is turned towards the world. One who possesses this consciousness is indeed a soul liberated in life. Liberation by dissolution can be gained only after the fall of the body. The state of liberation in life can be realised in the body itself.

# Integrality

**YOU** have stepped on to the path of integral Yoga. Try to fathom the meaning and the aim of the integral Yoga before you advance. He who has the noble aspiration of attaining the high summit of realisation should know thoroughly these two things; the aim and the path. Of the path I shall speak later on. First it is necessary to draw before your eyes, in bold outline, the complete picture of the aim.

What is the meaning of integrality? Integrality is the image of the Divine being, the dharma of the Divine nature. Man is incomplete, striving after and evolving towards the fullness and moving in the flow of gradual manifestation of the Self. Integrality is his destination; man is only a half-disclosed form of the Divine, that is why he is travelling towards the Divine integrality. In this human bud hides the fullness of the Divine lotus, and it is the endeavour of Nature to bring it into blossom gradually and slowly. In the practice of the Yoga, the Yoga-shakti begins to open it at a great speed, with a lightning rapidity. That which people call full manhood — mental progress, ethical purity, beautiful development of the faculties of mind, strength of character, vital force, physical health — is not the Divine integrality. It is only the fullness of a partial dharma of Nature. The real indivisible integrality can only come from the integrality of the Self, from the integrality of the Supramental Force beyond the mind, because the indivisible Self is the real Purusha, and the Purusha in mind, life or body is only a partial outward and debased play of the Supermind. The real integrality can only come when the mind is transformed into the Supermind. By the Supramental Force, the Self has

created the universe and regulated it; by the Supramental Force, it raises the part to the Whole. The Self in man is concealed behind the veil of mind. It can be seen when this veil is removed. The power of the Self can feel in the mind the half-revealed, half-hidden, diminished form and play. Only when the Supramental Force unfolds itself, can the Self fully emerge.

## Hymns and Prayers

**T**HE seeker, the seeking and the sought are the three limbs that go to the making of the Quaternary — the Four Norms or Objects of life — the Right Law, Interest, Desire and Liberation (Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha). Seekers have different natures; therefore different ways of seeking have been prescribed, and the goal sought is also different for each. But even if the outer view sees many goals, the inner vision understands that the goal sought is one and the same for all seekers: it is self-fulfilment. In the Upanishad Yajnavalkya explains to his wife that all is for the self. The wife is for the self, wealth is for the self, love is for the self, happiness is for the self, suffering is for the self, life is for the self, and death too is for the self. Therefore the importance and necessity of this question as to what the self is.

Many wise and learned people ask what is the use of worrying over the problem of self-knowledge. To waste one's time in such abstruse discussion is madness, better to engage oneself in the more important subjects of worldly life and try to do good to the world. But the problem as to what are the things important in worldly life and in what way good will come to humanity, needs for its solution a knowledge of the self. As is one's knowledge so is one's goal. If one considers one's body as the self, then one will sacrifice all other reasonings and considerations for its sole satisfaction and thus become a selfish demon in human form. If one considers one's wife as the self, loves her as one's self then one becomes a slave to her, ready to die to please her, inflict pain upon others for the sake of her happiness, do harm to others in order to satisfy her desire. And if one considers

one's country as the self then he may become a mighty patriot, perhaps leave behind an immortal name and fame in history, but then one may reject all other ideas and ideals, injure and rob and enslave other countries. Again, if you consider God as your self and love Him as your self, then too it would be the same thing. For love means supreme vision: if I am a yogi, full of love for the Divine, if I am a man of action acting desirelessly, then I shall be able to possess a power, a knowledge or joy beyond the reach of the common man. And finally if I consider the indefinable Supreme Reality (Brahman) as the self then I may attain the sovereign peace and dissolution. As is one's faith, so one becomes — *yo yat śraddha sa eva saḥ*. Mankind has all along been pursuing a development: it started with a small objective in view, then through comparatively greater ones it realised the highest transcendent reality. Finally it is now entering its goal, the supreme status of the Divine. There was an age when mankind was solely preoccupied with the body; the cultivation of the body was the law of the age. That was the way to Good in that age even if it meant depreciating all other laws. Otherwise the body, as it is the means and the foundation for the fulfilment of the law of the being (dharma), would not achieve the required development. Similarly there was another age in which the family and yet another in which the clan become the object of development as in modern times it is the nation that is the objective. However, the highest, the transcendent objective is the Supreme Lord or the Divine. The Divine is the real, the supreme self of all, therefore the real, the supreme objective. So the Gita says, “abandon all laws, remember me alone”. All laws are harmonised in God. If you follow Him, He takes charge of you, makes you His instrument and works for the sovereign welfare and happiness of your family, your clan, your nation and the whole of humanity.

Even if the objective be the same, different seekers having different natures, the way also differs in each case. One important way for realising the Divine is through prayers and hymns. But this is not suitable for everybody. One who follows the path of knowledge takes to meditation and concentration. For the worker, dedication of works is the best way. Prayers and hymns form a limb of devotion; even then it is not the highest limb; for unqualified love is the highest perfection of devotion. That love can realise God's true self through hymns and prayers and then, transcending their necessity, merges itself in God's self-enjoyment. And yet there is hardly a man of devotion who can do without hymns and prayers. When there is no need of the process and practice (sadhana) even then the heart wells out in hymns and prayers. Only one has to remember that the way is not the objective and my way may not be another's. Many men of devotion have this notion that one who does not take to hymns and prayers, who does not take delight in them, is not a spiritual man (one following the true law). This is a sign of error and narrowness. Buddha did not indulge in hymns and prayers but who would declare that Buddha is unspiritual? Hymns and prayers have developed for the practice of devotion.

Men of devotion are also of many kinds and hymns and prayers are used in different ways. A man becoming a devotee because of distress takes to hymns and prayers in order to cry out to God, to pray for His help in the hope of getting relief. One who is a devotee with a purpose takes to hymns and prayers in the hope of the fulfilment of his purpose, with the intention of securing wealth, fame, happiness, prosperity, victory, welfare, enjoyment, liberation, etc. Devotees of this category at times even try to tempt God and propitiate Him; some failing to achieve their objective get terribly indignant with God and abuse Him calling Him



names such as that He is cruel, He is a cheat, declaring they would never more worship God, never see His face, never accept Him. Many again in despair turn atheists and arrive at the conclusion that this world is a domain of suffering, a kingdom of torture, that there is no God. These two categories of devotion are an ignorant devotion; even so it is not to be despised; for from the lesser one rises to the greater. The discipline of ignorance is the first step to the discipline of knowledge. The child is ignorant; but there is a charm in the ignorance of a child. The child too comes weeping to its mother, demands redress from suffering, rushes to her for the sake of some satisfaction and self-interest, laments, pleads and when refused gets enraged, creates trouble. Even so, the Mother of the worlds bears with a smiling face all the claims and clamours of the ignorant devotees.

Now, a devotee in quest of knowledge does not take to hymns and prayers for the sake of securing a desired object or for pleasing God. For him, hymns and prayers are only a way to realising God's self-being and developing his own consciousness. But for the devotee who has already the knowledge, that necessity too disappears; because he has realised his self-being, his consciousness has become firm and well established: hymns and prayers are needed only for the outpouring of the fullness of the heart. The Gita says, these four categories of devotees are all large-hearted, none negligible, all are dear to God, but of them the devotee who has the knowledge ranks highest; for one who has the knowledge and God are the same in being. For a devotee God is the objective, that is to say, he is to be known and realised as the self; the devotee who has the knowledge, and God are related to each other as the self and the Supreme Self. The self and the Supreme Self are united together through this triple bond, knowledge and love and work. Work is there but the work is given by God, there is no

necessity of it, no self-interest in it, there is nothing to desire here. There is love, but that love is free from conflicts and quarrels; it is selfless, stainless, pure. Knowledge is there but that knowledge is not something dry and devoid of feeling, it is full of a deep and intense joy and love. The objective may be the same, but the way differs according to the aspirant. For different aspirants even the same way admits of different applications.

# Our Religion <sup>1</sup>

**O**UR religion is the eternal religion, *sanātana dharma*. It has three forms, ways, and activities of its own. Our religion has three forms. God is in the spirit within, in the mental and the physical worlds — in these three worlds, created by Nature, governed by the Supreme Consciousness-Force (*Mahāśakti*). He has expressed Himself as the universe. The attempt to unite with Him in these three worlds comprises the three forms of the eternal religion. Our religion has its three ways, *mārgas*. Knowledge, devotion, action, — these three, in their separate or combined working, such a state of union is within man's reach. The yearning to be united with God by a purification of the soul through these triple ways constitutes the Triple Way of the eternal religion. Our religion is involved in three activities. Among the major human tendencies three tend upward, and give the strength that brings Brahman-realisation — truth, love and energy. The evolution of the human race is being fulfilled through the gradual expression of these three tendencies. To advance on the Triple Way through truth, love and energy forms the triple action of the eternal religion.

There are many secondary religions hidden or implied in the eternal religion; depending on the eternal men busy themselves with changing, great and small religions, choose their own line of activity. All activities and religions are born of one's own nature. The eternal religion is supported by the eternal nature of the world, these many religions are the

<sup>1</sup> Dharma is usually translated as Religion, perhaps for the sake of simplicity. But a closer rendering — closer to the real sense — would be “the right law of life”, or simply “the Divine Law”.

result of the inner nature of the various instruments. There are many kinds of religion — individual, racial, hierarchical, of the spirit of the age, etc. They are not to be neglected or rejected because they are impermanent, rather it is through the transient, changing religions that the eternal religion develops and establishes itself. The giving up of the religion of one's individual nature, of the race, the hierarchy, and the spirit of the age, instead of strengthening the eternal religion, develops what is irreligion, and what the Gita calls mongrelisation, *sankara*; that is because of violating the eternal way and because of the downward momentum opposed to progress, the world suffers from sin and tyranny. When because of the excesses of such sin and tyranny the titanic (*āsuric*) powers that oppose man's progress and trample religion swell and grow in strength, selfishness, cruelty and egotism spread everywhere, and the godless pretend to be God, then to remedy the sufferings of a panic-ridden world the Lord, manifesting in a human form as either *avatāra* or *vibhūti*, again clears the way of the true religion.

For the adequate preservation of the eternal religion the religion of the individual, race, the hierarchy and the spirit of the age are always to be recommended. But among these many religions there are the two forms: noble and small. It is better to observe the 'small' religion in keeping with and by correcting it in terms of the nobler religion. If the religion of the individual is not made to conform with the religion of the race, that race goes to seed, and when the religion of the race is lost the field and opportunity of individual religion are destroyed. This too is a confusion in the life of religion, because of which both the race and the agents of confusion fall into the deepest hell. The race has to be saved first, only then can the individual's spiritual, ethical and economic progress be safeguarded. And if the hierarchy in the social

order cannot be recast in the form demanded by the spirit of the age, because of the contrary force of the mighty spirit of the age the religion based on the hierarchical order is broken and destroyed, and the same consequences overtake the society itself. The small is always a part or support of the great; in a contrary state of this relationship a great harm, due to religious confusion, is perpetrated. In the case of a conflict between the great and the small religion it is better to give up the small and follow the great.

Our aim is to spread the eternal religion and, based on that eternal religion, the observance of the religion of the race and the spirit of the age. We Indians, descendants of the Aryan race, have a right to an Aryan education and ethics. This Aryan feeling is our family religion and racial religion. Knowledge, devotion and non-attached activity are the root of an Aryan education; liberality, love, courage, energy, modesty are signs of the Aryan character. To spread the light of knowledge among men, to hold before the race the impeccable ideal of elevated, liberal characters, to protect the weak, to punish the powerful tyrants are the aims of Aryan living; in the pursuit of these aims lies its religious fulfilment. We have fallen from the ways of our religion, moved away from our goals; victim to religious confusion and the gross illusions full of error we are without the Aryan education and its regulative ethics. In spite of belonging to the Aryan race we, dominated by the mighty and victims of misery and suffering, have accepted the law of inferiority and the servitude that follows from it. Hence if we want to survive, if we have the slightest desire to be free from an eternal hell, our first duty is to serve the nation. The way to do that is to rebuild the Aryan character. So that the future children of the motherland may become men of wisdom, truth-abiding, lovers of mankind, inspired by feelings of brotherhood, courageous, humble, it should be our first aim

to give the entire nation, especially the youth of the country, an adequate education, high ideals and a way of activity that will arouse these Aryan ideals. Till we succeed in doing that the spread of the eternal religion will be like sowing seeds in a barren field.

The performance of the racial religion will make it easier to serve the spirit of the age. This is an age of energy, *śakti*, and love. At the beginning of the Age of Iron (*Kali*), the human tendencies try to fulfil themselves by subordinating knowledge and action to devotion, and with the support of love, truth and energy try and succeed in spreading the message of love. The friendliness and charity of Buddhism, the teaching of love in Christianity, the equality and brotherhood of Islam, the devotion and sentiment of love in the Puranic religion is a result of these attempts. In the Age of Iron the eternal religion, helped by the spirit of friendliness, action, devotion, love, equality and brotherhood, does good to humanity. Entering into and manifesting in the Aryan religion, composed of knowledge, devotion and non-attached action, these same powers are seeking for expansion and self-fulfilment. The signs of that energy of expression are severe austerity, high ideals, and noble action. When this race becomes once more a seeker after austere perfection, full of high ideals and undertaker of noble efforts, it should be understood that the world's progress is under way and the withdrawal of anti-religious titanic forces and the rise of divine forces is inevitable once again. Hence this type of education too is needed at the present time.

When the religion of the race and of the time-spirit are fulfilled, the eternal religion will spread and establish itself throughout the world, without let or hindrance. All that the Lord has ordained from before, about which there are prophecies in the ancient canons, *śāstras*, those too will be felt and realised in action. The entire world will come to the

Knower of Brahman, who will arise in the Aryan land, as learners in the ways of wisdom and religion, and accepting Bharat as a place of pilgrimage they will accept her superiority with bowed heads. It is to bring that day nearer that the Indians are rising, that is why this fresh awakening of Aryan ideas.

# Maya <sup>1</sup>

**O**UR ancient philosophers in their search for the fundamentals of the universe came to discover the existence of an eternal and all-pervading principle at the base of the phenomenal world. The present-day Western scientists have on their part, at the end of long researches, become convinced of the existence of an abiding universal unity even in the physical world. They have concluded that *ākāśa* or ether is the essential principle of physical phenomena. The ancient philosophers of India too came to this very conclusion thousands of years ago that *ākāśa* is the basis of the world of physical phenomena and that all other physical states emerge from it through the process of natural transformation. But they did not stop short with this conclusion which to them was not the ultimate one. They entered the subtle world through yoga-power and thus came to know that behind the gross physical world of appearances there exists a subtle world and that a subtle *ākāśa* or ether is the substratum of this phenomenal world. Even this *ākāśa* does not represent the ultimate stuff; they named the ultimate stuff as *pradhāna*. Prakriti or the cosmic Executrix after having created this *pradhāna* in the rhythm of her universal movement, fashions out of it millions and millions of *aṅṣus* or infinitesimals, and the subtle physical gets built up with these *aṅṣus*.

<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: The word Maya comes from the Sanskrit root *mā*, to measure, to delimit. In its original Vedic sense, it meant the power of the infinite consciousness of the absolute to form *nāma-rūpa*, the Name and Shape, out of the illimitable indivisible Truth of infinite Existence. But in course of time the word came to acquire a pejorative sense and Maya was regarded as an Illusive Power.



Prakriti or the dynamic force does nothing for herself; the creation and then the varied motion of this world of phenomena is solely for the pleasure of Him of whom she is the Power. The Self or Purusha is the overseer and witness in this play of Prakriti. The Self or Purusha is the overseer and witness in the play of Prakriti. The ineffable supreme Brahman of whom Purusha and Prakriti are the self-being and the dynamic action is the unique and eternal essential truth of the universe. The principal Upanishads affirm these doctrines of Brahman and of Purusha and Prakriti which form the core of the truths the Aryan Rishis discovered in their quest for the fundamentals. Out of these basic truths the philosophers erected different systems of thought-structures through debate and discussion. The protagonists of the doctrine of Brahman started the Vedanta philosophy: the partisans of the doctrine of Prakriti propounded the Sankhya philosophy. Apart from these, many others followed a different path stating that the *paramāṇus* or the infinitesimals represent the primordial principle of the world of physical phenomena. After these different approaches were chalked out, Sri Krishna established in the Gita a harmonising synthesis of all the various systems of thought and restated the truths of the Upanishads through the mouth of Vasudeva. The authors of the Puranas on their part accepted as the source-book the Purana composed by Vyasa and introduced to the general public the same truths in the garb of anecdotes and allegories. This could not of course arrest the polemics of the scholars; they went on stating their own individual views and sought to ratify the conclusions of various branches of philosophy by means of elaborate reasoning. The actual state of our six systems of philosophy has grown out of this later speculation. At last Shankaracharya formed a unique and abiding organisation for the propagation of Vedanta throughout the length and breadth of the

land and thus established the sway of Vedanta in the minds of the general public. After that the dominance and the influence of the other five systems of philosophy almost vanished from the field of thought even though they remained established amongst a handful of scholars. Then schism developed in the universally accepted Vedanta philosophy which branched into three main offshoots and many more secondary ones. The quarrel between Monism with its emphasis on Knowledge and the devotional Dualism and qualified Monism continues even today in the bosom of the Hindu religion. The follower of the Path of Knowledge explains away as symptoms of dementia the turbulent outbursts of love and passion in the devotee: the devotee on his part disdains as dry debate the urge for spiritual knowledge exhibited by the former. Both the views are fallacious and narrow. Knowledge without devotion feeds the ego and thus obstructs the way towards liberation; devotion divorced from knowledge gives rise to superstitions and a blundering tamasic mood. The genuine spiritual path as preconized by the Upanishads ensures the synthesis and mutual support of knowledge, devotion and works.

If we would like to spread the universal Aryan dharma suited to all men, we would have to found it on genuine Aryan lore. Philosophy has ever been partial and incomplete. Any attempt to constrict the entire world through logical argument to fit into the tenets of a narrow view-point might perhaps lead to the adequate explanation of one side of the Truth but only to the detriment of all others. The doctrine of Maya or illusionism as propounded by the Monists is a case in point. Brahman is real and the world is an illusion: this is the keynote of the doctrine of Maya. The nation that accepts this formula as the cornerstone of its thought grows in the yearning for knowledge, the spirit of detachment and the love for renunciation; but the power of

*rajas* gets annulled while *sattva* and *tamas* predominate so that while on the one hand the enlightened sannyasins, the peace-loving vairagis, and the lovers and devotees of God full of distaste for the world, increase in numbers, on the other, a miserable destiny befalls the common run of men who become tamasic, ignorant, besotted with passivity and absolutely useless. This is what has happened in India due to the spread of the doctrine of *Maya*. If the world happens to be an illusion, then all other enterprises excepting the thirst for knowledge must be deemed otiose and pernicious. But apart from this thirst after knowledge many other powerful and beneficial urges are at play in the life of man; no nation can survive the neglect of these. In order to avoid this possible catastrophe Shankaracharya distinguished two sides of knowledge, spiritual and pragmatic, and prescribed either knowledge or works for different individuals according to the nature of each. But the result has been quite the contrary because of his vehement denunciation of the then ceremonial Path of Works. That Path of Works became almost extinct and the Vedic ceremonies vanished, thanks to the influence of Shankara; but notions such as these: 'the world is created by the power of Illusion', 'works arise out of ignorance and hinder liberation', 'fate is the dispenser of our joys and sorrows' and other kindred notions conducive to the growth of *tamas* got so much settled in the minds of people that it became impossible for the power of *rajas* to manifest again. To save the Aryan race the Divine brought about resistance to the doctrine of *Maya* through the propagation of the teachings of the Puranas and the Tantras. Various aspects of the Aryan culture originating in the Upanishads were somewhat preserved in the Puranas, while the Tantras impelled

men to action for the attainment of the dual fruits of *mukti* and *bhakti*, liberation and enjoyment, through the worship of the Shakti. Almost all those who fought to maintain the integrity of the nation, such as Pratap Singh, Shivaji, Prata-paditya, Chand Rai, etc., were either worshippers of the Shakti or disciples of Tantric yogis. To prevent the harm emanating from *tamas*, Sri Krishna preached against the renunciation of works in the Gita.

The doctrine of Maya is indeed founded upon truth. The Upanishads too have declared that the Lord (*īśvara*) is the great Magician (*Parama Māyāvī*) who has brought forth this tangible world through His Maya-Power. Sri Krishna also has said in the Gita that Maya manifesting her triple *guṇas* or modes pervades the whole of the universe. The one and unique ineffable Brahman is the essential Truth of the Universe; all the phenomenal world is nothing but His self-manifestation, itself being mutable and impermanent. But if Brahman happens to be the sole reality, questions necessarily arise: Wherefrom and how do the division and multiplicity arise? and wherein are they established? To these questions the Upanishads reply: If Brahman is the sole Reality, division and multiplicity must have arisen from Brahman alone, they must be established in Brahman Himself and must have been occasioned by some inscrutable power of Brahman. That Power has been variously designated as the Maya of the Magician, Prakriti governed by Purusha, or the Will-Power of the Ishwara — a Power both of Knowledge and Ignorance. The logician's mind could not be satisfied with such statements; it could not find there explanations as to how the One becomes the Many or how division appears in the Indivisible. At last it hit upon an easy solution: The One can never become Many, division can never appear in the eternal Unity, multiplicity is an untruth, division is false, they are but *māyā* or illusions floating as

dreams in the eternal Self who is One without a second. But confusion does not cease even with this; for the questions arise: What is after all Maya? whence and how does it originate? and wherein is it established? Shankara replied: one cannot say what Maya is, for it is ineffable; Maya does not originate, Maya ever is and yet is not. Thus the confusion could not be cleared and no satisfactory solution was forthcoming. Only, as a result of this debate a second eternal and ineffable principle secured its place in the one and the unique Brahman; unity could thus not be maintained.

The explanation offered by the Upanishads is far better than that of Shankara. The Divine's own Nature is the creatrix of the world; that Nature is Shakti, the Chit-Shakti or the blissful Consciousness-Force of Sachchidananda (or the triune Unity of Existence absolute, Consciousness absolute and Bliss absolute). The Divine is the Super-self for the individual Self, so is Parameshwara for the world. The Will of the Parameshwara is imbued with creative potency; it is through that Will that the Many come out of the One and division appears in the Indivisible. Looked at from the point of view of the supernal, Brahman is real and the world is an appearance brought forth by the divine Maya (*Parāmāyā*)<sup>1</sup>, for it issues forth from Brahman and disappears into Brahman. The phenomenal universe exists in Time and Space, it does not exist in the transcendent status of the Brahman. Brahman is the continent of the phenomenal Time and Space; He cannot be circumscribed by Space and Time. The world has come out of Brahman and exists in Brahman; the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "It is by Maya that static truth of essential being becomes ordered truth of active being, — or, to put it in more metaphysical language, out of the supreme being in which all is all without barrier of separative consciousness emerges the phenomenal being in which all is in each and each is in all for the play of existence with existence, consciousness with consciousness, force with force, delight with delight." (Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine*, p. 108).

cosmos with a beginning and an end is established in the eternal inscrutable Brahman, it exists there after being created by the Power of *vidyā* and *avidyā* (the knowledge and the ignorance of Oneness) of Brahman. Just as man possesses in himself the power to conceive unreal objects through the exercise of imagination apart from the power to realise the actual truth, so in Brahman exist the powers of knowledge and ignorance (*vidyā* and *avidyā*), as also the real and the unreal appearances (*rta* and *anṛta*). But the appearances are the creations of Time and Space. Just as the imaginations of man get translated into reality in course of time and space, so too what we term as unreal is not altogether unreal, for it represents but the as yet unrealised aspect of the Truth. As a matter of fact, all without exception is real; the world is unreal in the transcendent status, but we who are not beyond Time and Space have no right to call the world false. In the bosom of Time and Space the world is by no means unreal, it is a reality. When the time will come and we will acquire the necessary strength to transcend Time and Space and merge in the Brahman, then and then alone we will be entitled to call the world an unreality; but if it comes from the mouth of one who has not got the right to say so it means a falsehood and a reversal of the course of dharma. Instead of declaring that Brahman is real and the world an illusion it would be better for us to state that Brahman is the Reality and the world too is Brahman. Such is the teaching of the Upanishads; the Aryan dharma is founded upon the truth: *sarvaṃ khalvidam brahma*, 'everything is indeed Brahman'.

## Nivritti

**T**HE wise in our country never accepted any narrow interpretation of *dharma*, the right law of Life, the Divine Law, opposed to the great activities of life. The great and profound axiom that all life is the field for *dharma* lay at the bottom of the Hindus' lore and learning. Tainted by the teachings of the West our knowledge and education have degenerated into a twisted and anomalous state. We often succumb to this false notion that nothing but renunciation, devotion or sattvic attitude can ever form part of *dharma*. Men in the West study religion with such a cramped notion. The Hindus used to divide all the activities of life into the two categories of *dharma* and *adharma* ('what is not *dharma*'); in the Western world they have made three divisions such as religion, irreligion and the cultivation of most of the pursuits and functionings of life outside the purview of religion and irreligion. To praise the Divine, to say prayers and to chant hymns, and listen to the sermons of the priest at the church and such other allied activities go by the name of religion. Morality forms no part of religion, that makes a separate category by itself; but many accept both religion and morality as auxiliary limbs of piety. Not to attend the church, to entertain the spirit of atheism or agnosticism, to disparage religion or even to show indifference towards it are

called acts of irreligion and immorality. According to the aforesaid view, these too make up impiety. But otherwise most of the pursuits and functionings fall outside of religion and irreligion. Religion and life, *dharma* and *karma* are separate categories — many amongst us interpret *dharma* in this distorted way. They style *dharma* all that pertains to saints and sannyasins, to God or to gods and goddesses and the renunciation of the world; but if you happen to raise any other topic, they will demur, “This concerns the world and not religion”. The occidental idea of religion has taken root in their mind; to hear the word ‘*dharma*’ makes them at once think of ‘religion’ and they unwittingly employ the word in the same sense. But if we impute such foreign connotations to our native terms, we are sure to lapse from the catholic and eternal Aryan notions and teachings. All life is the field of *dharma*, so is the life in the world. Only the culture of spiritual knowledge or the urge of devotion do not constitute *dharma*, action too is *dharma*. This great teaching pervades from ages past the whole of our literature — *eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*.

*Many think that although works form part of dharma, not so all types of work; only those that are governed by sattwa and conducive to nivṛtti*, abstention or withdrawal deserve this title. This too is a fallacious notion. Just as the *sattwic* actions are *dharma*, so are the *rajasic* ones. Just as showing compassion to creatures is *dharma*, so is destroying the enemy of the land in the field of a righteous battle. To sacrifice one's own happiness and wealth or even life, for the good of others, is *dharma*, even so is it *dharma* to maintain in a fit condition the body that is the instrument of *dharma*. Politics too is *dharma*, to write poetry, to paint pictures — that too is *dharma*, to gladden the hearts of others through sweet songs is also *dharma*. *Dharma* is whatever is not tainted by self-interest, be that work great or small. It is we who reckon a



thing great or small, there is nothing great or small before the Divine; He looks only at the attitude in which a person does the works befitting his nature or brought by unforeseen circumstances. The highest and greatest dharma is this: whatever work we do, to consecrate that to the feet of the Divine, to perform it as *yajña* or holy sacrifice and to accept it with an equal heart as something done by His own Nature:

*īśā vāsyamidaṁ sarvaṁ yat kicca jagatyāṁ jagat,  
tena tyaktena bhucjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam.  
kūrvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣecchataṁ samāḥ,<sup>1</sup>*

That is to say, the greatest way is to see in Him all that we see or do or think and to cover all that with his thought as if with a piece of raiment; neither sin nor irreligion can ever penetrate this covering. Without hankering for anything and giving up in our heart desire and attachment with regard to all works, to enjoy all that we receive in the flux of actions, to perform all types of works, to preserve the body: such is the conduct pleasing to God and this indeed is the greatest dharma. This is what constitutes true abstention. The *buddhi*<sup>2</sup> or the intelligent will is the seat of *nivṛtti* or abstention,

<sup>1</sup> *Isha Upanishads* 1, 2. Sri Aurobindo's own translation into English:

“All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy; lust not after any man's possession. Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years.”

<sup>2</sup> Cf. “Buddhi is the intelligence with its power of knowledge and will. Buddhi takes up and deals with all the rest of the action of the mind and life and body... From the point of view of yogic knowledge we may say that it is that instrument of the soul, of the inner conscious being in nature, of the Puruṣha, by which it comes into some kind of conscious and ordered possession both of itself and its surroundings.” (Sri Aurobindo; *The Synthesis of Yoga*: pp. 744, 759)

the vital and the senses are the field of *pravṛtti* or dynamic impulse. Buddhi should maintain the poise of a detached witness and act as the prophet or spokesman of God and, being free from desire, communicate to the life and the senses the inspiration sanctioned by Him; life and the senses will then act accordingly. The renunciation of actions is no great achievement, the renunciation of desire is the true renunciation. The physical withdrawal is no withdrawal, the non-involvement in consciousness is the true withdrawal.

# Prakamya

**WHEN** people speak of the eight-fold acquisitions (siddhi), they think of a few extraordinary powers gained through a supranatural yoga. Although it is true that a full play of the eight acquisitions can happen only in a yogi, still all these powers are not outside the common laws of nature; rather what we call natural laws are a disposition of these eight-fold powers.

The names of these eight powers are 'Mahima' (greatness), 'Laghima' (lightness), 'Anima' (smallness), 'Prakamya' (penetration or projection), 'Vyapti' (extension), 'Aisvarya' (splendour), 'Vasita' (control), 'Iseeta' (mastery); all these are known as the eight powers inherent in the nature of the Supreme. Take, for example, 'prakamya'; 'prakamya' means the full expression and free working of all the senses. In fact, all the working of the five senses, instruments of sense-knowledge and mind are included in prakamya. It is through the power of prakamya that the eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells, the skin feels touch, the tongue tastes and the mind receives all outside contacts. Normally people think that it is the physical senses that are the powers that hold knowledge; but the wise know that the eye does not see, it is the mind that sees, the ear hears not, it is the mind that hears, the nose smells not, it is the mind that smells. Men of still greater knowledge know that even the mind sees not, hears not, smells not, it is the being that sees, hears, smells. The Being is the knower, the being is God, part of the Supreme. The eight powers of the Supreme Divine are also the eight powers of the being.

An eternal portion of the Divine, in the world of souls,

becomes a soul, then meets the mind and the five senses in Nature, and draws them towards itself, uses in its own service and possesses for its own enjoyment. When God as a soul takes up a body or goes out of the body, then, as the wind takes away the perfumes from flowers, even so it takes away all the senses from the body. The Supreme Divine arches over the ears and eyes, the touch and taste and smell and the mind and enjoys their objects. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking (meantalising) are all functions of prakamya. The soul, an eternal portion of the Divine adopts all this working of Nature and in the course of Nature's transfiguration puts out the five senses and the mind in the subtle body. And as it takes up the physical body it enters there with all the six senses and at the time of death it departs taking with it the six senses. However, whether in the subtle body or in the physical body it is he who inhabits these six senses as their master and enjoys all their objects. In the causal body prakamya is there in its fulness. That power manifests itself first in the subtle body and then in the physical body. It does not from the very outset express itself wholly in the physical. The senses evolve gradually with the gradual evolution of the world. In the end they attain in some of the animals the degree of expression and intensity helpful for the human evolution. But in man himself the senses get somewhat dulled because we spend more energy for the development of the mind and intelligence. But this imperfect manifestation of prakamya is not its final stage. By the force of yoga all the powers of prakamya that have developed in the subtle body can be expressed in the physical body. This is the realisation of prakamya gained through yoga.

## II

Infinite and invincible is the might of the Supreme Divine. And the power that is inherent in his nature has an infinite

field and unhindered working. The soul is God, a portion of the Divine bounded in the subtle body and in the material body. He slowly unveils his divine powers. The senses of the physical body are particularly limited; and so long as man is limited by the powers of the physical body, he is superior to the animal only because of the development of his intelligence. Otherwise in the matter of the intensity of the senses and the faultless working of the mind — in one word in the realisation of *prakamyā*, power of projection — the animal is superior to man. What the scientists call instinct is this *prakamyā*. In the animal, the intelligence has developed to a very small extent and yet if one is to live in this world then one has need of a faculty that will show the way in all things as to what is to be done and what is to be rejected. The mind of the animal does this. Man's mind decides nothing, it is his intelligence that decides, it is his intelligence that settles, his mind is only an instrument, for registering impressions. Whatever we see, hear, feel turn into impressions in the mind. The intelligence accepts these impressions or rejects them or builds thoughts with them. The animal intelligence is incapable of taking decision in this way. Not by the intelligence but by the mind the animal understands and thinks. The mind has a curious capacity, it can understand in a moment what is happening in another mind. It does not argue but comprehends just what is happening in another mind. It does not argue but comprehends just what is necessary and chooses the right way for the work. We may not have seen anybody entering the room, still we may know somebody is hiding there. There is no cause for fear, still we are full of anxiety, as though there is some secret reason for fear somewhere. Our friend has not uttered a word, still before he opens his mouth we guess what he is going to say. Many instances of this kind may be given. All these are powers of the mind, the natural unfettered working of the

eleventh sense. But we have been so accustomed to act through our intelligence that we have almost lost the other power, the power of prakamya. If the animal did not possess prakamya, he would die out in a day or two. What is eatable, what is not, who is friend, who is foe, where is danger, where safety, all this knowledge, it is prakamya that gives to the animal. It is through prakamya that the dog without even understanding the language of the master can understand the meaning of his words or the idea in his mind. It is through prakamya that the horse always recognises the road on which it has gone once before. All these powers of prakamya belong to the mind. But even with regard to the power of the five senses the animal beats the man hollow. Which man is able like the dog to follow a scent through a hundred miles, and rejecting all other ways to pursue un-faillingly one particular animal? Or which man can see like the animal in the dark, or can discover through hearing only the sound made by some one from a secret place? An English newspaper while speaking of telepathy, that is, receiving thought from a distance, says it is a function of the mind. The animal has this capacity, man has not, therefore through the development of telepathy man will go down and not go up, an argument that befits very well a thick-headed Briton. True, in order to develop his intelligence man neglected the full development of the senses, but it was for his good, otherwise his intelligence would not have developed so quickly, if there had been no need of it. But once the intelligence has developed fully and faultlessly, it is now man's duty to develop again the eleventh sense. By this the knowledge ascertainable by the intellect will be widened and a full culture of the mind and intelligence will develop them into fit instruments, for the manifestation of the inner Divine. The development of any power whatsoever can never be a cause of decline, decline is possible only when the

power is applied in the wrong way, when it is used in a false manner, when it is tainted with disharmony. Many are the visible signs that are seen today which make us understand that the day is come for the eleventh sense to manifest again, for the power of prakamyā to begin to grow and increase.





## **VIII. NATIONALISM**



# The Old and The New

**I FIND** that my call to the country to pull down the prison of the old in order to create the new has given rise to much anger, fear and anxiety in the minds of many. They have got the idea that the old is all propitious; it is the irreproachable opulent treasure-house containing the riches of perfect truth and integral knowledge and dharma. The very Indianness of India depends on its antiquity.

We who are ready to march on the path of progress with our faith firmly fixed on the Divine and His power, and willing with undaunted courage to create the new forms of the future, are accused of being travellers on a reckless path, drunk with the wine of youth and nourished by Western culture. To make easy the advent of the new by removing the old is, they say, an extremely dangerous path that leads to ruin. If the old is destroyed then what will remain of the eternal religion of India? It is best to cling to the old, that imperishable penchant for liberation, that incomparable and beneficial illusionism, that immobile stability which constitute the sole wealth of India. I could have replied that it was difficult to comprehend or imagine a situation more disastrous, an end more deplorable, than the present condition of India and especially of Bengal. If this is the result of holding fast to the old, then what harm can there be in trying for the new? Which is better, to remain inactive relying on the old or to set out on the free road of an independent life by tearing to bits this net? But many of those who object are learned, thoughtful and honourable men. I have no intention of dismissing their words lightly. On the contrary, let me try to make them understand the significance of our words, the deeper truth of our call.

The eternal and the old are not one and the same thing. The eternal belongs to all time; what is beyond the past, the present and the future, what remains as an unbroken continuity through all changes, what we perceive as the immortal in mortal — that is eternal. We do not call the dharma and the fundamental thought of India, just because they are old, the eternal dharma, the eternal truth. This thought is eternal because it is the self-knowledge obtained by the realisation of the Self; this dharma is eternal because it is based on the eternal knowledge. The old is only a form of the eternal which was suitable to the age.

# The Problem of the Past

**COMPLETE** domination of the educated class in India by Europe for nearly a century deprived the Indians of the Aryan enlightenment and the Aryan nature. They became impotent and developed a predilection for inactivity and dependence on others. That tamasic feeling is now going. It would be helpful to discuss the reasons for its appearance. In the eighteenth century, tamasic ignorance and rajasic impulsiveness enveloped the whole of India. Thousands of men of strong asuric character, selfish, irresponsible, inimical to the country, took birth in India and prepared favourable conditions for her eventual bondage. At that hour, the English merchants came to her from the distant British Isles to fulfil a deep intention of the Divine. India, prostrate under a load of sins, passed into the hands of the foreigners. The world still looks with wonder at the miracle. In the absence of any other satisfactory explanation, every one is extolling to the skies the virtues of the English. In fact, the English have many qualities, otherwise they would not have become the greatest triumphant nation in the world. But those who say that the inferiority of the Indians and the superiority of the English, the vices of the Indians and the virtues of the English are the only reasons for this miracle, though not entirely wrong, still give rise to a few false ideas in the minds of people. Let us therefore carry out a penetrating investigation on the subject in order to arrive at the correct conclusion.

The conquest of India by the English is an unparalleled achievement in the history of the world. If this immense country were inhabited by a nation, weak and ignorant, inapt and uncivilised, then such a statement could not have been

made. On the contrary, India is the native country of the Rajputs, the Marathas, the Sikhs, the Pathans, the Moguls and others. The Bengalis with their quick intelligence, the thinkers from South India, the politician Brahmins from Maharashtra are children of Mother India. A capable statesman like Nana Farnavis, a general adept in the science of war like Madhaoji Scindia and mighty geniuses and kingdom-builders like Hyder Ali and Ranjit Singh could be found in every province at the time of the British conquest. In the eighteenth century, the Indians were not inferior to any other nation in power, courage or intelligence. India of the eighteenth century was the temple of Saraswati, the treasury of Lakshmi and the playground for Shakti. Yet the country which the mighty Muslims, constantly growing in power, took hundreds of years to conquer with the greatest difficulty and could never rule over in perfect security, that very country in the course of fifty years willingly admitted the sovereignty of a handful of English merchants and within a century went into an inert sleep under the shadow of their paramount empire. You might say, it was the result of the want of unity. We admit that the lack of unity is truly one of the principal reasons of our misfortune but then there was never any unity in India even in the past. There was no unity in the age of the Mahabharata nor in the time of Chandragupta or Ashoka. There was no unity during the period of the Muslim conquest of India or in the eighteenth century. The lack of unity could not be the exclusive reason for such a miracle to happen. If you say that the virtues of the English are the reason then I would ask those who know the history of that period whether they would venture to say that the English merchants of that epoch were superior to the Indians either in virtue or in merit. It is difficult to suppress laughter when we hear some one talking of the great qualities of those devils, cruel and powerful, selfish and avaricious, — Clive,

Warren Hastings and others, English merchants and robbers who by plundering and conquering India, have given to the world not only examples of incomparable bravery, labour and pride but also examples of unsurpassable wickedness. Courage, labour and pride are virtues of the Asuras, their good points. Clive and other Englishmen also possessed them. But their vices were in no way less than the vices of the Indians. Therefore the virtues of the English did not accomplish this miracle.

The English and the Indians both were equally Asuras. It was not a battle between the Gods and the Asuras but a fight of the Asuras against the Asuras. What was the sublime quality of the Occidental Asura which crowned with success his power, courage and intelligence? And what was the fatal defect of the Indian Asura which nullified his power, courage and intelligence? The answer is, in the first place, that though the Indians were equal to the English in all qualities, they did not have any national feeling whereas the English possessed it to the full. From this it must not be hastily concluded that the English were patriotic, and that it was patriotism which inspired them to build up successfully a vast empire in India. Patriotism and national consciousness are two different qualities. The patriot lives in a rapture of service to the motherland; he perceives her everywhere, looks upon her as a godhead, and to her offers all work done as a sacrifice for the good of the country; his own interest merges in the interest of the country. The English of the eighteenth century did not have this feeling as it cannot abide permanently in the heart of any Occidental materialist nation. The English did not come to India for the good of their country. They came here to do business, to make money for themselves. Not out of love for their country did they conquer or pillage India but they conquered it mainly in their own interest. However, without being patriots, they

had the national feeling; the pride that “our country is the best, the traditions and customs, religion, character, morality, strength, courage, intelligence, opinion and work of our nation are inimitably perfect, unattainable by others”; the belief that “the good of my country is my good, the glory of my country is my glory, the prosperity of my fellow countrymen is my prosperity; instead of seeking only personal ends, I shall advance at the same time the interest of my nation; it is the duty of every one in the country to fight for her honour, glory and prosperity; it is the religion of the hero, if need be, to die bravely in that fight”; this sense of duty exhibits the main characteristic of the national consciousness. Patriotism is in its nature sattwic, whereas the national consciousness is rajasic. One who can lose his ego in the ego of the country is the ideal patriot; one who aggrandises the ego of the country, all the while maintaining intact his own ego is a nationally conscious individual. The Indians of that epoch were wanting in national consciousness. We do not mean to say that they never cared for the good of their nation, but if there was the least conflict between their personal interest and that of the country, they often sacrificed the good of the country to achieve their own. According to us, the lack of national consciousness was a more fatal defect than the lack of unity. If full national consciousness spread everywhere in the country, then unity could be realised even in this land afflicted with division. Mere verbal repetition, “We want unity, we want unity!” is not sufficient. This is the principal reason of the conquest of India by the British. The Asuras fought against the Asuras; but the nationally conscious and unified Asuras defeated the Asuras equal to them in all other qualities but disunited and devoid of national consciousness. According to the Divine law, one who is strong and efficient wins the wrestling contest; one who is fast and enduring arrives first at the



destination. High moral qualities or merits alone cannot make one win a race or wrestling bout; the necessary strength is indispensable. Thus even a wicked and Asuric nation, conscious of itself, is able to found an empire, while for want of national consciousness a virtuous people possessing many high moral qualities loses its independence, and eventually forfeiting its noble character and good qualities falls into decadence.

From the political point of view this explains best how India was conquered. But there is a greater truth hidden behind it. We have already mentioned that tamasic ignorance and rajasic impulse had become very predominant in India. This state precedes a downfall. Concentration on the rajasic quality increases the rajasic power; but pure rajas soon changes into tamas. Arrogant and disorderly rajasic endeavour soon gets tired and exhausted and finally degenerates into impotence, dejection and inactivity. The rajasic power can become durable if it is turned towards sattwa. In the absence of the sattwic nature, at least a sattwic ideal is indispensable; that ideal imparts order and a steady strength to the rajasic power. The English always cherished these two great sattwic ideals, order and liberty, which have made them great and victorious in the world. In the nineteenth century this nation was seized by the desire to do good to others, and thanks to it, England rose to the summit of national grandeur. Moreover, the insatiable thirst for knowledge, which drove the Europeans to make hundreds of scientific discoveries and people by the hundred to lay down their lives willingly in order to gain even a drop of knowledge, that strong sattwic yearning for knowledge was active among the English. It was this sattwic power from which the English drew their strength; their supremacy, courage and force are diminishing, and fear, discontent and lack of self-confidence are on the increase because the sattwic power is waning; the

rajasic power having lost its sattwic aim is sliding into tam-  
as. On the other hand, the Indians were a great sattwic na-  
tion. It was because of this sattwic power that they became  
incomparable in knowledge, courage and in spite of their  
disunity were able to resist and throw back foreign attacks  
for a thousand years. Then began the increase of rajas and  
the decrease of sattwa. At the time of the Muslim advent,  
the widespread knowledge had already begun to shrink and  
the Rajputs who were predominantly rajasic occupied the  
throne of India. Northern India was in the grip of wars and  
internal quarrels and, owing to a decadence of Buddhism,  
Bengal was overcast with tamas. Spirituality sought refuge  
in South India and by the grace of that sattwic power South  
India was able to retain her freedom for a long time. Yearning  
for knowledge, progress of knowledge slowly declined; in-  
stead, erudition was more and more honoured and glori-  
fied; spiritual knowledge, development of yogic power and  
inner realisation were mostly replaced by tamasic religious  
worship and observance of rajasic ceremonies to gain worldly  
ends; when the cult of the four great orders of society dis-  
appeared, people began to attach more importance to out-  
ward customs and actions. Such an extinction of the na-  
tional dharma had brought about the death of Greece, Rome,  
Egypt and Assyria; but the Aryan race which held the an-  
cient religion was saved by the rejuvenating flow of heavenly  
nectar which gushed from time to time from the ancient source.  
Shankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Nanak, Ramdas and Tu-  
karam brought back to life a moribund India by sprinkling  
her with that divine nectar. However, the current of rajas  
and tamas was so strong that by its pull, even the best were  
altered into the worst; common people began to justify their  
tamasic nature with the knowledge given by Shankara; the  
cult of love revealed by Chaitanya became a cover for ex-  
treme tamasic inactivity; the Marathas who were taught by  
Ramdas, forgot their Maharashtrian dharma, wasted the power

in selfish pursuits and internal conflicts and destroyed the kingdom founded by Shivaji and Bajirao. In the eighteenth century this current attained its maximum force. Society and religion were confined within narrow limits as ordained by a few modern law-givers; the pomp of outward rites and ceremonies came to be designated as religion; with the Aryan knowledge vanishing and the Aryan character dying, the ancient religion abandoned society and took shelter in the forest-life of the Sannyasi and in the heart of the devotee. India was then enveloped in the thickest darkness of *tamas*, yet a stupendous rajasic impulse under the cloak of an outward religion relentlessly pursued vile and selfish ends, bringing ruin to the nation and the country. Power was not lacking in the country, but owing to the eclipse of the Aryan dharma and of *sattwa*, that power unable to defend itself, brought about its own destruction. Finally, the Asuric power of India vanquished by the Asuric power of Britain became shackled and lifeless. India plunged into an inert sleep of *tamas*. Obscurity, unwillingness, ignorance, inaction, loss of self-confidence, sacrifice of self-respect, love of slavery, emulation of foreigners and adoption of their religion, dejection, self-depreciation, pettiness, indolence, etc. all these are characteristic qualities of the *tamas*. Which of these was lacking in nineteenth century India? Each and every endeavour of that century, because of the predominance of these qualities, bore everywhere the seal of the *tamas*ic force.

When God roused India, in the first flush of her awakening the flaming power of the national consciousness began to flow swiftly in the veins of the nation. At the same time, a maddening emotion of patriotism enraptured the youth. We are not Europeans, we are Asiatics. We are Indians, we are Aryans. We have gained the national consciousness but unless it is steeped in patriotism our national consciousness

cannot blossom. Adoration of the Mother must be the foundation of that patriotism. The day “Bande Mataram”, the song of Bankimchandra, crossed the barrier of the outer senses and knocked at the heart, on that day patriotism was born in our heart; on that day the Mother's image was enshrined in our heart. The country is Mother, the country is Divine, — this sublime precept which forms a part of the Upanishadic teachings is the seed of the national rising. As the “Jiva” is a part of the Divine, as the power of the “Jiva” is also a part of the Divine power, so also the seventy million Bengalis, the collectivity of three hundred million Indians are part of all-pervading Vasudeva; in the same manner, Mother India, adorned with many hands and powers, shelter of these three hundred millions, embodiment of Shakti, is a force of the Divine Mother, the Goddess, the very body of the universal Mahakali. Excitement, passion, clamour, insult, oppression and torture endured during these five years in order to awaken the love for the Mother and establish Her image in the heart and mind of the nation were decreed by the Divine. That work is over. What next?

Next, the ancient power of the Aryans has to be resurrected. First, the Aryan character and the Aryan education must reappear; secondly, the yogic power has to be developed again; lastly, that yearning for knowledge, that capacity for work worthy of an Aryan must be utilised in order to assemble necessary material for the new age; the mad passion worked up during these last five years has to be harnessed and directed towards the accomplishment of the Mother's work. Young men all over the country, who are seeking a path and looking for work, let them get over the passion and find out a means for acquiring power. The sublime work that has to be accomplished cannot be achieved by passion alone; strength is necessary. The force that can be acquired from the teachings of your ancestors can do

the impossible. That Force is preparing to descend into your body. That Force is the Mother Herself. Learn to surrender to Her. The Mother by making you Her instrument will accomplish the work so swiftly, so powerfully that the world will be astounded. All your efforts will come to nothing without that Force. The image of the Mother is enshrined in your heart, you have learnt to serve and adore the Mother; now surrender to the Mother within you. There is no other way to accomplish the work.

## The Country and Nationalism

**T**HE country and nothing but the country is the foundation of Nationalism, neither the nation, nor religion, nothing else matters. All other elements are secondary and contributory, it is the country alone that is primary and essential. Many mutually exclusive races live in the land, perhaps there never was enough goodwill, unity or friendliness. What is there in that to worry about? When it is one country, one Mother — there is bound to be unity one day, and out of the union of many races shall emerge a strong and invincible nation. Our religious views may differ, there might be endless conflict among the communities, neither concordance nor any hope of concordance, still one need not have any misgivings. By the powerful magnetic attraction of the Mother embodied in the country, by fair means or foul — whether by mutual understanding, or by force or by appeasement — harmony will be achieved; communalism, separation will be drowned in fraternal feelings, in a common love and worship of the Mother. In a land of many languages brother is unable to understand brother, we do not sympathise with each other's feelings, between heart and heart there are immense barriers. These have to be overcome with much effort. Yet one need not fear. There is the same current of thought in every mind, of one country, one life, and under pressure of need a common language is bound to evolve, either one of the existing languages will come to be accepted, else a new language will be created. In the Mother's temple all will use that language. There is nothing permanent about these obstacles. The Mother's need, her attraction and deeper desire are not to be frustrated, these will surmount all

obstacles and conflicts. Born of the same Mother, on her lap we live, in her five elements we merge and melt, in spite of a thousand real dissensions we shall unite at Her call. This is a law of Nature, the lesson of history everywhere: the country is the base of nationalism, an inevitable bond. Where there is a country of one's own, nationalism is bound to be there. On the other hand, if the country is not one, even if the race, the religion and the language are the same, nothing will come of that. One day a separate race is sure to appear. By yoking together separate countries a great empire may be built. But that is not how a great nationality comes about. When the empire declines, separate nations spring up. Very often it is this inherent separateness that causes the empire to crash.

But even if the result is inevitable, the speed or delay with which it materialises will depend on human effort, human intelligence or the absence of it. In our country there never was unity before, but there had always been a pull, a current tending towards unity, towards welding the different parts into some kind of unity. There were some major obstacles regarding this natural attempt: first, the provincial differences; secondly, the Hindu-Muslim conflict; thirdly, the lack of a vision of the country as Mother. Its vast area, the delays and difficulties of communication, and the differences in language are some of the primary factors responsible for provincial disunity. Thanks to modern science, except for the last factor, the rest have lost their separative vigour. In spite of Hindu-Muslim differences, Akbar did manage to unify India. And had Aurangzeb not been a victim of lowly impulses, the Hindus and Muslims of India, like the Catholics and Protestants of England, would have long been united thanks to the time factor, habit and the threat of foreign invasion. Due to Aurangzeb's folly and the instigation of some of our English diplomats, the fire of conflict, fanned once more, refuses to go out. Our chief obstacle, however, is

an absence of vision of the country as our Mother. For the most part our politicians have been incapable of a close and full vision of the Mother. Ranjit Singh or Guru Gobind Singh had seen only the Mother of the Land of the Five Rivers instead of Mother India; Shivaji or Baji Rao had seen a Mother of the Hindus instead of Mother India. The other Maharashtrian statesmen had seen only a Mother for the Maharashtrians. At the time of the Partition we ourselves had been blessed with a vision of Mother Bengal, that was a vision of unity, hence the future unity and progress of Bengal is assured. But the unified image of Mother India is yet to be realised. In the Congress, the Mother India that we hymned, adored and worshipped was a figure of fancy, a companion and obliging maid of the British Raj, an undivine illusion in occidental outfit. She was indeed not our Mother. All the same, hid in a deep or vague murkiness our true Mother drew our heart and soul. The day we see Her true indivisible image, struck by Her beauty and grace, we shall eagerly lay down our lives in Her service. Then this obstacle will be gone, and India's unity, freedom and progress be easier to achieve. The barrier of language will no longer divide. Accepting Hindi as a link language but with due regard for one's own regional language, we shall get rid of the disability. We shall succeed in finding a true solution of the Hindu-Muslim conflict. For want of a vision of the country as the Mother, the urge to do away with these obstacles has not been strongly felt. That is why the means has not been found and the conflict been growing worse. What is required is an image of the country, true and indivisible. But if, under the illusion of that true vision, we still cherish only the Mother of the Hindus or Hindu nationalism we shall fall for the old error and deprive ourselves of the full flowering of Nationalism itself.



# The True Meaning of Freedom

**FREEDOM** is the goal of our political struggle, but there is a difference of opinion regarding the true meaning of freedom. Some say it is full autonomy, some say it is colonial self-government (Dominion Status), and yet others mention that it is 'Swaraj', full political independence. The Aryan Rishis used to designate the practical and spiritual freedom and its fruit, the inviolable Ananda, as 'Swarajya', self-empire. Political freedom is but a limb of Swarajya, self-empire. It has two aspects — external freedom and internal freedom. Complete liberty from foreign domination is the external freedom, and democracy is the highest expression of the internal freedom. As long as there is an alien government or ruler, no nation can be called a free nation possessing self-empire. As long as democracy is not established, no individual belonging to a nation can be deemed a free man. We want complete independence, free from the servitude to foreigners, complete authority of the individual in his own home. This is our political aim.

I shall describe briefly the cause of this yearning for freedom. For all people, subjection is a messenger and servitor of death. Only freedom can protect life and make any progress possible. Swadharma (self-law) or work and endeavour fixed by one's own nature is the only path of progress. The foreigner in occupation of the country, even if he is very kind, and our well-wisher, will not think twice about putting the load of an alien dharma on our heads. Regardless of whether his intention is noble or wicked, this can never do us anything but harm. We have neither the strength nor the inclination to advance on the path suitable

to the nature of an alien people; if we follow it, we may be able to imitate them well enough, ingeniously covering up our own degradation with the symbols and robes of progress of the foreigner, but during an ordeal our weakness and sterility, resulting from the pursuit of a foreign dharma, will become evident. We too shall die out because of that sterility.

The ancient European nations that were governed by Rome and that adopted her civilisation lived happily for a long time but their eventual plight was dreadful. The abject state to which they were reduced accounted for the loss of their manhood. Such a miserable condition and forfeiture of manhood are the inevitable outcome of a people who adore subjection. Death of the self-law of a people and adoption of an alien law provide the principal basis for the continuation of foreign rule; if even in our bondage we can protect or resurrect the self-law of our being, then the chains of slavery will automatically fall away from us. Therefore, if any nation loses its freedom by its own fault, an untruncated and full independence should be its first aim and political ideal. Colonial self-government is not independence. However, if full power is unconditionally given with it and the nation does not have to abandon its ideal and self-law of being, then it can be a helpful condition prior to full independence.

Now it is being said that to entertain any hope of independence outside the British Empire is a mark of arrogance, an incitement to treason; those who are not satisfied with colonial self-government must be guilty of treason and rebellion against the State and as such must be excluded from all political activity. But a hope or ideal of this nature has nothing to do with treason. From the inception of the British rule, many great English politicians have been saying that an independence of this kind is also the aim of the British officials and even now British judges openly proclaim

that propagation of the ideal of freedom and lawful endeavour to attain it do not constitute a violation of the law, nor are they a crime. The solution to the question whether we should be independent outside the British Empire or within it, does not seem to interest the National Party. We want full independence. If the British were to organise such a united empire that the Indians, while remaining within it, could realise their full independence, why should we have any objection to it? We are struggling for independence, not out of spite against the British, but in order to save our country. However we are not prepared to show our countrymen the wrong path of false politics, the wrong way to protect the country by admitting an ideal other than that of full independence.

## A Word About Society

**MAN** is not born for the society — but the society is created for him. Those who forget the inner Divinity in man and give a higher place to the society are worshipping the undivine. Meaningless worship of society is a sign of artificiality in human life, a deterioration of the self-law.

Man does not belong to the society but to the Divine. Those who try to weaken the Divine within him by imposing, on his mind and life and soul, slavery to the society and its numerous exterior bonds, have lost sight of the true goal of humanity. The sin of this oppression does not permit the Divine within him to awake, the Power goes to sleep. If you have to serve at all, then serve the Divine, not the society. There is sweetness as well as progress in this service. The highest felicity, liberty in bondage, and unrestricted freedom are its crowning results.

The society cannot be the aim; it is a means, an instrument. Self-inspired knowledge and power emerging from action and shaped by the Divine are the true guides of the life of man. Their progressive growth is the aim of the spiritual evolution of life. This knowledge, this power should use society as an instrument, mould it, and, if need be, even modify it. This is the natural condition. An unprogressive and stagnant society becomes the grave of lifeless manhood; the outpouring of life and the radiation of the force of knowledge are bound to bring about a transformation of society. To tie man with a thousand chains to the social machinery and crush him will lead to inevitable immobility and decay.

We have lessened man and extolled society. But a society cannot grow in this way, it becomes petty, stagnant and sterile. Instead of utilising society as a means of our progressive development, we have reduced it to an instrument of oppression and bondage; this is the reason for our degeneration, indolence and helpless impotence. Elevate man, open the gateway of the temple where the Divine secretly shines within him. The society will automatically become noble, beautiful in every limb, a successful field for the enterprise of a free and high intention.

# Fraternity

**T**HE three ideals, or ultimate aims of modern civilisation which were proclaimed at the time of the French revolution, are generally known in our language as the three principles of liberty, equality and amity. But what goes by the name of fraternity in the language of the West is not amity. Amity describes a state of mind. One who is a well-wisher of all beings and harms nobody, that benevolent person, free from violence and engaged in the well-being of all beings, is called 'a friend'; amity is the state of his mind. Such a state of mind is an asset to the individual; it can direct his life and work, but it cannot possibly become the mainstay of a political and social organisation. The three principles of the French revolution are not ethical rules for guiding the life of an individual but three ties or bonds capable of remoulding the structure of society and country, a fundamental truth of Nature yearning to manifest itself in the external condition of society and country. Fraternity means brotherhood.

The French revolutionaries were very anxious to gain social and political liberty and equality, their eyes were not set so much on fraternity. Absence of fraternity is the cause of incompleteness of the French revolution. This extraordinary rising established political and social liberty in Europe; even political equality to some extent found a place in the political organisation and legislation of a few countries. But without fraternity, social equality is impossible. And because of the absence of fraternity Europe was deprived of social equality. The full development of these three basic principles is interdependent: fraternity is the basis of equality; without it equality cannot be established.

Only brotherly feeling can bring about brotherhood. There is no brotherly feeling in Europe, equality and liberty are tainted there. That is why in Europe chaos and revolution is the order of the day. Proudly Europe calls this chaos and revolution progress and advancement.

Whatever brotherly feeling exists in Europe rests on the country: "We belong to one country, we have the same advantages and disadvantages, unity, safeguards, national freedom" — this knowledge is the cause of unity in Europe. There is another knowledge which stands against it: "we are all men, all men should be united, division between man and man is born of ignorance and is harmful; so let us give up nationalism and establish a unity of the human race". A conflict is going on between these two contradictory truths, especially in France, that emotional country where the great ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity was first proclaimed. However, the fact is that these two truths and feelings are not contradictory. Nationalism is a truth, unity of the human race is also a truth and only the harmony of these two truths can bring the highest good of humanity; if our intelligence is incapable of finding that harmony and becomes attached to the conflict of principles which are not contradictory, then we must consider that intelligence a misguided rajasic intelligence.

Europe, disgusted with political and social liberty without any equality, is now racing towards Socialism. There are two parties, the Anarchists and the Socialists. The Anarchist says, "Political liberty is an illusion; to establish a machine of torture in the name of government, by influential men, for crushing individual liberty on the pretext of preserving political freedom, is a sign of this illusion; therefore, abolish all kinds of government and establish genuine freedom." Who will protect liberty and equality in the absence of any government and prevent the powerful from torturing the

weak? In answer to this objection the Anarchist says, "Expand education, spread complete knowledge and brotherly feeling; knowledge and brotherly feeling will protect liberty and equality. If an individual violates the brotherly feeling and brings suffering to others, he can be punished with death by anybody." The Socialist does not say the same thing. He says, "Let the government remain, the government is useful. Let us establish society and the political structure on complete equality; when all the present defects of society and of the political organisation are rectified, the human race will be completely happy and free and full of brotherly feeling." For this reason the Socialist wants to unite society; if there is no personal property but everything belongs to society — as with the property of a joint family belonging not to any individual but to the family which is the body, the individual being only a limb of that body — then division will disappear from society and it will become one.

The Anarchist makes the mistake of attempting to do away with the government before fraternity is established. It will be long before the brotherly feeling can come; meanwhile, abolition of the government will result in the supremacy of animal instincts on account of the extreme chaos and disorder ensuing. The king is the centre of society; formation of a government enables men to avoid animality. When complete fraternity is established then God instead of employing any earthly representative will himself rule the earth and sit on the throne in every one's heart. The reign of the Saints of the Christians, our Satyayuga, will be established. Mankind has not progressed so far as to achieve this state soon, only a partial realisation is possible.

The Socialist errs in trying to establish fraternity on equality, instead of establishing equality on fraternity. It is possible to have fraternity without having equality; but



equality without fraternity cannot last and it will be destroyed by dissension, quarrels and inordinate greed for power. First we must have complete fraternity and then only complete equality.

The brotherly feeling is an outward condition: if we all remain full of brotherly feeling, have one common property, one common good and one common effort, that is fraternity. The external condition is based on the inner state. Love for the brother infuses life into fraternity and makes it real. There must be a basis even for that brotherly love. We are children of one Mother, compatriots; this feeling can provide the basis for a kind of brotherly love; though this feeling becomes a basis of political unity, social unity cannot be achieved in this way. We have to go still deeper: just as we all have to overpass our own mothers in order to worship the Mother of our compatriots, in the same way we have to transcend and realise the Universal Mother. We have to transcend the partial Shakti in order to reach the Shakti in her completeness. But, just as in our adoration of Mother India, though we overpass our physical mother yet we do not forget her, in the same way, in our adoration of the Universal Mother we shall transcend Mother India and not forget her. She too is Kali, she too is the Mother.

Only religion provides a basis for fraternity. All the religions say, "We are one, division is born of ignorance and jealousy." Love is the central teaching of all religions. Our religion also says, "We are all one, the dividing intellect is a sign of ignorance, the sage should look on all with an equal eye and perceive the one soul, one Narayan equally established in everyone." Universal love comes from this equality full of devotion. But this knowledge which is the highest goal of humanity will spread everywhere only at the final stage of our journey; meanwhile we have to realise it partially within, and without, in the family, society, country, in every being.

Man is always endeavouring to give an enduring form to fraternity by creating family, clan, society, country, and binding them firmly by laws and scriptures. Up till now that effort has failed. The basis exists and so does the form. But what is needed is some inexhaustible force which will preserve the life of fraternity, so that the basis remains unimpaired and the form becomes everlasting or is continually renewed. God has not yet manifested that Force. He has come down as Rama, Krishna, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna and is preparing to transform the selfish heart of man into a fit receptacle of love. How far is that day when He shall descend again and make this earth a paradise by spreading eternal love and bliss and implanting it in the heart of man!

# Indian Painting

**A**LL Western and Eastern nations have been obliged to admit that our Mother India was an imperishable treasure-house of knowledge, spirituality, art and literature. But formerly Europe was under the impression that Indian painting was not so highly developed as our literature and other arts, but was horrible and devoid of beauty. We too, enlightened by European knowledge and looking through European glasses, turned up our noses at the sight of Indian painting and sculpture, thus demonstrating our refined intellect and irreproachable taste. The mansions of the rich became filled with Greek statues and things in the 'cast' of English paintings or their lifeless imitations, even the walls of the houses of ordinary people were decorated with frightful oil-paintings. The Indians whose tastes and skills in art had been unmatched in the world, the Indians whose choice of colour and form had been naturally faultless, the same people grew blind, lost the intellectual capacity for seizing the inner significance and developed a taste even worse than that of an Italian labourer. Raja Ravi Varma was acclaimed the best Indian artist.

However, recently thanks to the efforts of some art-lovers the eyes of the Indians are opening and they are beginning to appreciate their own skill and their own vast wealth of art forms. Animated and inspired by the extraordinary genius of Sri Abanindranath Tagore, a few young men are resurrecting the lost art of Indian painting. By virtue of their talent a new age is being ushered in Bengal. After this, one may expect that India, instead of looking through the eyes of the English will see with her own eyes and, discarding the imitations of the West, depend upon her own clear intellect and once again express the eternal thoughts of India through colour and form.

There are two reasons for the Europeans' dislike of Indian painting. They say Indian paintings are incapable of imitating Nature: instead of drawing a man like a man, a horse like a horse, a tree like a tree, they draw deformed images; they have no perspective, the pictures appear flat and unnatural. The Europeans' second objection used to be that all these pictures lack beauty of form and feeling. This objection is no longer in their mouths. When they saw the incomparable serenity in our ancient images of Buddha and the radiance of supernal power in our ancient statues of Durga, they were charmed and stupefied. The greatest acknowledged art-critics of England have admitted that the Indian painter might not know the perspective of Europe, but the Indian laws of perspective were very beautiful, complete and reasonable. It is true, the Indian painter or other artist does not imitate the external world, but not because he lacks the capacity: his aim is to go beyond the outward scene and appearance and express the inner feeling and truth. The external shape is only a robe, a disguise of the inner truth — we lose ourselves in the beauty of the mass and cannot see what is hidden within. Therefore, Indian painters deliberately modified the outer form in order to make it more suitable for expressing the inner truth. One is amazed to see how beautifully they express the inner truth of an mental state or of an event, in each limb, in the environment, attitude and dress. This, indeed, is the main characteristic of Indian painting, its highest development.

The West is busy with the false external perception, they are devotees of the shadow. The East seeks the inner truth, we are devotees of the eternal. The West worships the body, we worship the soul. The West is in love with name and form, we can never be satisfied unless we get to the eternal object. This difference is evident everywhere: as in religion, philosophy and literature, so in painting and architecture.

# Hirobumi Ito

**T**wo types of souls are born among men. Those who manifest their innate divine nature through a slow process of progressive evolution are ordinary men. And those who are born as Vibhutis to help that process of evolution are a class apart. Accepting the character and mode of conduct of the nation, and the *zeitgeist* of the age in which they are born, they achieve ends which the ordinary people cannot attain, change the course of the world to some extent, and then return to their own respective occult worlds leaving immortal names in history. Their character and contribution are beyond man's praise and blame. Whether we praise or condemn them, they have fulfilled the tasks given them by God, and the future of humanity, determined by their works, will speed on in the decreed course. Caesar, Napoleon, Akbar, Shivaji are such Vibhutis, Hirobumi Ito, the great man of Japan, belongs to this category and not one of the people I have just mentioned was superior to him in native qualities, genius, the greatness of his effort or in the future results he produced. Every one is aware of the pre-eminent position of Ito in history and in the tremendous progress of Japan. But all may not know that it was Ito who conceived the course, means and aim of that progress and achieved that great transformation single-handed, all the other great men were only his instruments. It was Ito indeed who conceived in his mind the unity, independence, education, army, navy, economic prosperity, commerce and politics of Japan and translated that dream into reality.

He was preparing the future Japanese empire. Whatever he did he achieved mostly from behind the scenes. The world

learns immediately of what the Kaiser or Lloyd George is thinking or doing. But no one knew what Ito was thinking or doing — when his secret imagination and effort bore fruit, only then the world learnt with astonishment: this was being prepared so long. And yet what great effort, what wonderful genius is manifested in his achievement. If Ito had been used to publicise his great vision, the whole world would have laughed at him as a mad idealist given to fruitless dreams and bent upon achieving the impossible. Who would have believed that within fifty years, Japan would, maintaining its priceless independence, absorb western culture, become a very powerful nation like England, France and Germany, defeat China and Russia, spread Japanese trade and commerce and painting, and also induce admiration for the Japanese intelligence and fear of Japanese courage, capture Korea and Formosa, lay the foundation of a great empire, achieve the utmost progress in unity, freedom, equality and national education. Napoleon used to say: “I have banished the word ‘impossible’ from my dictionary”. Ito did not say but in fact did so. Ito's achievement is greater than Napoleon's. We should have no regret that the great man has been killed by a bullet of an assassin. It is a matter of gratification, of good fortune and something to be proud of that one who dedicated his life to Japan, whose one preoccupation and object of worship was Japan, has also sacrificed it for his country. “Slain thou shalt win heaven, victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth”. In the destiny of Hirobumi Ito we witness the attainment of both these fruits in the same life-tree.

# Guru Govind Singh

**A LIFE** of Guru Govind Singh, written by Shri Basanta Kumar Banerji, has been received by us recently. In this book, the character of Guru Govind Singh and his political activities have been brought out in a very fine manner in simple and lucid style. But the tenth Guru of the Sikhs was not merely a military leader and statesman. He was also a great religious personality and a preacher commissioned by God. He gave a new form to the sattwic type of religion in Nanak, with its rich store of Vedantic thought. This fine biography could thus have avoided a touch of incompleteness, had it given a full account of the Guru's views on religion and the transformation that he effected in Sikh religion and society. The writer has made it easier to appreciate the Guru's character and the historical causes and circumstances of his advent, by giving the early history of the Sikh people. It would have helped a great deal in understanding the results of the tenth Guru's extraordinary work and the fruit of his mighty endeavour, had a brief account been likewise given of the subsequent events.

The history of the Sikhs has Guru Govind Singh as its central theme. The true biography of this great personality could be nothing but the history of that people to whose organisation he applied all his strength and genius. In the absence of both the early and the later history of the Sikh community, a biography of Govind Singh would present a rather fragmentary appearance, like the trunk of a tree shorn of its roots and branches. It is to be hoped that the author will add the missing parts in the second edition of his work and make it a beautiful whole by giving a full description of

the great Sikh personality's views on religion and his work in the cause of social reform.

On reading this book, the mind is powerfully attracted by the magnanimous nature and extraordinary activities of this great hero, patriot and founder of the Khalsa. Any one who has given himself to the work for the national cause or is thinking of doing so will find this life augmenting his strength and fortifying the divine inspiration.



# National Resurgence

**O**UR opponents, the Britishers, have from the beginning called the present mighty and all-embracing movement as an outcome of hatred. And a few Indians who like to imitate them never miss repeating this judgement. We are engaged in a spiritual mission and we are using our energy in the movement of national awakening because it is an important limb of the Divine Law (*Dharma*). If this movement were born of hatred, then we would not have dared to proclaim it as part of the spiritual discipline. Conflict, battle, even killing may have a place in the Divine Law, but hatred and malice have to be rejected for the sake of progress; therefore they who foster these impulses in themselves or try to awaken them in the nation fall into ignorant delusion and give shelter to vice. We cannot say that hatred never entered into this movement. When one side is full of hatred and malice, then it is inevitable that the other side also, as a reaction, should be liable to hatred and malice. In Bengal some British newspapers and some arrogant violent individuals by their behaviour have brought into being this vicious element. The naturally forbearing and patient Indians have suffered for long indifference, contempt, hatred, reproach, from day to day in the newspapers and also while travelling in train, on road, in all meeting places, abuse and insult and even physical blows. In the end, when it became intolerable even for them, they started returning abuse for abuse, blow for blow. Many Englishmen have admitted this error and this wrong outlook on the part of their own countrymen. Besides, the Government officials have blundered grievously and been doing for a very long time things that are against the interest of the people, that create disaffection and bring

pain and suffering. Man is naturally prone to anger when his self-interest is attacked, when he meets unfriendly behaviour, when violence is done to any object or idea dear to him, then this fire of anger that is lodged in every creature flares up and as it goes to the extreme in a blind rush it gives rise to hatred and hate-born acts. Discontent was growing within unseen in the heart of the Indian for a very long time because of the wrong behaviour and insolent words of some Englishmen and because of the Indian citizen not possessing any real right or power in the government of his country. Finally at the time when Lord Curzon was the ruler, this discontent grew to such intensity and the unbearable heartfelt pain due to the partition of Bengal kindled such an extraordinary countrywide flame of anger, the aggressive policy of the rulers adding to it, that it resulted in fierce hatred. We must admit all the same that many became impatient and poured a huge amount of butter as fuel into that fire of hatred. God's play is curious. In his creation it is the conflict of good and evil that brings about progress and yet it is the evil that often helps the good, it is the evil that produces the good which God desires. This supreme evil, this creation of hatred had also a good result, it is this that in the Indian Nature, overwhelmed by 'tamas', a fierce force of 'rajas' arose capable of awakening the rajasic power. But that is no reason for us to praise the evil or the evil doer. One who does evil through rajasic egoism, although his action may help to bring out the good result decreed by God can in no way escape from the bondage that his responsibility and its consequences involve. They are mistaken who spread national hatred. The result obtained by spreading disinterested spiritual discipline is ten times greater than that obtained by the spread of hatred, for there one has not to suffer from unrighteousness and the consequences of unrighteousness; instead righteousness increases and unmixed

virtue finds play. We shall not write of national hatred and malice (spite) and we shall ask others also not to do such undesirable things. If there is a conflict of interests between nations and if that becomes an inevitable circumstance of the present situation then we have the right legally and morally to promote the interests of our own nation at the cost of the interest of the other. When there is oppression and injustice we have the legal and moral right to protest firmly against it and to do away with it through the pressure of our national force and through all just means and just remedies. If any man, whether he is a government official or a countryman of ours, says or does a thing that is wrong or unjust or harmful, we have the right to protest and counter it by means of sarcasm and satire, never of course going against the gentleman's code of behaviour. But we have no right to cherish or create hatred or spite against any nation or individual. If such a lapse has happened in the past it is a past thing; in the future such a lapse should not happen. This is our advice to all, particularly to all newspapers and youthful workers for the cause of nationalism.

The aryan knowledge, the aryan education, the aryan ideal is quite different from the knowledge, education, ideal of the materialistic, vitalistic Occident given to physical enjoyment. According to the Europeans, where there is no interest or search for happiness, there can be no work to be done. Without hatred, there can be neither conflict nor fighting. Either you have to work with a desire, or you have to sit down and become a desireless ascetic. Such is their notion. It is through the struggle for existence that the world has been built up, and is achieving progress, this is the keynote of their science. Since the days when the Aryans moved from the arctic land towards the south and conquered the land of the five rivers, they have had this eternal wisdom — winning thereby the eternal status in the world —

that the whole universe is a world of delight and it is for the manifestation of love and truth and power that the omnipresent Divine has been playing the game by manifesting himself again in all that stands or moves, in man and animal, in the worm and the insect, in the saint and the sinner, in friend and foe, in God and the Titan. It is for the sake of the play that there is happiness, for the sake of the play there is pain, for the sake of the play there is sin, for the sake of the play there is virtue, for the sake of the play there is friendship, for the sake of the play there is enmity, for the sake of the play there is godhood, for the sake of the play there is titanhood. Friend and foe are equally partners in the game, they divide themselves in the two sides and create opposite sides. The aryan protects the friendly, smites the unfriendly, but he has no attachment. He sees the Divine everywhere, in all beings, in all things, in all works and in all results. He has an equal disposition towards good and evil, friend and foe, pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, success and failure. This does not mean that all consequences are equally the wanted object, that all men his friends, all happenings agreeable to him, all works worth-doing, all results desirable. Until you are perfect in yoga, the dualities do not disappear, that status is attainable only by a few. But the aryan education is for all aryan. The aryan seeks to secure his objective but once secured he is not carried away in the flush of victory. And he is not afraid of hurting. The aim of his endeavour is to help the friendly and to quell the unfriendly. He does not hate his enemy, he is not unjustly partial to the friendly, for the sake of duty he can slay his own people, and save the opponent's life, giving up his own. Happiness is desirable to him, unhappiness is undesirable, but in his happiness he does not lose balance, and in his unhappiness his patience and gladness remain unshaken. He abandons sin and gathers virtue but never takes pride in his virtuous acts and when

fallen in sin he does not weep like a weak child but comes out of the maya, wipes out the mud from the body, makes it clean and pure and starts again his endeavour for self-development. To fulfil his task, the Aryan makes a tremendous effort; thousand defeats do not stop him, it is against the Divine law to grieve, to be dejected or petulant in case of failure. Of course when one is established in yoga and keeping himself above the gunas, one is capable of doing work, then for him all dualities have ended and whatever work the Divine Mother gives him he does it without question, whatever result She gives, he enjoys it with pleasure and whomsoever She chooses as belonging to his side, he takes him for doing the Mother's work and whomsoever She points out as the opposition he quells him or slays him as commanded by Her. Such is the Aryan training, there is no place in it for hatred and spite. The Divine is everywhere, whom to hate? whom to despise? If we were to do the political movement in the way of the Occident then of course hatred and spite would be inevitable, and in the occidental view it is not a thing to blame, for there is conflict of interest and when one side rises, the other must be repressed. But we are rising not for the rising of the aryan race alone, it is the rising of the aryan character, aryan education, aryan law of life. In the early stage of the movement the influence of occidental politics was very great; even then in that early stage we realised this truth and the second stage, imbued with the spirit of the Divine Law, was prepared by the adoration of the Mother, by love for the Mother, by an intense feeling of aryan dignity. Politics is a part of the divine law but it has to be carried out through the aryan attitude, through means approved by the aryan law. We tell young men, our hope of the future: if you have hatred in your heart root it out without delay. A force full of turbulent violence (rajas) can for a time be easily awakened

through the intense excitement of hatred but it soon breaks down and turns to weakness. Those who have taken the resolution of freeing the country, those who have consecrated their life, go among them and spread the bond of strong fraternity, stern effort, iron-firmness and a flame fire-like energy. In that strength we shall secure an unshakable force and victory for ever.

# Our Hope

**WE** have no material strength, armaments, education, national government. Then where is our hope grounded, where is the strength, depending on which we are attempting to achieve a result impossible for the powerful and educated nations of Europe? The learned and the wise declare this to be the wild dream of youth, an idle dream of indiscriminate men drunk with high idealism. War, they think, is the only way to gain independence, and we are unable to fight. Granted that we are unable to wage war, nor do we advise armed conflict. But is it true that physical force is the only support of strength, or does strength emanate from some deeper, profounder source? Every one is bound to admit that it is impossible to achieve any great undertaking only through physical prowess. Where two opposed but equally strong powers meet in conflict, the one with the greater ethical and mental strength, — one with superior unity, courage, enthusiasm, determination, self-sacrifice, the one who has knowledge, intelligence, cleverness, keen observation, a better developed ability to evolve new means is sure to win. In fact, one who is comparatively poor, in physical number and equipment, can, because of ethical and intellectual superiority, beat down a powerful adversary. One could, however, say that though the ethical and intellectual have greater value than physical power, without the latter who will protect the ethical and intellectual powers? This is indeed true. But it has also been found that in a conflict of rival ideologies, groups, cults, and cultures the side with ample physical strength, governmental backing, equipments of war, etc., may have lost, while the side that did not have

these advantages at all has won. How does this happen? *Jato dharmastato jayah*, the righteous side wins, but *dharma* must be supported by force, otherwise the rise of wickedness and the degeneration of righteousness is likely to persist. Nothing happens without a reason. The reason for victory is force. By what force does the weaker side win and the mightier side lose or is destroyed? By examining historical examples we shall see that this strange thing or miracle has happened because of spiritual power, it is spiritual power, which, without caring for physical force, tells mankind that this world is God's kingdom, and not the playground of a blind mechanical nature. The pure spirit is the source of true strength, and the original Puissance, *ādyāprakṛti*, which moves a billion suns in the sky, and by a mere turning of its finger shaking the earth destroys all traces of the earlier splendours created by human effort, that original Puissance is controlled by the pure spirit. That Puissance can make the impossible possible, give voice to the dumb, provide the lame with the power to cross mountains. The whole world is a creation of that power, *śakti*. One whose spiritual powers are developed, his instruments of victory are forged of themselves, the difficulties get removed and favourable conditions are created, the ability to work grows of itself, becomes quick and energetic.

Europe is now discovering this soul-force, though it does not believe in it wholly and has not the inclination to rely and act on that faith. But at the root of India's education, culture, glory, strength is this soul-force. Every time people thought the end of the Indian people was imminent, from its hidden source the soul-force has flooded and revitalised the dying race, created adequate and ancillary strength. That source has not dried yet, that marvellous, deathless power is still at play.

But the manifestation of all the powers of the physical



universe depends on time; according to the rhythm of appropriate conditions, like the ebb and tide of the sea, they become effective in the end. With us too it is that which is happening. Now it is a complete ebb, we are waiting for the tide to turn. The austerity of the great-souled, the willing acceptance of suffering by the self-sacrificing, the infusion of knowledge by the wise, the purity of the saint, these are the fountain-head of spiritual energy. Once in the past these diverse pieties and good deeds has swept India along its invigorating ambrosial stream and transformed a dead race into something living, strong and vigorous. Once again, that energy of austerity, *tapobal*, so long confined within itself, is about to be released, unbeatable, indomitable. Thanks to the oppression, the weakness and defeat of a few years, the Indians have learned to seek the source of strength within themselves. Not the excitement of oration, not the *mlechcha*, occidental learning, the emotion-arousing power of meetings and societies, the fragile inspiration of newspapers, rather it will be that energy, deep, steady, unerring, pure, beyond-joy-and-sorrow, beyond-good-and-evil which is born within the self when in the soul's immense silence God and the human person come together, that greatly-creative, greatly-destructive, greatly-conserving, knowledge-giving Mahasaraswati, wealth-bestowing Mahalakshmi, strength-giving Mahakali, in that combination of a thousand puissances Chandi will manifest herself to work for India's and the world's welfare. The independence of India is only a secondary aim, the main object is to reveal the power of Indian culture, its spread and victory throughout the world. Had we succeeded in gaining independence or autonomy through the use of western civilised techniques, through meetings and organisations, lectures and the use of physical force, that main object would not have been fulfilled. We have to achieve independence through the inherent strength of our own

culture, through the strength of the spirit and the use of subtle as well as material means that the soul-force can create. That is why, by destroying our western-oriented movement, God has turned the outward energy inward. That which Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya had seen in his divine vision, and because of which he would repeatedly exhort “Turn the energy inward”; but since the time was then not ripe no one could do that, he himself could not do that, but today God has brought that about. The energy, *śakti*, of India has turned within. When once again it turns outward, that current will never cease flowing, and no one stop it. Redeemer of the three worlds, that holy Ganges will flood India and by its immortal touch it will usher in an era of new youth to the world.

## East and West

**T**HE main difference between our country and Europe is this, our life is turned inward, Europe's outward. We judge of good and evil, etc., from the point of motive, Europe judges it on the basis of action done. Knowing God as one who dwells within and who knows all that passes in our minds we seek Him in the soul, Europe looks upon Him as the King of the world and seeks and worships Him in the world outside. The heaven of Europe is in the material world; worldly riches, beauty, luxury are welcome and to be sought after; if they imagine any other heaven, that too is a reflection of these riches, beauty and luxury. Their God is akin to our Indra, who rules his world empire, sitting like an earthly monarch on a bejewelled throne, swollen by the hymns and prayers of a thousand flatterers. Our Shiva is the supreme among gods, yet he is but a beggar, out of his senses, uncaring and forgetful; our Krishna is a youth, fond of laughter, fun and love, it is in his nature to be playful. The God of Europe never laughs or plays, since His majesty is hurt by these activities, His godhead suffers. The extrovert attitude is at the back of it — signs of wealth are, for them, the support of splendour, they cannot see a thing unless they see the sign, they have no divine, no subtle vision, everything is material. Our Shiva is a beggar, but to the spiritual seeker he easily gives away all the wealth and wisdom of the three worlds; he is generous to a fault, but the wisdom beyond the reach of the wise is his inborn possession. Our loving, gay Krishna is the hero of the Kurukshetra, father of the worlds, friend and companion of the universe. India's immense knowledge and subtle vision, unfettered divine vision pierces

through the material veils and brings out the inner attitude, the true truth, the inner and subtle principles.

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The same order is observed about good and evil. We look at the inner attitude. There may lurk holy feeling behind an activity that we condemn, just as behind the outwardly good or sanctimonious conduct may lie hidden the self-seeking of a scoundrel; good and evil, joy and sorrow are subjective factors, the outer activity is but a veil. We know this; though for the sake of the social order we respect outward good and evil as evidence of the activity, but the inner attitude is what we really cherish. The renunciant, *sannyāsin*, who behaves like inert-mad-fiend, *jaḍonmattapiśacabat*, as beyond rules and conventions, duty or otherwise, beyond good and evil, such a one, who has risen above laws, we call the supreme person. The western intellect is unable to accept such a principle; he who behaves as inert it treats him as inert, he who behaves as if he is mad it treats him as off his head, he who behaves like a fiend, it treats him as a disgusting, lawless devil; for it has no subtle vision, and is unable to look at the inner attitude or truth.

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Bound to this outward view of things European scholars say that at no time was there democracy in India. In the Sanskrit language words to describe democracy are not found, those days there were no legislative bodies like the modern parliament, the absence of the outer signs of democracy denotes the absence of democracy. We too on our part have been content to accept as valid this western

view. In our ancient Aryan rule there was no lack of democracy; its external instruments were no doubt insufficient, but the democratic attitude permeated the core of society and the government, and stood guard over the people's welfare and progress. First, every village was run entirely on democratic lines, the villagers would come together and, on the basis of the general will and guided by the elderly and leading personalities provided for the administration of the village, and of society; this rural democracy was kept intact during Mughal rule, it vanished only the other day, under the oppression of the British government. Secondly, even in the small principalities, where there existed conditions favourable to a convention of the masses, this custom was in force. In Buddhist literature, in Greek records, in the *Mahabharata* there is abundant evidence in support of this. Thirdly, in the larger kingdoms, where it was impossible for these ingredients or external conditions to be available, the democratic attitude guided the monarchy. The subjects may not have a legislative body, but neither did the king have the least right to pass laws or modify the existing laws. The king was but the keeper of the codes, conventions and laws which the subjects were in the habit of observing. The Brahmins, like the lawyers and judges of today, would explain to the king these regulations admitted and observed by the subjects and they would record in writing the gradual changes which they had observed. The responsibility of governing was indeed the king's, but that power was also severely limited by laws; other than these the king had to act in accordance with the wishes of his subjects, he would never do anything that might displease his subjects, this political practice was observed by all. If the king violated this rule, the subjects were no longer obliged to respect and follow him.

The unification of the East and the West is the religion of today. But in this task of unification, if we consider the West as the foundation or the chief support we shall be making a grievous error. The East is the foundation, the chief support. The outer world is established in the inner, not *vice versa*. Respect and emotion, or inner attitude (*bhāva*), are the source of energy and activity, one has to be faithful to one's inner attitude (*bhāva*) and sense of reverence, but one is not to be attached to the application of force and the external forms and means of activity. The occidentals are busy with the outward forms and means of democracy. But the external form is only for the purpose of expressing the inner attitude; it is this attitude that shapes the form, it is one's reverence that creates the means or the instrument. The occidentals are so attached to the forms and instruments that they are unable to notice that in their external expressions the inner attitude and reverence are languishing. These days in the eastern countries the inner attitude and respect for democracy are becoming fast clearer and creating external means and building its outward forms, while in the western countries that feeling is getting dimmed, that respect is much attenuated. The East has set its face towards the dawn, moving towards the light — the West is moving back towards the dark night.

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The reason for this is the ill effects of democracy that follow from an attachment to its outward forms and instruments. So long, having created a government wholly favourable to democracy, America was fond of declaring that there was no other country which was equally free. But, in reality, the President and the executive officers, with the help of the

Congress, rule despotically, and support the wrongs done by the rich, the injustice and the all-consuming greed, and they themselves grow fat by the abuse of power. The subjects are free only at the time of electing representatives, but even then the rich maintain their power through huge expenditure, and even later, by buying up the representatives of the people, they exploit and dominate arbitrarily. France is the birth-place of democracy and freedom, but the administrators and the police who had been created as instruments to run, according to the people's wish, the departments, they have now turned into numerous miniature autocrats, of whom the people are afraid and tremble. Such a confusion has not taken place in England, it is true, but the other dangers of democracy have declared themselves there. Since the government and politics are determined by every change in the opinion of the fickle and half-educated electorate, the British race has lost its earlier political tact and is faced with danger from within and without. In order to maintain their interest and influence, the rulers, devoid of their sense of duty, by tempting or by trying to put fear into them or else misleading them, are perverting the mind of the people, adding to its fickle-mindedness and restlessness. Because of these factors some people who look upon democracy as an error are becoming sworn enemies of freedom, on the other hand, the number of anarchists, socialists and revolutionaries is going up. The conflict between these two groups is going on in England — in the sphere of politics; in America — in the conflict between workers and capitalists; in Germany — among ideological groups; in France — between the army and the navy; in Russia — between the police and the assassins; everywhere there is confusion, excitement, absence of peace.

Such a consequence is inevitable for the extrovert outlook on life. For a while, swelled with *rājasic* forces, the *asura* grows powerful, great and glorious, then its inherent defects begin to come out, and everything breaks and dissolves. The country whose main principle of education is the value of inner attitude and reverence, willed and non-attached activity, only in such a country by its synthesis of the inner and the outer, the East and the West, can the social, economic and political problems find a satisfactory and practical solution. But we shall not be able to arrive at a solution if we follow western knowledge and education. We shall have to assimilate the West by standing firm on the basis of the principles of the East. The foundation within, the expression without. By adopting western instruments we shall be in danger, we have to create in keeping with our own nature and the eastern view of things.



## **IX. TALES OF PRISON LIFE**



# Tales of Prison Life

## I

On Friday, May 1, 1908, I was sitting in the *Bande Mataram* office, when Shrijut Shyamsundar Chakravarty handed over a telegram from Muzaffarpur. On reading it I learned of a bomb outrage in which two European ladies had been killed. In that day's issue of the "Empire" I read another news item that the Police Commissioner had said that he knew the people involved in the murder and that they would soon be put under arrest. At that time I had no idea that I happened to be the main target of suspicion and that according to the police I was the chief killer, the instigator and secret leader of the young terrorists and revolutionaries. I did not know that that day would mean the end of a chapter of my life, and that there stretched before me a year's imprisonment during which period all my human relations would cease, that for a whole year I would have to live, beyond the pale of society, like an animal in a cage. And when I would re-enter the world of activity it would not be the old familiar Aurobindo Ghose. Rather it would be a new being, a new character, intellect, life, mind, embarking upon a new course of action that would come out of the ashram at Alipore. I have spoken of a year's imprisonment. It would have been more appropriate to speak of a year's living in a forest, in an ashram, hermitage. For long I had made great efforts for a direct vision (*sakshat darshan*) of the Lord of my Heart; had entertained the immense hope of knowing the Preserver of the world, the Supreme Person (*Purushottam*) as friend and master. But due to the pull of a thousand

worldly desires, attachment towards numerous activities, the deep darkness of ignorance I did not succeed in that effort. At long last the most merciful all-good Lord (*Shiv Hari*) destroyed all these enemies at one stroke and helped me in my path, pointed to the *yogashram*, Himself staying as guru and companion in my little abode of retirement and spiritual discipline. The British prison was that ashram. I have also watched this strange contradiction in my life that however much good my well-intentioned friends might do for me, it is those who have harmed me — whom shall I call an enemy, since enemy I have none? — my opponents have helped me even more. They wanted to do me an ill turn, the result was I got what I wanted. The only result of the wrath of the British Government was that I found God. It is not the aim of these essays to provide an intimate journal of my life in the prison. I wish to mention only a few external details, but I have thought it better to mention, at least once, in the beginning, the main theme of the prison life. Else readers may think that suffering is the only fact of prison life. I can't say there were no inconveniences, but on the whole the time passed quite happily.

On Friday night I was sleeping without a worry. At about five in the morning my sister rushed to my room in an agitated manner and called me out by name. I got up. The next moment the small room was filled with armed policemen; Superintendent Cregan, Mr. Clark of 24-Parganas, the charming and delightful visage of familiar Sriman Benod Kumar Gupta, a few Inspectors, red turbans, spies and search witnesses. They all came running like heroes, pistols in hand, as though they were besieging, with guns and cannon, a well-armed fort. I heard that a white hero had aimed a pistol at my sister's breast, but I did not see it. I was sitting on my bed, still half-asleep, when Cregan inquired, "Who is Aurobindo Ghose, is that you?" I answered, "Yes. I

am Aurobindo Ghose." Immediately he ordered a policeman to put me under arrest. Then, because of an extremely objectionable expression used by Cregan, there was a little exchange of words between the two. I asked for the search warrant, read and signed it. Finding a mention of bombs in the warrant I understood that the presence of these soldiers and policemen was connected with the Muzaffarpur killing. The one thing I did not understand was why, even before any bombs or explosives had been discovered in my house, I was arrested in the absence of a body warrant. But I did not raise any useless objections. Afterwards, under instructions from Cregan, my arms were handcuffed, and a rope tied round my middle. An upcountry constable stood behind me holding the rope end. Just then the police brought in Shrijut Abinash Bhattacharya and Shrijut Sailen Bose, hand-cuffed and rope round the midriff. Nearly half an hour after, I do not know at whose bidding, they removed the rope and the handcuff. From Cregan's words it seemed as if he had entered into the lair of some ferocious animal, as if we were uneducated, wild, lawbreakers, and that it was unnecessary to speak or behave courteously towards us. But after the sharp exchange the sahib grew a little milder. Bendorbabu tried to explain something about me to him. After which Cregan asked me: "It seems you are a B. A. Is it not a matter of shame for an educated person like you to be sleeping on the floor of an unfurnished room and in a house like this?" "I am a poor man, and I live like one," I said. "Then have you worked up all this mischief with the idea of becoming a rich man?" Cregan replied in a loud voice. Knowing how impossible it was to explain the love of motherland, sacrifice or the sublimity of a vow of poverty to this thick-skulled Briton I did not make the attempt.

All the while the search continued. Beginning at five-thirty, it was over at about eleven-thirty. Inside or outside

the boxes, all the exercise books, letters, papers, scraps, poems, plays, prose, essays, translations, nothing escaped the clutches of the all-engrossing search. Among the witnesses to the search Mr. Rakshit seemed a little put out; later, bemoaning his lot, he informed me that the police had dragged him along, and that he had no idea that he would have to be a party to such a nefarious activity. He described, most pathetically, how he had been kidnapped for the purpose. The attitude of the other witness, Samarnath, was of quite another kind, he discharged his part of the job with considerable gusto, like a true loyalist and to the manner born. Nothing remarkable transpired in the course of the search. But I recollect Mr. Clark looking long and suspiciously at the sacred earth from Dakshineswar that had been kept in a small cardboard box; he suspected it might be some new and terribly powerful explosive. In a sense Mr. Clark's suspicions were not ungrounded. In the end the decision was reached that it was a piece of earth which it was unnecessary to send to the chemical analyst. I did not join in the search except to open a few boxes. No papers or letters were shown or read out to me. Mr. Cregan, for his own delectation, read out loudly a letter from Alakdhari. The friendly Benod Gupta in his natural and delightful style marched round the room, raising echoes everywhere and brought out from the shelf or some other corner papers or letters, and now and then, muttering "Very important, very important" handed these over to Cregan. I was never told what these important documents might be. Nor was I at all curious, since I knew it was impossible that there might be in my house any formula for the manufacture of explosives or documents relating to conspiracy.

After rummaging through my room the police led us to the adjoining room. Cregan opened a box belonging to my youngest aunt, he once or twice glanced at the letters, then

saying that it was no use carrying these women's correspondence, left them behind. Then the police *mahatmas* appeared on the ground floor. Cregan had his tea there. I had a cup of cocoa and toast. During this period Cregan tried to argue and convince me about his political views — this mental torture I had to suffer coolly. But may I ask, one knows physical tortures to be part of the traditional police strategy, but does such inhuman mental torture also fall within the purview of its unwritten law? I hope our highly respectable, friend-of-the-country Srijut Jogeshchandra Ghose will raise this question in the Legislative Assembly.

After searching the rooms on the ground floor and the office of “Navashakti” the police again came up to the first floor to open an iron safe belonging to “Navashakti”. Unable to open it after a half-hour battle, they decided to remove it bodily to the police station. This time a police officer discovered a bicycle, with a railway lable bearing the mark of Kushtia. Immediately they took it as an important proof that the vehicle belonged to the man who had earlier shot a sahib there and they gladly took it away with them.

At about eleven-thirty we left our house. Outside the gates stood, in a car, my maternal uncle and Srijut Bhupendranath Basu. “On what charges have you been arrested?” asked uncle. “I know nothing,” I answered, “they arrested and handcuffed me soon after getting into my room; they didn't show any body warrant.” When uncle inquired why the handcuffs were thought necessary, Benodbabu said, “Sir, it's not my fault. Ask Aurobindababu, I told the sahib and had the handcuffs removed.” On Bhupenbabu's asking about my offence, Mr. Gupta mentioned the I.P.C. article on murder. Bhupenbabu was stunned and did not say another word. Later on I came to know that my solicitor, Sri Hirendranath Datta, had expressed a desire to be present on my behalf during the search. The police had turned down the request.

Benodbabu was entrusted with taking us to the police station. There he behaved with us in a remarkably decent manner. We had our bath and lunch there and then proceeded towards Lal Bazar. After being made to wait there for a couple of hours we were removed to Royd Street, in which auspicious locality we stayed all evening. It was there that I first came to know the sly detective Maulvi Sams-ul-Alam and had the pleasure of entering with him into a cordial relation. Till then the great Maulvi had not acquired either enough influence or energy, he was not yet the chief researcher in the bomb outrage or functioning as Mr. Norton's prompter and unfailing *aide-memoire*. Till that time Ramsadayababu was acting as the chief protagonist. The Maulvi made me listen to a most entertaining sermon on religion. That Hinduism and Islam have the same basic principles: in the Omkara of the Hindus we have the three syllables, A, U, M; the first three letters of the Holy Koran are A, L, M. According to philological laws, U is used for L; *ergo*, Hindus and Mussulmans have the same *mantra* or sacred syllables. Yet one has to maintain the uniqueness of one's faith, so a Hindu considers it wrong to eat with Mussulmans. To be truthful is part of the religious life. The Sahibs say Aurobindo Ghose is the leader of the terrorist party, this is a matter of shame and sorrow for India. But by keeping to the path of rectitude the situation can yet be saved. The Maulvi was fully convinced, that distinguished persons, men of high character, like Bepin Pal and Aurobindo Ghose, whatever they might have done, they would openly confess these. Shrijut Purnachandra Shastri, who happened to be present there, expressed his doubt in this respect. But the Maulvi did not give up his views. I was charmed and delighted with his knowledge, intelligence and religious fervour. Thinking that it would be impertinent to speak much I listened politely to his priceless sermon and



cherished it in my heart. But in spite of so much religious enthusiasm the Maulvi did not give up his profession of a 'tec'. Once he said: "You made a great mistake in handing over the garden to your younger brother to manufacture bombs. It was not very intelligent on your part." Understanding the implication of his words I smiled a little, and said: "Sir, the garden is as much mine as my brother's. Where did you learn that I had given it up to him, or given it up to him for the purpose of manufacturing bombs?" A little abashed, the Maulvi answered: "No, no, I was saying in case you have done it." Then the great souled Maulvi opened a chapter of his life before me, and said, "All the moral or economic progress that I have made in life can be traced back to a single sufficing moral adage of my father. He would always say, «Never give up an immediate gain. This great word is the sacred formula of my life, all this advancement is owing to the fact that I have always remembered that sage advice.»" At the time of this pronunciamento the Maulvi stared at me so closely that it seemed as though I was his meat and food, which, following the parental advice, he would be loath to give up. In the evening, the redoubtable Ramasadaya Mukhopadhyaya appeared on the scene. He expressed words of unusual kindness and sympathy, told everyone present to be careful about my food and bed. Immediately afterwards some fellows came and took Sailendra and me, through rain and storm, to the lock-up at Lal Bazar. This was the only occasion when I met Ramasadaya. I could see the man was both intelligent and active, but his words and demeanour, his tone, his gait, all seemed fake and unnatural, as if he was for ever acting on a stage. There are men like that whose words, bodies, efforts are an embodiment of untruth. They are expert in imposing on immature minds, but those who know men and their ways, find them out at once.

At Lal Bazar on the ground floor in a spacious room we two were kept together. Some snacks were served. After a while two Englishmen entered the room, later I was told that one of them was the Police Commissioner, Mr. Halliday himself. Finding us both together Halliday was wrathful with the sergeant, and pointing towards me he said, "Take care that nobody stays or speaks with this man." Sailen was at once removed and locked up in another room. When others had left, Halliday asked me: "Aren't you ashamed for being involved in this cowardly, dastardly activity?" "What right have you to assume that I was involved?" To this Halliday replied: "I am not assuming, I know everything." At this I said: "What you know or do not know is your concern. I wholly deny having any connection with these murderous acts."

That night I had other visitors, all members of the police force. There was a mystery behind the visit, which till now I have failed to fathom. A month and a half before my arrest an unknown gentleman came to see me. He said: "Sir, we have not met, but since I have great respect for you I have come to warn you of an impending danger. I would also like to know if you are familiar with anyone at Konna-gar. Did you ever visit the place, and do you have a house there?" "No, I do not have any house there," I said. "But I have been there once and am known to some people there." "I will say nothing more," said the stranger, "but now on you should not meet anyone from there. Some wicked people are conspiring against you and your brother, Barindra. Soon they will put you into trouble. Don't ask me anything more." I told him: "Gentleman, I am unable to understand how this incomplete information will help me, but since you came with friendly intentions, thank you for coming. I do not wish to know anything more. I have complete faith in God, He will always protect me, and it is for me needless to make any

attempt or be careful." I heard nothing about this afterward. That this stranger and well-wisher did not imagine things, I had proof the same night. An inspector and a few police officers came to pump out my connection with Konnagar. "Is your original home at Konnagar?" they asked. "Did you ever visit the place? When? And Why? Has Barindra any properties there?" — and other questions. I answered these questions in order to get at the root of these. But the attempt was not a success, but from the questions as well as the manner of the police inquiry it appeared that they had come by some information which they were trying to verify. I guessed just as in the Tai-Maharaj case there had been an attempt to prove Tilak as a hypocrite, liar, cheat and tyrant in which the Bombay Government had joined hands and wasted public money, — similarly there were people interested in putting me into trouble.

The whole of Sunday was passed in the lock-up. There was a staircase in front of my room. In the morning I found a few young lads coming down the stairs. Their faces were unfamiliar, but I guessed that they too had been arrested in the same case. Later I came to know that these were the lads from the Manicktola Gardens. A month after in the jail I came to know them. A little later I too was taken down-stairs for a wash — since there was no arrangement for a bath, I went without it. For lunch I grabbed, with some effort, a few morsels of pulse and boiled rice, the effort proved too much and had to be given up. In the afternoon we had fried rice. For three days this was our diet. But I must also add that on Monday the sergeant, of himself, gave me tea and toast.

Later I came to learn that my lawyer had sought permission from the Commissioner to have my food sent from home, but to this, Mr. Halliday did not agree. I also heard that the accused were forbidden to consult their lawyer or attorney. I don't know if this restriction is valid or not. It is

true that though lawyer's advice would have been of help to me, I didn't quite need it; it has however, harmed some others involved in the case. On Monday we were presented before the Commissioner. Abinash and Sailen were with me. We were taken in different batches. Thanks to our good deeds in our past incarnation we three had been arrested earlier, and, since we had already some experience of legal quibblings, all of us refused to make any declarations before the Commissioner. Next day we were taken to the court of the magistrate, Mr. Thornhill. It was then that I met for the first time Shrijut Kumar Krishna Datta, Mr. Manuel, and one of my relations. Mr. Manuel asked me, "According to the police a good deal of suspicious literature has been recovered from your house. Were these papers or letters really there?" "I can say without a shadow of doubt," I told him, "that there were no such things, it is quite impossible." Of course then I did not know of the "sweets letter" or of the "scribblings." I told my relative: "Tell the people at home not to fear or worry, my innocence will be fully vindicated." From that period I had a firm belief that it would be so. In the beginning, during solitary imprisonment, the mind was a little uneasy. But after three days of prayer and meditation an unshakable peace and faith again overwhelmed the being.

From Mr. Thornhill's court we were taken in a carriage to Alipore. The group included Nirapada, Dindayal, Hemchandra Das, and others. Of these I knew Hemchandra Das, once I put up at his place in Midnapore. Who could have known then that I would meet him like this, as a prisoner on the way to the jail? We were detained for a little while at the Alipore magistrate's court, but we were not presented before the magistrate; they went in only to get an order signed. We again got into the carriage, when a gentleman came near me and said, "I have heard that they are planning solitary confinement for you and orders are being passed to that

effect. Probably they will not allow any one to see or meet you. If you wish to convey any information to your people, I shall do that." I thanked him, but since what I wished to convey I had already done through my relative, I did not tell him anything more. I am mentioning this fact as an example of my countrymen's sympathy and unsought kindness towards me. Thereafter from the court we went to the jail, and were surrendered to its officers. Before entering the jail precincts we were given a bath, put into prison uniform, while our clothes, shirts, dhotis and *kurtas* were taken away for laundry. The bath, after four days, was a heavenly bliss. After that they took us to our respective cells. I went into mine and the doors were closed as soon as I got in. My prison life at Alipore began on May 5. Next year, on May 6, I was released.

## II

My solitary cell was nine feet long and five or six feet in width; it had no windows, in front stood strong iron bars, this cage was my appointed abode. Outside was a small courtyard, with stony grounds, a high brick wall with a small wooden door. On top of that door, at eye level, there was a small hole or opening. After the door had been bolted the sentry, from time to time, peeped through it to find out what the convict was doing. But my courtyard door remained open for most of the time. There were six contiguous rooms like that, in prison parlance these were known as the 'six decrees'. 'Decrees' stood for rooms for special punishment — those who are condemned to solitary imprisonment by the orders of either the judge or the jail superintendent have to stay in these mini-caves. Even in such solitary confinement there is the rule of caste or hierarchy. Those who are heavily punished have their courtyard doors permanently closed; deprived of contacts with the rest of the

human world their only point of relation with the outside world is restricted to the vigilant eyes of the sentry and the fellow-convict who brings his food twice a day. Since Hemchandra Das was looked upon as being a greater terror for the criminal investigation department than I, he had been given this strict regimen. But in the solitary cell too there are refinements — handcuffs and iron rings round one's hand and foot. This highest punishment is meted out not only for disturbing the peace of the prison or playing rough but also if one is found frequently slack in prison labour. To harass those convicted in cases of solitary confinement is against the spirit of law, but the Swadeshi or 'Bande Mataram' convicts were beyond the pale and according as the police desired benign arrangements were made for these.

Such was the place where we were lodged. As for fittings our generous authorities had left nothing to be desired so far as our hospitable reception was concerned. One plate and bowl used to adorn the courtyard. Properly washed and cleansed my self-sufficing plate and bowl shone like silver, was the solace of my life. In its impeccable, glowing radiance in the 'heavenly kingdom' in that symbol of immaculate British imperialism, I used to enjoy the pure bliss of loyalty to the Crown. Unfortunately the plate too shared in the bliss, and if one pressed one's fingers a little hard on its surface it would start flying in a circle, like the whirling dervishes of Arabia. And then one had to use one hand for eating while the other held the plate in position. Else, while whirling, it would attempt to slip away with the incomparable grub provided by the prison authorities. But more dear and useful than the plate was the bowl. Among inert objects it was like the British civilian. Just as the civilian, *ipso facto*, is fit and able to undertake any administrative duty, be it as judge, magistrate, police, revenue officer, chairman of municipality, professor, preacher, whatever you ask him to do he

can become at your merest saying, — just as for him to be an investigator, complainant, police magistrate, even at times to be the counsel for defence, all these roles hold a friendly concourse in the same hospitable body, my dear bowl was equally multipurpose. The bowl was free from all caste restrictions, beyond discrimination, in the prison cell it helped in the act of ablution, later with the same bowl I gargled, bathed, a little later when I had to take my food, lentil soup or vegetable was poured into the same container, I drank water out of it and washed my mouth. Such an all — purpose priceless object can be had only in a British prison. Serving all my worldly needs the bowl became an aid in my spiritual discipline too. Where else could I find such an aid and preceptor to get rid of the sense of disgust? After the first spell of solitary imprisonment was over, when we are allowed to stay together my civilian's rights were bifurcated, and the authorities arranged for another receptacle for the privy. But for one month I acquired an unsought lesson in controlling my disgust. The entire procedure for defecation seems to have been oriented towards the art of self-control. Solitary imprisonment, it has been said, must be counted among a special form of punishment and its guiding principle the avoidance of human company and the open sky. To arrange this ablution in the open or outside would mean a violation of the principle, hence two baskets, with tar coating, would be kept in the room itself. The sweeper, *mehtar*, would clean it up in the morning and afternoons. In case of intense agitation and heart-warming speeches from our side the cleaning would be done at other times too. But if one went to the privy at odd hours as penance one had to put up with the noxious and fetid smell. In the second chapter of our solitary confinement there were some reforms in this respect, but British reforms keep the old principles intact while making minor changes in administration. Needless to

say, because of all this arrangement, in a small room, one had throughout to undergo considerable inconvenience, especially at meal times and during night. Attached bathrooms are, I know, often times a part of western culture, but to have in a small cell a bedroom, dining room and w.c. rolled into one — that is what is called too much of a good thing! We Indians are full of regrettable customs, it is painful for us to be so highly civilised.

Among household utilities there were also a small bucket, a tin water container and two prison blankets. The small bucket would be kept in the courtyard, where I used to have my bath. In the beginning I did not suffer from water scarcity, though that happened later on. At first the convict in the neighbouring cowshed would supply water as and when I wanted it, hence during the bathing recess amidst the austerities of prison life I enjoyed every day a few moments of the householder's luxury and love of pleasure. The other convicts were not so fortunate, the same tub or pail did for the w.c., cleaning of utensils and bath. As undertrial prisoners this extraordinary luxury was allowed to them, the convicts had to take their bath in a bowlful or two of water. According to the British the love of God and physical well-being are almost equal and rare virtues, whether the prison regulations were made in order to prove the point of such a proverb or to prevent the unwilling austerity of the convicts spoilt by excessive bathing facilities, it was not easy to decide. This liberality of the authorities was made light of by the convicts as "crow bathing". Men are by nature discontented. The arrangements for drinking water were even better than bathing facilities. It was then hot summer, in my little room the wind was almost forbidden to enter. But the fierce and blazing sunlight of May had free access to it. The entire room would burn like a hot oven. While being locked thus the only way to lessen one's irresistible thirst was the



tepid water in the small tin enclosure. I would drink that water often and often, but this would not quench the thirst, rather there would be heavy sweating and soon after the thirst would be renewed. But one or two had earthen pots placed in their courtyard, for which, remembering the austerities of a past incarnation, they would count themselves lucky. This compelled even the strongest believers in personal effort to admit the role of fate; some had cold water, some remained thirsty for ever, it was as the stars decreed. But in their distribution of tin-cans or water-pots, the authorities acted with complete impartiality. Whether I was pleased or not with such erratic arrangements the generous jail doctor found my water trouble unbearable. He made efforts to get an earthen pot for my use, but since the distribution was not in his hands he did not succeed for long, at last at his bidding the head sweeper managed to discover an earthen pot from somewhere. Before that in course of my long battle with thirst I had achieved a thirst-free state. In this blazing room two prison blankets served for my bed. There was no pillow, I would spread one of these as mattress and fold the other as a pillow, and I slept like that. When the heat became unbearable I would roll on the ground and enjoy it. Then did I know the joy of the cool touch of Mother Earth. But the floor's contact in the prison was not always pleasing, it prevented the coming of sleep and so I had to take recourse to the blanket. The days on which it rained were particularly delightful. But there was this difficulty that during rain and thunder, thanks to the *danse macabre* (*tandava nritya*) of the strong wind, full of dust, leaf and grass, a small-scale flood would take place inside my little room. After which there was no alternative but to rush to a corner with a wet blanket. Even after this game of nature was over, till the earth dried one had to seek refuge in reflection leaving aside all hope of sleep. The only dry areas

were near the w.c., but one did not feel like placing the blankets near that area. But in spite of such difficulties on windy days a lot of air also blew in and since that took away the furnace-like heat of the room I welcomed the storm and the shower.

This description of the Alipore government hotel which I have given here, and will give still more later, is not for the purpose of advertising my own hardship; it is only to show what strange arrangements are made for undertrial prisoners in the civilised British Raj, what prolonged agony for the innocent. The causes of hardship that I have described were no doubt there, but since my faith in divine mercy was strong I had to suffer only for the first few days; thereafter — by what means I shall mention later — the mind had transcended these sufferings and grown incapable of feeling any hardship. That is why when I recollect my prison life instead of anger or sorrow I feel like laughing. When first of all I had to go into my cage dressed in strange prison uniform, and notice the arrangements for our stay, this is what I felt. And I laughed within myself. Having studied the history of the English people and their recent doings I had already found out their strange and mysterious character. So I was not at all astonished or unhappy at their behaviour towards me. Normally this kind of behaviour towards us would be for them extremely illiberal and blameworthy. We all came from gentlemanly stock, many were scions of landlords, some were, in terms of their family, education, quality and character, the equals of the highest classes in England. The charge on which we had been arrested, that too was not ordinary murder, theft or dacoity; it was an attempt at insurrection to liberate the country from foreign rulers or conspiracy towards armed conflict. The main cause of detention was suspicion on the part of the police, though even there in many instances the proof of guilt was wholly

wanting. In such cases to be herded together like ordinary thieves and dacoits — and not even as thieves and dacoits, to keep them like animals in a cage, to give them food unfit for animals, to make them endure water scarcity, thirst and hunger, sun, rain and cold, all these do not enhance the glory of the British race and its imperial officers. This is, however, a national defect of their character. The English are possessed of the qualities of the Kshatriya, but in dealing with enemies or opponents they are cent per cent businesslike. But, at the time, I was not annoyed at this. On the contrary, I had felt a little happy that no discrimination had been made between the common uneducated masses and myself, moreover, this arrangement added fuel to the flame of my adoration of the Mother (*mātribhakti*). I took it as a marvellous means and favourable condition for learning yoga and rising above conflicts. I was one of the extremists, in whose view democracy and equality between the rich and the poor formed a chief ingredient of nationalism. I remembered that, thinking it our duty to turn the theory into practice, we had travelled together, on our way to Surat, in the same third class, in the camp the leaders instead of making separate arrangements would sleep in the same room along with the others. Rich, poor, Brahmins, businessmen, Shudra, Bengali, Maratha, Punjabi, Gujarati, we all stayed, slept, ate together in a wonderful feeling of brotherhood. We slept on the ground, ate the normal fare, made of rice-pulse-curd, in every way it was superlatively *svadeśī*. The “foreign-returned” from Bombay and Calcutta and the Brahmin-born Madrassi with his *tilak* (head-mark) had become one body. During my stay in the Alipore Jail I ate, lived, went through the same hardship and enjoyed the same privileges with the other convicts, my fellow nationals, the peasants, ironmonger, potter, the *doms* and the *bagdis*, and I could learn that the Lord who dwells in every body, this socialism and

unity, this nation-wide brotherhood had put its stamp on my life's dedication (*jīvan brata*). The day when before the sacred altar of the world-Mother in the form of the Motherland, all the orders of the country will stand with proud heads as brothers and of the same mind, the loving-kindness of my fellow convicts and prisoners as well as the impartiality of the British administrators, during the imprisonment I could feel the coming of that happy day and many a time it brought such delight and thrill. The other day I noticed that the *Indian Social Reformer*, from Poona, has ironically commented on one of my simple easy-to-understand statements by remarking: "We find an excess of Godwardness in the prison!" Alas for the pride and littleness of men, seeking after renown, of little learning, proud of their little virtues! The manifestation of God, should it not be in prison, in huts, ashrams, in the heart of the poor, but rather in the temples of luxury of the rich or the bed of repose of pleasure-seeking-selfish worldly folk? God does not look for learning, honour, leadership, popular acclaim, outward ease and sophistication. To the poor He reveals Himself in the form of the Compassionate Mother. He who sees the Lord in all men, in all nations, in his own land, in the miserable, the poor, the fallen and the sinner and offers his life in the service of the Lord, the Lord comes to such hearts. So it is that in a fallen nation ready to rise, in the solitary prison of the servant of the nation the nearness of God grows.

After the jailor had seen to the blankets and the plates and bowl and left, I began to watch, sitting on the blanket, the scene before me. This solitary confinement seemed to me much better than the lock-up at Lal Bazar. There the silence of the commodious hall with an opportunity to extend its huge body, seems to deepen the silence. Here the walls of the room seemed to come closer, eager to embrace one, like the all-pervading Brahman. There one cannot even look at

the sky through the high windows of the second storey room, it becomes hard to imagine that there are in this world trees and plants, men, animals, birds and houses. Here, since the door to the courtyard remains open, by sitting near the bars one could see the open spaces and the movement of the prisoners. Alongside the courtyard wall stood a tree, its green foliage a sight for sore eyes. The sentry that used to parade before the six 'six decree' rooms, his face and footsteps often appeared dear like the welcome steps of a friend. The prisoners in the neighbouring cowshed would take out in front of the room the cows for grazing. Both cow and cowherd were daily and delightful sights. The solitary confinement at Alipore was a unique lesson in love. Before coming here even in society my affections were confined to a rather narrow circle, and the closed emotions would rarely include birds and animals. I remember a poem by Rabibabu in which is described, beautifully, a village boy's deep love for a buffalo. I did not at all understand it when I read it first, I had felt a note of exaggeration and artificiality in that description. Had I read that poem now, I would have seen it with other eyes. At Alipore I could feel how deep could be the love of man for all created things, how thrilled a man could be on seeing a cow, a bird, even an ant.

The first day in prison passed off peacefully. It was all so new that it was almost gay. Comparing it with the Lal Bazar lock-up I felt happy with my present circumstances, and since I had faith in God the loneliness did not weigh heavily on me. Even the strange spectacle of prison diet failed to disturb my attitude. Coarse rice, even that spiced with husk, pebbles, insects, hair, dirt and such other stuff — the tasteless lentil soup was heavily watered, among vegetables and greens mixed with grass and leaves. I never knew before that food could be so tasteless and without any nutritive value. Looking at its melancholy black visage I was struck with fear,

after two mouthfuls with a respectful *salaam* I took leave of it. All prisoners receive the same diet, and once a course gets going it goes on for ever. Then it was the Reign of Herbs. Days, fortnights and months pass by, but the same herbs, or *Shak*, lentils and rice went on unchanged. What to speak of changing the menu, the preparation was not changed a jot or tittle, it was the same immutable, eternal from beginning to end, a stable unique thing-in-itself. Within two evenings it was calculated to impress the prisoner with the fragility of this world of *māyā*. But even here I was luckier than the other prisoners because of the doctor's kindness. He had arranged supply of milk from the hospital, thanks to which I had been spared on certain days from the vision of *Shak*.

That night I went to bed early, but it was no part of the prison regulations to be allowed to enjoy undisturbed sleep, since this might encourage a love of luxury among the prisoners. Hence there is a rule that every time sentries are changed, the prisoner has to be noisily disturbed and till he responds to their cries there is no respite. Among those who were engaged in this kind of patrolling the 'six decree' cells there were a few who would be no doubt remiss in their duty in this respect — among the police there was as a rule more of kindness and sympathy than strict sense of responsibility — this was especially so with the Hindustani policemen. Some of course remained obstinate. Waking us up at odd hours they would inquire about our well-being thus: "How do you do, Sir?" This untimely humour was not always pleasant or welcome, but I could see that those who were behaving like this were but carrying out orders. For a few days in spite of the annoyance I put up with this. In the end to preserve my sleep I had to scold them. After repeating this process for a few times I noticed that this custom of seeking news about my well-being stopped of itself.

Next morning at four-fifteen the prison bell rang, this was the first bell to wake up the prisoners. There is a bell again

after sometime, when the prisoners have to come out in file, after washing they have to swallow the prison gruel (*lufsi*) before starting the days' work. Knowing that it was impossible to sleep with the bells ringing every now and then, I also got up. The bars were removed at five, and after washing I sat inside the room once again. A little later *lufsi* was served at my door step, that day I did not take it but had only a vision of what it looked like. It was after a few days that I had the first taste of the 'great dish'. *Lufsi*, boiled rice, along with water, is the prisoner's little breakfast. A trinity, it takes three forms. On the first day it was *Lufsi* in its Wisdom aspect, unmixed original element, pure, white, *Shiva*. On the second, it was the Hiranyagarbha aspect, boiled along with lentils, called kedgerree, yellowish, a medley. On the third day *lufsi* appeared in its aspect of Virat, a little mixed with jaggery, grey, slightly fit for human consumption. I had thought the Wisdom and the Hiranyagarbha aspects to be beyond the capacity of average humanity and therefore made no efforts in that direction, but once in a while I had forced some of the Virat stuff within my system and marvelled, in delightful muse, about the many-splendoured virtues of British rule and the high level of western humanitarianism. It should be added that *lufsi* was the only nutritious diet for the Bengali prisoners, the rest were without any food value. But what of that? It had a taste, and one could eat this only out of sheer hunger, even then, one had to force and argue with oneself to be able to consume that stuff.

That day I took my bath at half past eleven. For the first four or five days I had to keep wearing the clothes in which I had come from home. At the time of bathing the old prisoner-warder from the cowshed, who had been appointed to look after me, managed to procure a piece of *endi*,<sup>1</sup> a yard

<sup>1</sup> A kind of coarse silk.

and half long, and till my only clothes did not dry I had to keep wearing this. I did not have to wash my clothes or dishes, a prisoner in the cowshed would do that for me. Lunch was at eleven. To avoid the neighbourhood of the basket and braving the summer heat I would often eat in the courtyard. The sentries did not object to this. The evening meal would be between five and five-thirty. Then on the door was not permitted to be opened. At seven rang the evening bell. The chief supervisor gathered the prisoner-warders together and loudly called out the names of the inmates, after which they would return to their respective posts. The tired prisoner then takes the refuge of sleep and in that has his only pleasure. It is the time when the weak of heart weeps over his misfortune or in anticipation of the hardships of prison life. The lover of God feels the nearness of his deity, and has the joy of his prayer or meditation in the silent night. Then to these three thousand creatures who came from God, victims of a miserable social system, the huge instrument of torture, the Alipore Jail, is lost in a vast silence.

### III

I would rarely meet the co-accused. They had been kept elsewhere. Behind the "six decrees" there were two rows of cells, forty-four in all, the reason why it was known as forty-four decrees. Most of the accused were placed in one of these lines. Confined to the cells as they were, they did not suffer from solitary imprisonment, since there were three in each room. On the other side of the prison there was another decree, with a few large rooms, these could accommodate even up to twelve persons. Those who were fortunate enough to be placed in this decree lived more happily. Many were confined to a room in this decree, with leisure to talk day and night and spend their time happily in human



companionship. But there was one who was deprived of this pleasure. This was Hemchandra Das. I do not know why the authorities were especially afraid or angry with him, out of so many people he had been singled out for solitary confinement. Hemchandra himself believed that since, in spite of much effort, the police had failed to make him admit his guilt explained their wrath. He was confined to a small room in the decree of which even the door would be closed from outside. I have said that this was the extreme form of this type of punishment. From time to time the police would bring forward witnesses of different kind, colour and shape and enact the farce of an identification parade. On these occasions we would be made to line up, a long row, in front of the office. The prison authorities would mix up those accused on other charges along with us. But this was only in name. For among these other accused there was none that was either educated or from gentlemanly stock, and when we stood by their side there was such obvious disparity between the two types of accused, on the one hand the sharp, intelligent features of those accused in the bomb conspiracy, on the other hand, the soiled dress and lustreless visage of the average accused, that if looking at them one could not make out the difference, that could only mean that one was a big fool, bereft of the lowest human intelligence. The prisoners were not however averse to the identification parade. It brought a kind of variety in prison life and provided a chance to exchange a few words. After our arrest it was during one of the parades that I could first meet my brother, Barindra, though we did not speak at that time. It was Narendranath Goswami who would often stand by my side, so I had a little more exchange with him. Extremely handsome, tall, strong, plump, but his eyes spoke of evil propensities, nor did his words reveal any signs of intelligence. In this respect he was quite different from the other

young people. On their lips were often expressed high and pure ideas and their speech showed keen intelligence, a love of knowledge and noble selfless aspirations. For though Gos-sain's<sup>1</sup> words were those of a fool and a light-hearted person, they expressed vigour and boldness. At that time he fully believed that he would be acquitted. He would say: "My father is an expert in litigations, the police can never beat him. My evidence too will not go against me, for it will be proved that the police had got those statements by torturing me." I asked him, "You had been with the police. Where are your witnesses?" Gossain answered unabashed: "My father has conducted hundreds of cases, he knows all this very well. There will be no lack of witnesses." Of such stuff are approvers made.

Earlier we have referred to many of the needless sufferings and difficulties of the accused, but it should also be added that these were all part of prison administration; the sufferings were not due to any one's personal cruelty or lack of human qualities. Indeed, the persons on whom rested the administration of the Alipore Jail, they were all of them exceedingly polite, kindly and conscientious. If in any prison the prisoner's suffering has been lessened, the inhuman barbarity of the western prison lightened through kindness and conscientiousness, then that good out of evil has happened in the Alipore Jail under Mr. Emerson. This has happened due to two main reasons, the extraordinary qualities of its Superintendent, Mr. Emerson, and the assistant doctor, Baidyanath Chatterji. One of them was an embodiment of Europe's nearly vanished Christian ideals, the other was a personification of the charity and philanthropy that form the essence of Hinduism. Men like Mr. Emerson do not come to this country often, they are getting rarer even in the West. In him could be found all the virtues of a Christian gentleman. Peace-loving, just, incomparably

<sup>1</sup> A short, familiar form for Goswami.

generous, full of rectitude, simple, straight and disciplined even towards inferiors, he was by nature incapable of anything but polite conduct. Among his short-comings were lack of energy and administrative efficiency, he would leave all the responsibility on the jailor, himself remaining a *roi faineant*. I do not think this caused much harm. The jailor, Jogendrababu, was a capable and efficient person, in spite of being seriously handicapped by diabetes he would himself look after all the activities and since he was familiar with the boss's nature, he would respect justice and the absence of cruelty in the administration. But he was not a great soul like Emerson, but only a minor Bengali officer, he knew how to keep the Sahib in humour, would do his job efficiently and dutifully, treat others quietly and with natural politeness. Other than these I did not observe in him any other special quality. He had a great weakness for the service. More so since it was then the month of May and the time for his pension had drawn near, he was looking forward to well-earned rest from January next. The sudden appearance of the accused in the Alipore Bomb Conspiracy had caused in our jailor much fear and cogitation. There was no knowing what these violent energetic Bengali boys might be up to one of these days, the thought gave him no rest. He would say, there was only an inch and half left for him to climb to the top of the palm tree. But he had succeeded in negotiating only half of that distance. Towards the end of August Mr. Buchanan was pleased with his prison inspection. The jailor said gleefully, "This is Sahib's last visit during my term of office, there is nothing to worry about the pension now." Alas, for human blindness! The poet has truly said, God has given two great aids to the suffering race of man. First, he has covered the future with darkness; secondly, as his sole support and consolation, he has endowed him with blind hope. Within five days of this statement by the jailor Naren

Gossain fell a victim at the hands of Kanai, and Buchanan's visits to the prison grew increasingly frequent. The result was that Jogenbabu lost his job before time, and, because of the combined attack of sorrow and disease, he soon breathed his last. If instead of delegating all the work to such a subordinate, Emerson had looked after the administration, there would have been the possibility of greater improvement and reform during his regime. The little that he himself looked after he no doubt did that properly, it was due to his character that the prison had become a place only for severe punishment and not turned into a veritable hell. Even after he had been transferred, the effect of his goodness did not wholly disappear. Even now his successors have been obliged to keep sixty per cent of his good measures intact.

#### IV

Just as in the other jail departments Jogenbabu, a Bengali, was the chief, similarly in the hospital, the Bengali doctor, Baidyanathbabu, was all-in-all. His superior officer, Doctor Daly, though not as charitable as Mr. Emerson, was out and out a gentleman and a most judicious person. He had high praise for the quiet demeanour, cheerfulness and obedience of the boys, and loved to exchange pleasantries with younger people and discuss with the other accused problems of religion, politics and philosophy. The doctor was of Irish stock and he inherited many of the qualities of that liberal and sentimental race. There was no meanness or duplicity about him, once in a while when angry he might use a rough word or behave harshly, but on the whole he loved to help people. He was familiar with the trickeries and the got-up diseases resorted to by the prisoners, but sometimes, suspecting trickery, he would neglect even genuine sufferers. But once sure of the disease he would prescribe with great

care and kindness. Once I had a little temperature. It was then the rainy season, in the hospital's many-windowed huge verandahs the moisture-laden winds played about freely, and yet I was unwilling either to go to the hospital or take medicine. My views on illness and cure had undergone change and I did not have much faith in medicines. Unless the disease was severe, nature herself would cure it in her own way, such was my belief. The harm done by the humid air, by controlling that yogically I wished to verify and prove to the logical mind the success of my yogic training and methods. But the doctor was extremely anxious on my account, he explained to me with much eagerness the need to go to the hospital. And when I had gone there he kept me with *impressment* and saw that I had meals such as I might get at home. Fearing that by staying in the prison-wards my health might suffer during the rains he desired that I should be comfortably lodged in the hospital. But I refused to stay longer in the hospital and insisted on going back to the ward. He was not equally considerate to everybody, especially those who were strong and healthy, he was afraid of keeping such people in the hospital even when they were sick. He had a false notion that if ever any incident took place it would be because of these strong and restless lads. What happened in the end was its exact opposite, the incident in the hospital was due to the ailing, emaciated Satyendranath Bose and the sick, quiet-natured Kanailal, a man of few words. Though Dr. Daly had his qualities, most of his good deeds were inspired and set into motion by Baidyanathbabu. I had never seen such a sympathetic soul before, nor do I expect to see it after, it was as if he had been born to help and do good to others. Whenever he heard of a case of suffering to try to lessen it had become for him almost a natural and inevitable act. To the residents of this abode of misery, full of suffering, it was as if he would distribute the carefully preserved

heavenly waters to the creatures of hell. The best way to remove any want, injustice or needless suffering was to reach a report of it to the doctor's ears. If its removal lay within his powers he would never rest without doing it. Baidyanathbabu harboured in his heart a deep love of the motherland, but as a government servant he was unable to express that emotion. His only failing was his excessive sympathy. Though in a prison administrator this may be looked upon as a defect, in terms of higher ethics this may be described as the finest expression of one's humanity and the quality most beloved of God. He did not discriminate between the ordinary prisoners and the 'Bandemataram' convicts; whoever was sick, or ailing, he kept them in the hospital with the same care and would be unwilling to let them go till they had wholly come round. This fault of his was the real reason for his loss of job. After the killing of Gosain the authorities suspected this attitude of his and wrongfully dismissed him.

There is a special need to speak of the kindness and human conduct of these officers. The prison arrangements made for our detention I have been obliged to describe earlier, and afterwards too I shall try to show the inhuman cruelty of the British prison system. Lest some readers may look upon this as an evil effect of these officers, I have described the qualities of some of the chief of the staff. In the description of the early stages of prison life there will be found further evidence of these qualities.

I have described my mental state on the first day of solitary confinement. For a few days I had to be without books or any other aid to spend the period of forced isolation. Later on Mr. Emerson came and handed over to me the permission to get some clothes and reading material from home. After procuring from the prison authorities pen and ink and their official stationery I wrote to my respected maternal uncle, the well-known editor of *Sanjibani*, to send my *dhota* and

*kurta*, among books I asked for the Gita and the Upanishads. It took a couple of days for the books to reach me. Before that I had enough leisure to realise the enormity or dangerous potentiality of solitary confinement. I could understand why even firm and well-developed intellects crack up in such a state of confinement and readily turn towards insanity. At the same time, I could realise God's infinite mercy and the rare advantage offered by these same conditions. Before imprisonment I was in the habit of sitting down for meditation for an hour in the morning and evening. In this solitary prison, not having anything else to do, I tried to meditate for a longer period. But for those unaccustomed it is not easy to control and steady the mind pulled in a thousand directions. Somehow I was able to concentrate for an hour and half or two, later the mind rebelled while the body too was fatigued. At first the mind was full of thoughts of many kinds. Afterwards devoid of human conversation and an insufferable listlessness due to absence of any subject of thought the mind gradually grew devoid of the capacity to think. There was a condition when it seemed a thousand indistinct ideas were hovering round the doors of the mind but with gates closed; one or two that were able to get through were frightened by the silence of these mental states and quietly running away. In this uncertain dull state I suffered intense mental agony. In the hope of mental solace and resting the overheated brain I looked at the beauties of nature outside, but with that solitary tree, a sliced sky and the cheerless prospects in the prison how long can the mind in such a state find any consolation? I looked towards the blank wall. Gazing at the lifeless white surface the mind seemed to grow even more hopeless, realising the agony of the imprisoned condition the brain was restless in the cage. I again sat down to meditate. It was impossible. The intense baffled attempt made the mind only more tired, useless, made it burn and

boil. I looked around, at last I found some large black ants moving about a hole in the ground, and I spent sometime watching their efforts and movements. Later I noticed some tiny red ants. Soon there was a big battle between the black and the red, the black ants began to bite and kill the red ants. I felt an intense charity and sympathy for these unjustly treated red ants and tried to save them from the black killers. This gave me an occupation and something to think about. Thanks to the ants I passed a few days like this. Still there was no way to spend the long days ahead. I tried to argue with myself, did some deliberate reflection, but day after day the mind rebelled and felt increasingly desolate. It was as though time weighed heavy, an unbearable torture, broken by that pressure it did not have leisure even to breathe freely, it was like being throttled by an enemy in a dream and yet without the strength to move one's limbs. I was amazed at this condition! True, while outside, I never wished to stay idle or without any activity, still I had spent long periods in solitary musings. Had and mind now become so weak that the solitude of a few days could make me so restless? Perhaps, I thought, there is a world of difference between voluntary and compulsory solitude. It is one thing to stay alone in one's home, but to have to stay, forced by others, in a solitary prison cell is quite another. There one can turn at will to men for refuge, find shelter in book knowledge and its stylistic elegance, in the dear voice of friends, the noise on the roadside, in the varied shows of the world, one can find joy of mind and feel at ease. But here, bound to the wheels of iron law, subservient to the whim of others, one had to live deprived of every other contact. According to the proverb, one who can stand solitude is either a god or a brute, it is a discipline quite beyond the power of men. Previously I was unable to believe in what the proverb said, now I could feel that even for one accustomed to the yogic



life this discipline is not easy to acquire. I remember the terrifying end of the Italian regicide, Brechi. His cruel judges, instead of ordering him to be hanged, had given him seven years' solitary imprisonment. Within a year Brechi had gone mad. But he had endured for some time! Was my mental strength so poor? Then I did not know that God was having a game with me, through which He was giving me a few necessary lessons. First, He showed me the state of mind in which prisoners condemned to solitary cells move towards insanity, and turned me wholly against the inhuman cruelty of western prison administration, so that I might, to the best of my ability, turn my countrymen and the world from these barbarous ways to the path of more humane prison organisation. This was the first lesson. I remembered, fifteen years back, after returning home from England, I had written some bitterly critical articles in the *Induprakash*, of Bombay, against the petitionary ethics of the then Congress. Seeing that these articles were influencing the mind of the young, the late Mahadeo Govind Ranade had told me, when I met him, for nearly half an hour, that I should give up writing these articles, and advised me to take up some other Congress work. He was desirous of my taking up the work of prison reform. I was astonished and unhappy at his unexpected suggestion and had refused to undertake that work. I did not know then that this was a prelude to the distant future and that one day God himself would keep me in prison for a year and make me see the cruelty and futility of the system and the need for reform. Now I understood that in the present political atmosphere there was no possibility of any reform of the prison system, but I resolved before my conscience to propagate and argue in its favour so that these hellish remnants of an alien civilisation were not perpetuated in a self-determining India. I also understood His second purpose: it was to reveal and expose before my mind its own

weakness so that I might get rid of it for ever. For one who seeks the yogic state crowd and solitude should mean the same. Indeed, the weakness dropped off within a very few days, and now it seems that the mental poise would not be disturbed even by twenty years of solitude. In the dispensation of the All-Good (*maṅgalamaya*) even out of evil cometh good. The third purpose was to give me this lesson that my yoga practices would not be done by my personal effort, but that a spirit of reverence (*śrad-dhā*) and complete self-surrender (*ātma-samarpana*) were the road to attain perfection in yoga, and whatever power or realisation the Lord would give out of His benignity, to accept and utilise these should be the only aim of my yogic endeavour. The day from which the deep darkness of Ignorance began to lessen, I started to see the true nature of the All-Good Lord's amazing infinite goodness as I watched the different events in the ward. There is no event — great or small or even the smallest — from which some good has not accrued. He often fulfils three or four aims through a single event. We frequently see the working of a blind force in the world, accepting waste as part of nature's method we ignore God's omniscience and find fault with the divine Intelligence. The charge is unfounded. The divine Intelligence never works blindly, there cannot be the slightest waste of His power, rather the restrained manner in which, through the minimum of means, He achieves a variety of results is beyond the human intelligence.

Troubled by mental listlessness I spent a few days in agony in this manner. One afternoon as I was thinking streams of thought began to flow endlessly and then suddenly these grew so uncontrolled and incoherent that I could feel that the mind's regulating power was about to cease. Afterwards when I came back to myself, I could recollect that though the power of mental control had ceased, the intelligence was not

self-lost or did not deviate for a moment, but it was as if watching quietly this marvellous phenomenon. But at the time, shaking with the terror of being overcome by insanity, I had not been able to notice that. I called upon God with eagerness and intensity and prayed to him to prevent my loss of intelligence. That very moment there spread over my being such a gentle and cooling breeze, the heated brain became relaxed, easy and supremely blissful such as in all my life I had never known before. Just as a child sleeps, secure and fearless, on the lap of his mother, so I remained on the lap of the World-Mother. From that day all my troubles of prison life were over. Afterwards on many occasions, during the period of detention, inquietude, solitary imprisonment, and mental unease because of lack of activity, bodily trouble or disease, in the lean periods of yogic life, these have come, but that day in a single moment God had given my inner being such a strength that these sorrows as they came and went did not leave any trace or touch on the mind, relishing strength and delight in the sorrow itself the mind was able to reject these subjective sufferings. The sufferings seemed as fragile as water drops on a lily leaf. Then when the books came, their need had considerably lessened. I could have stayed on even if the books were not there. Though it is not the purpose of these articles to write a history of my inner life, still I could not but mention this fact. From this one incident it will be clear how it was possible to live happily during long solitary confinement. It was for this reason that God had brought about this situation or experience. Without turning me mad he had enacted in my mind the gradual process towards insanity that takes place in solitary confinement, keeping my intelligence as the unmoved spectator of the entire drama. Out of this came strength, and I had an excess of kindness and sympathy for the victims of human cruelty and torture. I also realised the extraordinary power and efficacy of prayer.

## V

During the period of my solitary confinement Dr. Daly and the Assistant Superintendent would come to my room almost every day and have a little chat. From the beginning, I do not know why, I had been able to draw their special favour and sympathy. I did not speak much with them, but just answered only when they asked something. If they raised any issues I either listened quietly or would stop after speaking a few words. Yet they did not give up visiting me. One day Mr. Daly spoke to me, "I have been able, through my Assistant Superintendent, to get the big boss to agree that every day, in the morning and evening, you will be allowed to take a walk in front of the decree. I do not like that you should be confined throughout the day in a small cell, it's bad for both body and mind." From that day on I would take a stroll everyday in the morning and evening in the open space before decree. In the afternoons it would be for ten, fifteen or twenty minutes, in the morning for an hour; at times I would stay out for two hours, there was no time limit about it. I enjoyed this very much. On one side were the jail industries, on the other, the cowshed — my independent kingdom was flanked by these two. From the industrial section to the cowshed, from the cowshed to the industrial section, travelling to and fro I would recite the deeply moving, immortal, powerful *mantras* of the Upanishads, or watching the movements and activities of the prisoners I tried to realise the basic truths of the immanent Godhead, God in every form. In the trees, the houses, the walls, in men, animals, birds, metals, the earth, with the help of the *mantra*: All this is the Brahman, (*sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ Brahma*), I would try to fix or impose that realisation on all of these. As I went on doing like this sometimes the prison ceased to appear to be a prison at all. The high wall, those

iron bars, the white wall, the green-leaved tree shining in sunlight, it seemed as if these common-place objects were not unconscious at all, but that they were vibrating with a universal consciousness, they love me and wish to embrace me, or so I felt. Men, cows, ants, birds are moving, flying, singing, speaking, yet all is Nature's game; behind all this is a great pure detached spirit rapt in a serene delight. Once in a while it seemed as if God Himself was standing under the tree, to play upon his Flute of Delight; and with its sheer charm to draw my very soul out. Always it seemed as if someone was embracing me, holding me on one's lap. The manifestation of these emotions overpowered my whole body and mind, a pure and wide peace reigned everywhere, it is impossible to describe that. The hard cover of my life opened up and a spring of love for all creatures gushed from within. Along with this love such *sāttvik* emotions as charity, kindness, *ahimsā*, etc., overpowered my dominantly *rājasik* nature and found an abundant release. And the more these qualities developed, the greater the delight and the deeper the sense of unclouded peace. The anxiety over the case had vanished from the beginning, now it was a contrary emotion that found room in my mind. God is All-Good, He had brought me into the prison-house for my good, my release and the quashing of charges was certain, I grew firm in this faith. After this for many days I did not have to suffer any troubles in the jail.

It took some days for these emotions to settle and deepen. It was while this was going on that the case opened in the magistrate's court. At first the mind was greatly perturbed, by being dragged from the silence of solitary imprisonment to the noise of the world outside. The patience of inner discipline was lost and the mind did not at all consent to listen for five hours on end to the dull and bothersome arguments by the prosecution. At first I tried to continue the

inner life while sitting in the court-room, but the unaccustomed mind would be attracted to every sound and sight, and the attempt would not succeed, in the midst of the noise going on all round. Later the feelings changed and I acquired the power to reject from the mind the immediate sounds and sights, and draw the mind inwards. But this did not take place in the early stages, the true power of concentration had not developed then. For that reason, giving up the futile attempt, I would be content with seeing, now and then, God in all creatures, for the rest I would observe the words and behaviour of my companions in adversity, else think of other things, or sometimes listened to Mr. Norton's valuable remarks or even the evidence of witnesses. I found that while spending one's time in solitary imprisonment had grown easy and pleasant, it was not that easy in the midst of the crowd and in the life-and-death game of a serious case. I greatly enjoyed the laughter, the jollities and the pleasantries of the accused lads, else the time spent at the court appeared wholly annoying. At four-thirty I would happily get into the police van and return to the prison.

The contact of human life and each other's company, after fifteen or sixteen days of prison life, made the other prisoners extremely happy. As soon as they got into the carriage the fountain of laughter and conversation would open and during the ten minutes that they were inside the carriage the stream would never cease for a moment. On the first day they took us to the court with great eclat. There was a small platoon of European sergeants who went along with us and they carried loaded pistols. At the time of our getting into the carriage a band of armed policemen stood guard round us and did some marching behind the carriage, the ritual was repeated at the time of our getting down as well. Looking at so much to-do some inexperienced spectators must have thought that these laughter-loving young lads must be some

group of daredevil famous warriors. Who knows how much courage and strength resided in their bodies so that even with their empty hands they might be able to break through the impassive cordon of a hundred policemen and tommies. Maybe it was for this reason that we were being conducted with so much honour and ceremony. For a few days the pomp was kept up, then there was a gradual decline, in the end two to four sergeants would be there to take and bring us back. At the time of our getting down they did not very much observe how we entered the prison; we would walk into it as if we were returning home after a stroll, just as a free person does. Watching this carelessness and slackening the Police Commissioner and some of the Superintendents said angrily: "On the first day we had arranged for twenty-five to thirty sergeants, now we see that not even four or five turn up." They would scold the sergeants and make strict arrangements for supervision. Then, maybe for two days, two more sergeants would come, and again the earlier slackness followed! The sergeants found that the devotees of the bomb were quite harmless folk, who were not attempting to escape and had no plans to kill or attack anyone, so they wondered why they should waste valuable time in performing unpleasant duties. At first before entering and leaving the court there used to be a personal search, during which we used to have the joy of feeling the soft palms of the sergeants, otherwise no one was likely to profit or to lose from this search. It was clear that our protectors had profound scepticism about the utility of such a procedure, and after a few days this was also given up. We could safely carry with us into the courtroom books, bread, sugar just as we liked. They soon got the feeling that we were not there to hurl a bomb or fire a pistol. But I noticed that there was one singular fear from which the sergeant's mind was not free. Who knew which of the accused will have the evil brainwave

of hurling a pair of a shoes at the glorious pate of the magistrate? Then the fat would be in the fire! For this reason entering the court with shoes on was strictly forbidden, and the sergeants were always alert on that point. I did not notice them to be keen on any other safety measures.

## VI

The nature of the case was a little strange. Magistrate, counsel, witnesses, evidence, exhibits, accused, all appeared a little *outré*. Watching, day after day, the endless stream of witnesses and exhibits, the counsel's unvaried dramatic performance, the boyish frivolity and light-heartedness of the youthful magistrate, looking at the amazing spectacle I often thought that instead of sitting in a British court of justice we were inside a stage of some world of fiction. Let me describe some of the odd inhabitants of that kingdom.

The star performer of the show was the government counsel, Mr. Norton. Not only the star performer, but he was also its composer, stage manager and prompter — a versatile genius like him must be rare in the world. Counsel Mr. Norton hailed from Madras, hence it appeared he was unaccustomed and inexperienced in the common code and courtesy as it obtained among the barristers of Bengal. He had been at one time a leader of the National Organisation, and for that reason might have been incapable of tolerating opposition and contradiction, and in the habit of punishing opponents. Such natures are known as ferocious. I cannot say whether Mr. Norton had been the lion of Madras Corporation, but he certainly was the king among beasts at the Alipore court. It was hard to admire his depth of legal acumen — which was as rare as winter in summer. But in the ceaseless flow of words, and through verbal quips, in the strange ability to transmute inconsequential witness into



something serious, in the boldness of making groundless statements or statements with little ground, in riding roughshod over witnesses and junior barristers and in the charming ability to turn white into black, to see his incomparable genius in action was but to admire him. Among the great counsels there are three kinds — those who, through their legal acumen, satisfactory exposition and subtle analysis can create a favourable impression on the judge; those who can skilfully draw out the truth from the witnesses and by presenting the facts of the case and the subject under discussion draw the mind of the judge or the jury towards themselves; and those who through their loud speech, by threats and oratorical flow can dumbfound the witness and splendidly confuse the entire issue, can win the case by distracting the intelligence of the judge or the jury. Mr. Norton is foremost in this third category. This is by no means a defect. The counsel is a worldly person, he takes money for his service, to gain the intention of the client is his duty, is what he is there for. Now, according to the British legal system the bringing out of truth by the contending parties, complainant and defendant, is not the real purpose, to win the case, by hook or by crook, is what it is really after. Hence the counsel must bend his energies towards that end, else he would be unfaithful to the law of his being. If God has not endowed one with other qualities then one must fight with such qualities as one possesses, and win the case with their help. Thus Mr. Norton was but following the law of his own being (*svadharmā*). The government paid him a thousand rupees a day. In case this turned out to be a useless expenditure the government would be loser, Mr. Norton was trying heart and soul to prevent such a loss to the government. But in a political case, the accused have to be given wide privileges and not to emphasise doubtful or uncertain evidence were rules germane to the British legal system. Had

Mr. Norton cared to remember this convention it would not have, I feel, harmed the case. On the other hand, a few innocent persons would have been spared the torture of solitary imprisonment and innocent Ashok Nandi might have even been alive. The counsel's leonine nature was probably at the root of the trouble. Just as Holinshed and Plutarch had collected the material for Shakespeare's historical plays, in the same manner the police had collected the material for this drama of a case. And Mr. Norton happened to be the Shakespeare of this play. I, however, noticed a difference between Shakespeare and Mr. Norton: Shakespeare would now and then leave out some of the available material, but Mr. Norton never allowed any material, true or false, cogent or irrelevant, from the smallest to the largest, to go unused; on top of it he could create such a wonderful plot by his self-created and abundant suggestion, inference and hypothesis that the great poets and writers of fiction like Shakespeare and Defoe would have to acknowledge defeat before this grand master of the art. The critic might say that just as Falstaff's hotel bill showed a pennyworth of bread and countless gallons of wine, similarly in Norton's plot "an ounce of proof was mixed with tons of inference and suggestion". But even detractors are bound to praise the elegance and construction of the plot. It gave me great happiness that Mr. Norton had chosen me as the protagonist of this play. Like Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in Mr. Norton's plot at the centre of the mighty rebellion stood I, an extraordinarily sharp, intelligent and powerful, bold, bad man! Of the national movement I was the alpha and the omega, its creator and saviour, engaged in undermining the British empire. As soon as he came across any piece of excellent or vigorous writing in English he would jump and loudly proclaim, Aurobindo Ghose! All the legal and illegal, the organised activities or unexpected consequences of the

movement were the doings of Aurobindo Ghose! and when they are the doings of Aurobindo Ghose then when even lawfully admissible they must contain hidden illegal intentions and potentialities. He probably thought that if I were not caught within two years, it would be all up with the British empire. If my name ever appeared on any torn sheet of paper, Mr. Norton's joy knew no bounds, with great cordiality he would present it at the holy feet of the presiding magistrate. It is a pity I was not born as an Avatar, otherwise thanks to his intense devotion and ceaseless contemplation of me for the nonce, he would surely have earned his release, *mukti*, then and there and both the period of our detention and the government's expenses would have been curtailed. Since the sessions court declared me innocent of the charges Norton's plot was sadly shorn of its glory and elegance. By leaving the Prince of Denmark out of *Hamlet* the humourless judge, Beachcroft, damaged the greatest poem of the twentieth century. If the critic is allowed his right to alter poetic compositions, such loss of meaning can hardly be prevented. Norton's other agony was that some of the other witnesses too were so caused that they had wholly refused to bear evidence in keeping with his fabricated plot. At this Norton would grow red with fury and, roaring like a lion, he would strike terror in the heart of the witness and cower him down. Like the legitimate and irrepressible anger of a poet when his words are altered or of a stage manager when the actor's declamation, tone or postures go against his directions, Norton felt a comparable loss of temper. His quarrel with barrister Bhuvan Chatterji had this holy or *sāttvic* anger as its root. Such an inordinately sensitive person as Mr. Chatterji I have not come across. He had no sense of time or propriety. For instance, whenever Mr. Norton sacrificed the distinction between the relevant and the irrelevant, tried to force odd arguments purely for the sake of poetic effect, Mr. Chatterji

would invariably get up and raise objections and declare these as inadmissible. He did not appreciate that these were being furnished not because they were relevant or legal, but because they might serve the purpose of Norton's stagecraft. At such impropriety not Norton alone but Mr. Birley could hardly contain himself. Once Mr. Birley addressed Chatterji in a pathetic tone: "Mr. Chatterji, we were getting on very nicely before you came." Indeed so, if one raises objections at every word the drama does not proceed, nor has the audience the joy of it.

If Mr. Norton was the author of the play, its protagonist and stage manager, Mr. Birley may well be described as its patron. He seemed to be a credit to his Scotch origin. His figure was a symbol or reminder of Scotland. Very fair, quite tall, extremely spare, the little head on the long body seemed like little Auchterlonie sitting on top of the sky-kissing Auchterlonie monument, or as if a ripe coconut had been put on the crest of Cleopatra's obelisk! Sandy-haired, all the cold and ice of Scotland seemed to lie frozen on his face. So tall a person needed an intelligence to match, else one had to be sceptical about the economy of nature. But in this matter, of the creation of Birley, probably the Creatrix had been slightly unmindful and inattentive. The English poet Marlowe has described this miserliness as "infinite riches in a little room" but encountering Mr. Birley one has an opposite feeling, infinite room in little riches. Finding so little intelligence in such a lengthy body one indeed felt pity. Remembering how a few such administrators were governing thirty crores of Indians could not but rouse a deep devotion towards the majesty of the English masters and their methods of administration. Mr. Birley's knowledge came a cropper during the cross-examination by Shrijut Byomkesh Chakravarty. Asked to declare when he had taken charge of the case in his own benign hands and how to complete the

process of taking over charge of a case, after years of magistracy, Mr. Birley's head reeled to find these out. Unable to solve the problem he finally tried to save his skin by leaving it to Mr. Chakravarty to decide.

Even now among the most complex problems of the case the question remains as to when Mr. Birley had taken over this case. The pathetic appeal to Mr. Chatterji, which I have quoted earlier, will help one to infer Mr. Birley's manner of judgment. From the start, charmed by Mr. Norton's learning and rhetoric, he had been completely under his spell. He would follow, so humbly, the road pointed out by Norton. Agreeing with his views, he laughed when Norton laughed, grew angry as Norton went angry. Looking at this daft child-like conduct one sometimes felt tenderly and paternally towards him. Birley was exceedingly childlike. I could never think of him as a magistrate, it seemed as if a school student suddenly turned teacher, was sitting at the teacher's high desk. That was the manner in which he conducted the affairs of the court. In case someone did not behave pleasantly towards him, he would scold him like a schoolmaster. If any one of us, bored with the farce of a case, started to talk among ourselves, Mr. Birley would snap like a schoolmaster, in case people did not obey he would order everybody to keep standing and if this was not done at once he would tell the sentry to see to it. We had grown so accustomed to the schoolmasterish manner that when Birley and Chatterji had started to quarrel we were expecting every moment that the barrister would now be served with the stand up order. But Mr. Birley adopted an opposite course Shouting "Sit down, Mr. Chatterji", he made this new and disobedient pupil of the Alipore School take his seat. Just as when a student asks questions or demands further explanation an irritated teacher threatens him, so whenever the advocate representing the accused raised objections Mr. Birley would threaten him.

Some witnesses gave Norton a hell of a time. Norton wanted to prove that a particular piece of writing was in the handwriting of such-and-such accused. If the witness said “No sir, this is not exactly like that handwriting, but may be, one cannot be sure,” — many witnesses answered like that — Norton would become quite agitated. Scolding, shouting, threatening, he would try somehow to get the desired answer. And his last question would be, “What is your belief? Do you think it is so or not?” To this the witness could say neither “yes” nor “no”, every time, again and again, he would repeat the same answer and try to make Norton understand that he had no “belief” in the matter and was swayed between scepticisms. But Norton did not care for such an answer. Every time he would hurl the same question, like thunder, at the witness: “Come, sir. what is your belief?” Mr. Birley, in his turn, would catch fire from the embers of Norton's anger, and thunder from his high seat above: “*Tomar biswas ki achay?*”<sup>1</sup> Poor witness! he would be in a dilemma. He had no “biswas” (belief), yet on one side of him was ranged the magistrate, and on the other, like a hungry tiger, Norton was raging in a circle to disembowel him and get at the priceless never-to-be-had “biswas”. Often the “biswas” would not materialise, and his brain in a whirl, the sweating witness would escape with his life from the torture chamber. Some who held their life dearer than their “biswas” would make good their escape by offering an artificial “biswas” at the feet of Mr. Norton, who also, now highly pleased, would conduct the rest of the cross examination with care and affection. Because such a counsel had been matched with a magistrate of the same calibre the case had all the more taken on the proportions of a play.

Though a few of the witnesses went against Mr. Norton

<sup>1</sup> What is your belief? Or, simply, what do you think?

the majority answered in support of his questions. Among these there were few familiar faces. One or two we of course knew. Of these Devdas Karan helped to dispel our boredom and made us hold our sides with laughter, for which we shall be eternally grateful to him. In course of giving evidence he said that at the time of the Midnapore Conference when Surendrababu had asked from his students devotion to the teacher, *gurubhakti*, Aurobindobabu had spoken out: "What did Drona do?" Hearing this Mr. Norton's eagerness and curiosity knew no bounds, he must have thought "Drona" to be a devotee of the bomb or a political killer or someone associated with the Manicktola Garden or the Student's Store. Norton may have thought that the phrase meant that Aurobindo Ghose was advising the giving of bombs to Surendrababu as a reward instead of *gurubhakti*. For such an interpretation would have helped the case considerably. Hence he asked eagerly: "What did Drona do?"<sup>1</sup> At first the witness was unable to make out the nature of the (silly) question. And for five minutes a debate went on, in the end throwing his hands high, Mr. Karan told Norton: "Drona performed many a miracle." This did not satisfy Mr. Norton. How could he be content without knowing the whereabouts of Drona's bomb? So he asked again: "What do you mean by that? Tell me what exactly he did." The witness gave many answers, but in none was Dronacharya's life's secret unravelled as Norton would have liked it. He now lost his temper and started to roar. The witness too began to shout. An advocate, smiling, expressed the doubt that perhaps the witness did not know what Drona had done. At this Mr. Karan went wild with anger and wounded pride, *abhimāna*.

<sup>1</sup> In *Mahabharata* Drona or Dronacharya is a preceptor of the royal princes. Norton and others, ignorant of the reference, took him to be a contemporary character, in fact a conspirator.

“What”, he shouted, “I, I do not know what Drona had done? Bah, have I read the *Mahabharata* from cover to cover in vain?” For half an hour a battle royal waged between Norton and Karan over Drona's corpse. Every five minutes, shaking the Alipore judge's court, Norton hurled his question: “Out with it, Mr. Editor! What did Drona do?” In answer the editor began a long cock and bull story, but there was no reliable news about what Drona had done. The entire court reverberated with peals of laughter. At last, during tiffin time, Mr. Karan came back after a little reflection with a cool head, and he suggested this solution of the problem, that poor Drona had done nothing and that the half-hour long tug of war over his departed soul had been in vain, it was Arjuna who had killed his *guru*, Drona. Thanks to this false accusation, Dronacharya, relieved, must have offered his thanks at Kailasha to Sadashiva, that because of Mr. Karan's evidence he did not have to stand in the dock in the Alipore bomb conspiracy case. A word from the editor would have easily established his relationship with Aurobindo Ghose. But the all-merciful Sadashiva saved him from such a fate.

## VII

The witnesses in the case could be divided into three categories. There were the police and the secret service men; there were people from the lower classes and other gentry, for misdeeds of their own, deeply in love with the police; and there were others who, because of personal failings and deprived of the love of the police, had been dragged unwillingly to give evidence. Each category had its own style of offering evidence. The gentlemen of the police would say their say, already decided upon, quite cheerfully, without hesitation, just as it pleased them, would recognise those they had to, without a shade of doubt, hesitation or any



margin of error. The friends of the police would give witness with considerable eagerness, those they had to identify they would, but sometimes in their excessive eagerness they would even identify those who were not to be identified. Those who had been brought there against their wishes would say only what they knew, but this would come to very little and Norton would feel unsatisfied. Assuming that the witness was holding back highly valuable and certain proof he would make every attempt to cross-examine him and get the secret out of his system, by a surgical operation of the abdomen as it were. This put the witnesses into a good deal of difficulty. On one side stood a thundering Mr. Norton, a red-eyed Mr. Birley, on the other the great sin of sending, on false evidence, one's countrymen to the Andaman islands. Whether to please Norton and Birley or God, for the witness this question assumed serious proportions. On one side, temporary danger because of incurring other men's displeasure, on the other, hell and misery in the next life due to one's evil deeds. But the witness would reflect: hell and the next life are still far beyond while the man-made dangers might swallow him at the next moment. Afraid that they might be convicted of bearing false evidence because of their unwillingness to do so, such a fear was likely to be shared by many, since in such cases the consequences were none too rare. For this type of witness the time spent in the witness-box was made up of a good deal of fear and agony. At the end of the cross-examination their half-vanished life would return to their bodies and relieve them of the suffering. Some, however, gave their evidence boldly without caring for Nortonian thunders, at which the English counsel, following national habit, would soften. Like this so many witnesses came and went and gave such a variety of evidence, but not one helped the police cause in any way worth mentioning. One spoke quite plainly, "I know nothing, and

cannot understand why the police have dragged me into it!" This sort of method for conducting cases is possible perhaps only in India, had it been some other country the judge would have been annoyed and would have severely censured and taught the police a lesson. Hauling hundreds of witnesses, gathered on a basis of guesswork, and without inquiring whether one was guilty or not, wasting the country's finances and keeping without any sense the accused for long periods under the hardship of prison life, it is worthy only of the police force of this country. But what were the poor police to do? They are detectives only in name, but without much power of their own. Hence to throw a wide net and catch good, bad and indifferent witnesses in this manner and bring them to the witness box, like pig in a poke, was their only way. Who knows, these men might have some information, even provide some proof.

The method for identification was also extremely mysterious. First, the witness was told, Would you be able to recognise any one of these persons? If the witness answered, Yes, I can, happy Mr. Norton would arrange for the identification parade in the witness box itself and order him to demonstrate the powers of his memory. In case the man said, I am not sure, maybe I can recognise, Mr. Norton would grow a little sad and say, All right, go and try. When someone said, No, I can't, I haven't seen them or I did not mark carefully, Mr. Norton would not let him go even then. Looking at so many faces some memory of the past life might come back, in that hope he would send him to the experiment to find out. The witness however lacked such a yogic power. Perhaps the fellow had no faith in the past life, and gravely marching, under the sergeant's supervision, between two long rows of accused persons, he would say, without even looking at us, No, I don't know any one of them. Crestfallen, Norton would take back his human net without

any catch. In course of this trial there was a marvellous illustration of how sharp and correct human memory could be. Thirty to forty people would be kept standing, one didn't know their name, hadn't known them at all in this or any other life, yet whether one had seen or not seen someone two months back, or seen such and such person at three places and not seen in the other two; — one had seen him brush his teeth once, and so his figure remains imprinted in the brain for all time. When did one see this person, what was he doing, was there anyone else with him, or was he alone? One remembers nothing of these, yet his figure is fixed in one's mind for all lives; one has met Hari ten times, so there is no probability of forgetting him, but even if one has seen Shyam only for half a minute, one would not be able to forget him till one's last breath, and with no possibility of mistake, — such a power of memory is not to be found frequently in this imperfect human nature, this earth wrapped up in matter and its unconsciousness. But not one, not two, every police chap seemed to be the owner of such uncanny, error-proof accurate memory. Because of which our devotion and respect for the C.I.D. grew more profound day by day. It is not that in the magistrate's court we did not have, once or twice, occasions for scepticism. When I found in the written evidence that Sisir Ghose had been in Bombay in the month of April, yet a few police chaps had seen him precisely during that period in Scott's Lane and Harrison Road,<sup>1</sup> one could not but feel a little uneasy. And when Birendrachandra Sen of Sylhet, while he was physically present at Baniachung, at his father's place, became visible in his subtle body to the occult vision of the C.I.D. at the Garden and Scott's Lane — of which Scott's Lane Birendra knew nothing, as was proved conclusively in the written

<sup>1</sup> In Calcutta.

evidence — the doubts could not but deepen: especially when those who had never set their foot in Scott's Lane were informed that the police had often found them there, in the circumstances a little suspicion seemed not unnatural. A witness from Midnapore — whom the accused persons from Midnapore however described as a secret service man — said that he had seen Hemchandra Sen of Sylhet, lecturing at Tamluk. Now Hemchandra had never seen Tamluk with his mortal eyes, yet his shadow self had rushed from Sylhet to Midnapore and, with his powerful and seditious nationalist speech delighted the eyes and ears of our detective monsieur. But the causal body of Charuchandra Roy of Chandernagore, materialising at Manicktola had perpetrated even greater mysteries. Two police officers declared on oath that on such and such date at such and such time they had seen Charubabu at Shyambazar, from where he had walked, in the company of a conspirator, to the Manicktola Gardens. They had followed him up to that and watched him from close quarters, and there could be no ground for error. Both witnesses did not budge when cross-examined. The words of Vyasa are true indeed, *Vyāsasya vacanam satyam*, the evidence of the police also cannot be otherwise. They were not wrong in their view about date and time either, since from the evidence of the Principal, Dupleix College, Chandernagore, it seemed that on the same day and at the same time, Charubabu had taken leave from the College and gone to Calcutta. But the surprising thing was that on that day and at that hour on the Howrah station platform he was found talking with the Mayor of Chandernagore, Tardival, his wife, the Governor of Chandernagore and few other distinguished European gentlemen. Remembering the occasion they had, all of them, agreed to stand witness in favour of Charubabu. Since the police had to release Charubabu at the instance of the French government the mystery has remained unsolved.

But I would advise Charubabu to send all the proofs to the Psychological Research Society and help in the advancement of knowledge. Police evidence — especially the C.I.D.'s — can never be false, hence there is no way out except to seek refuge in Theosophy. On the whole during this trial at every stage I could find, in the British legal system, how easily the innocent could be punished, sent to prison, suffer transportation, even loss of life. Unless one stood in the dock oneself, one cannot realise the delusive untruth of the Western penal code. It is something of a gamble, a gamble with human freedom, with man's joys and sorrows, a life-long agony for him and his family, his friends and relatives, insult, a living death. In this system there is no counting as to how often guilty persons escape and how many innocent persons perish. Once one has been involved in this gamble, this cruel, callous, reactionary social machinery, one can understand the reason for so much propaganda on behalf of Socialism and Anarchism, and their wide influence. In such a milieu it is not to be wondered at that many liberal and kind-hearted men have started to say, it is better to end and destroy this society; if society has to be preserved with the aid of so much sin and suffering, the burning sighs of the innocent and their heart's blood, its preservation would seem unnecessary.

### VIII

The only worthwhile event in the magistrate's court was the evidence of Narendranath Goswami. Before describing that event let me first speak about the companions of my days of trouble, the boys who had been accused along with me. Watching their behaviour in the court room I could well guess that a new age had dawned, a new type of children had begun to live on the Mother's lap. Those days the Bengali boys were of two kinds: either docile, well mannered,

harmless, of good character, cowardly, lacking in self-respect and high aims; else they were evil characters, rowdies, restless, cheats, lacking in restraint and honesty. Between these two extremes, creatures of many kinds must have been born on the lap of Mother Bengal, but except for eight or ten extraordinary talented and vigorous pioneers no strong representatives of a superior breed beyond these two groups were usually to be seen. The Bengali had intelligence, talent. but little power of manhood. Looking at these lads, however, one felt as if the liberal, daring, puissant men of an earlier age with a different training had come back to India. That fearless and innocent look in their eyes, the words breathing power, their carefree delighted laughter, even in the midst of great danger the undaunted courage, cheerfulness of mind, absence of despair, or grief, all this was a symptom not of the inert Indians of those days, but of a new age, a new race and a new activity. If these were murderers, then one must say that the bloody shadow of killing had not fallen across their nature, in which there was nothing at all of cruelty, recklessness or bestiality. Without worrying in the least about the future or the outcome of the trial they passed their days in prison with boyish fun, laughter, games, reading and in discussions. Quite early they had made friends with every one, with officers, the sentries, convicts, European sergeants, detectives, court officials and without distinguishing between friends and enemies, high and low, had started to tell stories and jokes. They found the time spent in the court-room quite tiresome, for in that farce of a trial there was very little that was enjoyable. They had no books with which to pass the time, and talking was forbidden. Those of them who had started doing yoga, they hadn't so far learnt how to concentrate even in a crowd, for them passing the time proved quite difficult. At first some of them began to bring books with them, this was soon followed by others.

Later on, one could see a strange spectacle: while the trial was going on, and the fate of thirty or forty accused persons was being wrangled over, whose result might be hanging or transportation for life, some of the accused persons without as much as glancing at what is happening, around them, were absorbed in reading the novels of Bankimchandra, Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* or *Science of Religions*, or the Gita, the Puranas, or European Philosophy. Neither the English sergeants nor the Indian policemen objected to this. They must have thought, if this keeps the caged tigers peaceful, that only lightens their duty. Further, this arrangement harmed no one. But one day Mr. Birley's eyes were drawn to it, to the magistrate this was unbearable and unpardonable. For two or three days he kept quiet, then, he could not hold himself any longer and gave orders forbidding the bringing of books to the court room. Really, Birley was dispensing justice so beautifully, but instead of everybody enjoying that and listening to his judgements, here was everybody reading books! There was no doubt that this showed great disrespect for Birley's dignity and the majesty of British justice.

During the period of our detention in separate cells, it was only in the police van, an hour or half before the magistrate's arrival and during tiffin time that we had some scope for conversation. Those who were known to each other from before would employ this recess to have a revenge for the forced silence and solitude of the cell and would spend the time in jokes, pleasantries and a variety of discussions. But the leisures were not conducive to conversation with unfamiliar people, hence I did not talk much. I would listen to their stories and laughter but myself did not join any one other than my brother and Abinash. One person would however often edge his way towards my side, this was the future approver, Narendranath Goswami. He was not quiet and well-behaved like the other boys, but looked bold, light-hearted and in character, speech and act, undisciplined. At

the time of his arrest he had shown his natural courage and forwardness, but being light-hearted it was impossible for him to put up with the minimum suffering of prison life. A landlord's son, brought up in luxury and evil ways, the severe restraint and austerity of prison life had proved too much for him, a fact which he did not hesitate to express before others. The grotesque longing to be freed by any means from this agony began to grow upon his mind from day to day. At first he had the hope that by withdrawing his confession he might be able to prove that the police had extorted, by torturing him, a confession of his guilt. He told us that his father was determined to procure these false witnesses. But within a very few days another attitude revealed itself. His father and a *moktar*, a pleader's agent, began to visit him frequently in the prison, in the end the detective Sham-sul-Alam also came and started holding long and secret conversations with him. During this period Gossain developed a tendency to be curious and ask questions. At this many felt suspicious about him. He would ask big and small questions, of Barindra and Upendra, if they knew or were close to the 'big men of India', and who were the people that helped the secret society with money, and the men belonging to the group outside India and in the different provinces of India, who would run the society now, where are its branches, etc. The news of Gossain's sudden thirst for learning soon reached everyone and his intimacy with Shams-ul-Alam too, instead of remaining confidential love-talk, became an open secret. There was a good deal of talk over this and it was noticed by some that these ever new questions would sprout in Gossain's mind after every visit from the police. It is needless to say that he did not receive satisfactory answers to his questions. When these things were being first talked



about among the accused, Gossain himself had confessed that the police were trying to persuade him in a number of ways to turn into a "king's approver". He had once mentioned this to me in the court. "What did you tell them?" I had asked him. "Do you think I am going to listen to that! And even if I do, what do I know that I could offer evidence in the way they would like to have it?" When after a few days he broached the subject once again, I noticed events had moved a bit too far. While standing by my side at the identification parade he told me, "The police are visiting me all the time." "Why don't you tell them that Sir Andrew Frazer<sup>1</sup> was the chief patron of the secret society, that would be ample reward for their labour," I told him jokingly. "I have said something of the sort," answered Gossain. "I have told them that Surendranath Banerji is our head and that once I had shown him a bomb." Staggered at this I asked, "What was the need of saying that sort of thing?" In answer Gossain said: "I shall make mincemeat of the.... I have told them many other things of that kind. Let the — s die of seeking for corroboration. Who knows because of this the trial may go phut." In answer I only said: "You should give up this kind of mischief. By trying to be clever with them you will be fooled." I do not know how far Gossain had spoken the truth. The other accused thought that he had said all this in order to throw dust in our eyes. To me it seemed that till then Gossain had not wholly made up his mind to turn an approver, even if he had proceeded quite far in that direction, but he had also the hope of spoiling the case by misleading the police. To achieve one's end through trickery and evil ways is the natural inspiration for a wicked disposition. From then on I could make out that, under the thumb of the police, by telling them fact or fiction, just as they

<sup>1</sup>The Governor of Bengal.

needed, Gossain would try to save his own skin. The degradations of an evil nature were being enacted before our very eyes. I noticed how, from day to day, Gossain's mind was undergoing rapid changes, his face, his movements and manners, his language were not the same as before. He started to adduce economic and political justifications in support of ruining his companions through treachery. One does not often come across such an interesting psychological study.

## IX

At first no one allowed Gossain to guess that his designs were known to all. He too was so stupid as to be unaware of this for quite some time, he thought he was helping the police quite secretly. But when after a few days it was ordered that instead of solitary confinement we would have to live together, because of this new arrangement we used to meet and talk throughout the day and night, and the thing could not be a secret much longer. At this time one or two of the boys had quarrels with Gossain. From their language and the unpleasant behaviour of everybody else Gossain could see that his intentions were not unknown to any one. When later he gave his evidence before the court, some English newspapers reported that this had caused surprise and excitement among the accused persons. Needless to say, this was entirely the reporters' fancy. Days ahead every one had known the nature of evidence that would be offered. In fact, even the date on which the evidence was given was known from before. At this time an accused went to Gossain and said — “Look, brother, life here is intolerable. I too would like to turn an approver. Please tell Sham-sul-Alam to arrange for my release.” Gossain agreed to this and after a few days told him that a government note had come to the effect that there was a possibility of favourable consideration

of the accused's appeal. After which Gossain suggested to him to eke out some necessary information from Upen and others, for instance, the location of the branches of the secret society and its leaders, etc. The pretended approver was a man with a sense of humour, a lover of fun, and, on Upendra's advice, he supplied a number of imaginary names to Gossain, and said that among the leaders of the secret society were Vishambhar Pillay in Madras, Purushottam Natekar at Satara, Professor Bhatt in Bombay and Krishnajirao Bhao of Baroda. Gossain was delighted with this and passed on this reliable information to the police. And the police too rummaged the whole of Madras, and came across many Pillays, big and small, but not one that was Pillay Vishambhar, not even half a Vishambhar; as for Satara's Purushottam Natekar, he also seemed to keep his identity hidden in deep darkness; in Bombay a certain Professor Bhatt was found no doubt, but he was a harmless person and a loyalist, there was no likelihood of any secret society using him as a cover. Yet at the time of giving his evidence, Gossain, depending on what he had heard from Upen earlier, offered such ring-leaders of conspiracy as the imaginary Vishambhar Pillay, etc., at the holy feet of Norton and strengthened the latter's strange prosecution theory. With regard to Bir Krishnajirao Bhao the police perpetrated a hoax. They produced the copy of a telegram sent by some Ghose from the Manicktola Gardens to Krishnajirao Deshpande of Baroda. The people of Baroda did not know of the existence of any one answering to that name, but since the truthful Gossain had spoken of a Krishnajirao Bhao of Baroda, then surely Krishnajirao Bhao and Krishnajirao Deshpande must be the same person. And whether Krishnajirao Deshpande existed or not, the letters mentioned the name of our respected friend, Keshavrao Deshpande. Hence Krishnajirao Bhao and Krishnajirao Deshpande are surely

one and the same. From which it followed that Keshavrao Deshpande was a ringleader of the secret conspiracy. Mr. Norton's famous theory was based on such extraordinary inference.

To believe Gossain one had to accept that it was at his suggestion that our solitary confinement was done away with and we were ordered to stay together. He had said that the police had arranged it like this and kept him in the midst of the other accused with the intention of drawing out secret information about the conspiracy. Gossain did not know that his new business was known to every one long before, when he started to ask questions about those who were engaged in the conspiracy, and the whereabouts of the branches of the secret society, about patrons and contributors, about those who would now be in charge of continuing the secret activities, etc. I have already given examples of the kind of answers he received. But most of Gossain's words were false. Dr. Daly had told us that, by persuading Mr. Emerson, it was he who had brought about this change in our accommodation. Possibly Daly's was the true version; afterwards on hearing about the change in arrangements the police may have imagined this likely gain. Be it as it may, everyone, excepting me, was extremely pleased at the change. At that period I was unwilling to be in the midst of a crowd, for my spiritual life, *sādhanā*, was proceeding at a rapid pace. I had tasted a little of Equality, Non-attachment and Peace, but these states had not been yet fully stabilised. By being in company, the pressure of other men's thought-waves on my unripe young ideas, this new state of being might suffer, or be even washed away. In fact, it did happen like that. Then I did not understand that for the fullness of my spiritual experience it was necessary to evoke opposite emotions, hence the Inner Guide, *antaryāmin*, suddenly deprived me of my dear solitude, flung me into the stream of violent

outward activity. The rest of the group went wild with joy. That night the big room in which singers like Hemchandra Das, Sachindra Sen, etc., were staying, most of the accused persons collected there, and no one could sleep till two or three in the morning. The ring of laughter, the endless stream of singing, all the pent-up stories began to flow like swollen rivers during the rainy season. The silent prison reverberated with noise and merriment. We fell asleep but every time we woke up we heard the laughter, the singing, the conversation going on as before. Towards the small hours the stream thinned, the singers too fell asleep. Our ward was silent once again.

# Prison and Freedom

**MEN** as we are, we are mostly creatures of circumstance, confined to the sensations of the outer world. Our mental activities depend upon such external sensations, even our reason is unable to go beyond the limits of the material; and the joys and sorrows of life are but echoes of outward events. This slavery is due to the domination of the body. In the Upanishad it has been said, "The self-born has set the doors of the body outwards, therefore the soul of a man gazes outward and not at the self within; hardly a wise man here and there, desiring immortality turns his eye inward and sees the Self within him." Normally, the outward, physical eyes with which we observe the life of man, in that kind of seeing the body is our chief support. However much we may call the Europeans materialists, in fact all men are materialists. The body is an instrument for the fulfilment of religious life, a chariot with many horses to pull it, the body-chariot on which we ride across the ways of the world. But, admitting the false importance of the body we give such a prominence to the physical mind that we find ourselves wholly entangled by outward activity and superficial good and evil. The result of such ignorance is life-long slavery and subordination. Joys and sorrows, good and evil, affluence and danger, compel us to mould our mental states in their own terms, and we too float along the waves of desire to which we give our thoughts. Greedy of enjoyment and afraid of sorrow we come to depend on others, and receiving our joy and sorrow from others, we suffer endless misery and humiliation. Because, be it man Or nature, whoever or whatever is able to exercise control over our body, or can bring it within the

field of its own forces, we have to submit to that influence. Its extreme example is to fall into the hands of enemies or the life of imprisonment. But the person, who, surrounded by friends and boon companions, moves about freely, even his condition is just as wretched as of those who spend their days in prison. The body is the prison, the body-centred intelligence, the reasoning Ignorance is the enemy that imprisons.

This state of imprisonment is the perennial condition of man. On the other hand, on every page of literature and history we find the irrepressible eagerness and enthusiasm on the part of the human race to gain freedom. As in the political and social spheres, so in the life of the individual in every age we find the same endeavour. Restraint, self-torture, indifference, stoicism. Epicureanism, asceticism, Vedanta Buddhism, Advaita, the doctrine of Maya. Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Gita, the path of Knowledge, Devotion and Activity — the paths are many, the goal is the same. The aim is always — victory over the body, getting rid of the domination of the physical, the freedom of the inner life. Western scientists have arrived at the conclusion that there is no world other than the physical, the subtle is based on the material, the subtle experiences are but reflections of the external experiences, man's attempt to be free is in vain; the philosophy, religion and Vedanta are but unreal imaginings, and wholly limited by the physical reality as we are, the attempt to untie the knot or cross the limitations of our physical nature is an attempt doomed to fail. But the longing to be free is lodged in such a deep layer of the human heart that a thousand arguments are helpless to uproot it. Man can never remain content with the conclusions of the physical sciences. In all ages he has felt vaguely that the subtle elements capable of conquering the physical limits are definitely to be found in his own inner being, that there is an

Inner Controller, a Person, for ever free and full of Delight, within him. It is the object of religion to realise this state of eternal freedom and pure Delight. This object of religious seeking is also the object of evolution of which science speaks. Reason or its absence is not the real difference between man and animals. The animals have the power to judge, but in the animal body that power does not develop. The real difference between man and animal lies elsewhere: a complete submission to the body is what constitutes the animal state, while in the conquest of the body and the effort at inner freedom lies man's manhood! This freedom is the chief goal of religion, this is what it calls *mukti*. It is for the sake of *mukti* that through knowledge we try to find out the mental guide of the body and life who lives within, or through action-devotion try to surrender to it our body, mind and life. The central ethical injunction in the Gita — *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi*<sup>1</sup> — this freedom is the yoga of the Gita. When the interior joys and sorrows, instead of depending on external good and evil, well-being and danger, become self-generated, self-propelled, self-bound, then the normal human condition is reversed, and the outer life can be modelled on the inner, the bondage of action slackens. The ideal person of the Gita renounces the desire for the fruit of action and practises active renunciation in the supreme Person, Purushottama. He is “*duḥkheṣvanudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigatasprhaḥ*”<sup>2</sup>; attaining an inner freedom he enjoys self-delight and self-control. Unlike the normal human individual he does not seek any external refuge out of fear or sorrow born of greed for pleasure, he does not accept his joys and sorrows from others and yet is free of the bondage of action.

<sup>1</sup> Fixed in yoga do thy actions. *Gita*, II, 48.

<sup>2</sup> He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows and amid pleasures is free from desires. *Gita*, II, 56.



Rather in the battle between Gods and Titans, it is the man, sent by God, greatly controlled, a mightily puissant protagonist, beyond anger and fear, he the man of yogic action who helps to usher in a political or religious revolution, or by preserving the established state and religious order, fulfills in a non-attached spirit God's own work; he is the superior person of whom the Gita speaks.

In the modern times we have arrived at a point of transition between the new and the old. Man is ever moving forward to his goal, from time to time one has to leave the plains and ascend the heights, and it is during these periods of ascent that revolutions occur in the state, society, religion as well as in the intellectual spheres. In the present times there is a preparation, if nothing else, to move towards the subtle from the physical. Because of the minute examination and finding of the laws of the physical universe by western scientists, the outlying plains surrounding the upward Way have been cleared. The knowers of the West are taking their first step in the Vast, inner worlds, many are tempted by the hope of conquest. Apart from this there are other visible signs — such as the quick spread of Theosophy, the welcome given to Vedanta in America, the partial and indirect influence of India in western philosophy and modes of thinking. But the most remarkable sign is the sudden and unexpected emergence of India. By claiming the role of world teacher, the Indians are rising to inaugurate a new age. If the westerners are deprived of the help from India they will not be able to succeed in their efforts at progress. Just as in the cultivation of the supreme means to the flowering of the inner life no country had excelled India in the Knowledge of Brahman or Self (*tattvajñāna*), and yoga, similarly the purification of the nature, control over the senses, the power of Brahman-realisation, the energy born of askesis, *tapasyā*, and the lesson of non-attached activity as yoga, these too are

India's very own. To acquire by ignoring the outward joys and sorrows the inner freedom is possible only for the Indian, the Indian alone is capable of undertaking activity in a spirit of non-attachment, while the sacrifice of ego and indifference in action are acknowledged as the highest aim of her education and culture and are the seed of her national character.

The truth of this view I first realised in the Alipore jail. Those who live there are usually thieves, robbers, murderers. Though we were forbidden to speak with the convicts, in practice this rule was not strictly observed. Apart from that there were the cook, the waterman, the sweeper, the cleaner, with whom one could not help coming into contact, and many times we would speak freely with each other. Those who were arrested with me for the same offence, they too were described in such unspeakable adjectives as heartless murderers. If there is any place where the Indian character has to be looked upon with eyes of contempt, if it is possible to see it at its worst, lowest and most hateful state, then Alipore Jail is that place; imprisonment at Alipore is that inferior and degenerate state. In such a place I spent twelve months like this. Thanks to my experience of these twelve months I have been able to return to the world of action with tenfold hope, with a fixed notion about Indian superiority, with redoubled respect for human character, the future progress and well-being of the motherland and the human race. This is not due to my inherent optimism or excessive trust. Srijiit Bepinchandra Pal had felt the same way in the Buxar Jail, in the Alipore Jail Dr. Daly, who had served here earlier, supported this view. Dr. Daly was a generous and wise person, experienced in the ways of men, the worst elements of human nature were present to him every day, yet he used to tell me: "The more I see and hear

of Indian gentlemen or the poor folk, men who are distinguished in society or the convicts in a prison, I am convinced that in quality and character you are much superior to us. Looking at these lads has further confirmed me in my judgement. Who can judge from their behaviour, character and other high qualities that they are anarchists or assassins? Instead of finding in them cruelty, wildness, restlessness or impropriety I find the opposite virtues." Of course thieves and robbers don't turn into holy men while they are serving a term in prison. The British prison is not a place for reform of character, on the contrary, for the ordinary convict it is but an instrument for the degradation of character and manhood. They remain the thieves and robbers that they had been before being sent to gaol; they continue to steal even in the prison, in the midst of the strict prohibitory rules they manage to indulge in addiction, continue to cheat. But what of that? The humanity of the Indian survives every loss. Fallen because of social abuses, crushed out because of loss of humanity, on the outside are the distortions of dark, dubious, shameful emotions, yet, within, the nearly vanished humanity seems to save itself in hiding, thanks to the inborn virtue of the Indians, it expresses itself time and again in their speech and act. Those who, having seen the filth outside, turn away their face in contempt, only they can say that they have failed to find in them the least trace of humanity. But one who has given up the pride of holiness and looks at them with one's own natural clear vision will never agree to such a view. After six months of imprisonment in the Buxar jail Srijut Bepinchandra Pal had seen God among the thieves and robbers, which he had openly confessed in an Uttarpara meeting. In the Alipore Jail itself I too could realise this fundamental truth of Hinduism for the first time among the thieves, robbers and killers, in the human body I could realise the divine Presence.

In this country who knows how many hundreds of innocent people are undergoing hellish long-term imprisonment and working out the misdeeds of their past lives towards a heavenlier way ahead? But see the average Westerner, who is not purified by religious emotions and is not of a godly nature; how these people fare in such tests, those who live in the western countries or are familiar with their literature expressive of western mentality and character can easily infer. In a similar situation either their tearful earthly hearts with their depressive anger and sorrow move towards hell's murk and, because of the contagion of companions, adopt their cruelty and low ways, else, because of the extreme pressure of weaknesses, lose strength and reasoning power so that what survives is only a remnant of humanity.

Let me speak of an innocent person at Alipore. As an accused in a dacoity case he had been sentenced to ten years' rigorous imprisonment. A cowherd by profession, un-educated, without anything to do with reading or writing, his only support was his faith in God and patience worthy of an Aryan and other noble qualities. Faced with this old man's attitude towards life, my pride of learning and forbearance was completely shattered. There was a serene and simple friendliness written in the old man's eyes, his talk was always full of amiability and friendliness. At times he would speak of his sufferings, even though he was innocent of the charges, and speak of his wife and children, he even wondered when God would bring him release so that he could meet them, but never did I find him depressed or restless. Waiting for God's Grace, he spent his days quietly doing his duties in the prison. All his efforts and thoughts were not concerned about himself, but about the well-being of others. His sense of kindness and sympathy for the sorrowing frequently came out in his speech, serving others was the law of his being. The noble qualities were further set off by his humility. Knowing

that he had a heart thousand times nobler than mine I would feel ashamed at his humility, to have to accept the old man's services embraced me, but he would not be held back so easily. He was all the time anxious about my comfort. As with me — so with the others, his kindly attention and humble service and respect seemed to be much greater especially for the innocent and miserable ones. Yet on his face and in his conduct there glowed a natural serene gravity and majesty. He had a great love for the country too. I shall always remember the white-whiskered serene visage of this old convict full of kindness and generosity. Even in these days of decline among the Indian peasantry — whom we describe as uneducated, “small people”, *chhotolok* — may be found such representatives of the Indian race. India's future is hopeful only because of this. The educated youth and the unlettered peasantry, the future of India lies with these two classes. The future Aryan race will be a blend of the two.

I have spoken about an uneducated peasant. Let me now speak of two educated young men. These were the two Kavirajs of Harrison Road, Nagendranath and Dharani.<sup>1</sup> The manner in which, quietly and contentedly, they too suffered this sudden mishap, this unjust punishment, was astounding. I could never find in them the slightest anger or censure or annoyance over those for whose fault they had to pass their youth in a hellish prison. They were devoid of the glory of modern education, a knowledge of western languages and familiarity with western learning. The mother-tongue was their only stay, but among the English-educated group I have found few men of comparable calibre. Instead

<sup>1</sup> Thinking that the police had come to know of the bombs Ullaskar, one of the conspirators, had removed a packet containing bombs to his friend Nagendranath's house, who did not know anything about its content. Later, to save his friend, Ullaskar gave a true confession. But the police did not release the brothers.

of complaining to either man or God, both of them had accepted the punishment with a smile. Both brothers were *sādhaks* but their natures were different. Nagendra was steady, grave, intelligent. He was very fond of godly conversation and religious topics. When we had been kept in solitary confinement the jail authorities had permitted us, at the end of the day's labour, to read books. Nagendra who had asked for the Gita had been given the Bible instead. In the witness box he would tell me of his feelings on reading the Bible. Nagendra hadn't read the Gita but I noticed with surprise that instead of speaking about the Bible he was expressing the inner sense of the Gita's verse — once in a while it even appeared as if the sublime and divine statements of Krishna at Kurukshetra were coming out of the same lotus lips of Vasudeva in the Alipore dock. Without reading the Gita to be able to realise in the Bible the spirit of equality, renunciation of the desire for fruit, to see the Divine in all things, etc., is the index of a not negligible inner life or spiritual capacity, *sādhanā*. Dharani was not as intelligent as Nagendra, but he was obedient and tender by nature, temperamentally a devotee. He was always wrapt up in the idea of Divine Motherhood, and looking at the Grace that shone on his face, his innocent laughter and gentle devotional attitude it was hard to realise that we were confined in a jail. Knowing these men, who can say that the Bengali is low and despicable? This power, this manhood, this sacred fire is only hidden amidst the ashes.

They were both innocent. Imprisoned without any fault of their own, by their own qualities or by virtue of their training they had been able to reject the supremacy of external joys and sorrows and succeeded in preserving the freedom of their inner life. But the virtues of the national character came out even among the real offenders. I stayed in Alipore for twelve months, and excepting one or two all the convicts, the

thieves, the dacoits and the murderers with whom we had come in contact, we received from all and sundry good behaviour and helpfulness. Rather it was among those spoilt by modern education that these qualities seemed to be lacking. Modern education may have many virtues to recommend itself, but civility and selfless service form no part of these. The kindness and sympathy that are such valuable elements of an Aryan education, I found that even among the thieves and robbers. The sweeper, the cleaner, the waterman, they all had to share, for no fault of their own, part of the misery and hardship of our solitary confinement, but they never expressed to us their anger or annoyance on that score. At times they ventilated their distress before the native jailors, but they would also cheerfully pray for our release from detention. A Mohammedan convict used to love the accused like his own children and at the time of parting he could not restrain from shedding tears. Pointing out their suffering and humiliation as the price of patriotism he would tell others and express his sorrow by saying, "Look, these are gentlemen, sons of the rich, and this their suffering is because they have tried to help the poor and the distressed." Those who vaunt about western culture, I would like to ask them: Is this self-control, charity, generosity, gratitude, godly love for others to be found among the lower order of criminals, the thieves and robbers of England? In fact, Europe is the land of enjoyment, India of sacrifice. The Gita describes two kinds of creatures — *deva* and *asura*. The Indian is intrinsically of the *deva* kind, the western of the *asura*. But in this age of deep darkness (*ghor kali*) because of the disappearance of Aryan education, due to the predominance of inertia, in our national decline, we are acquiring the inferior qualities of the *asura* while the westerners, because of their national progress and the evolution of manhood are acquiring the qualities of the *deva*. But in spite of this, in their

*deva* qualities something of the *asura* and in our *asuric* qualities something of the *deva* can be imperfectly glimpsed. Among them those who are the cream, even they cannot wholly get rid of the *asuric* qualities. When one compares the inferior specimens of both cultures, the truth comes out quite strikingly.

There is much to be written on this topic, but I forbear for fear of the lengthiness of the article. But those persons in whose bearing I have seen this inner freedom, while I was in the prison, they are the prototypes of the godward emotions, *devabhāva*. I have an idea of writing in future an article on this subject.



# The Aryan Ideal and the Three Gunas

**I**N the essay entitled “Prison and Freedom”<sup>1</sup> I have, by describing the psychology of some innocent prisoners, tried to establish that, owing to the Aryan discipline, the priceless ancestral legacy of inner freedom which the Indians have, is not destroyed even in prison — indeed something of the godly disposition, garnered through thousands of years and inherent in the true Aryan character, remains even in the worst of imprisoned criminals. The main principle of the Aryan discipline is the sattwic temperament. He who is sattwic is pure; normally all human beings are impure. This impurity is nourished and increased by the predominance of rajas and the great density of tamas. The impurity of mind is of two kinds. First, inertia or impurity due to lack of inclination to work; this is produced by tamas. Secondly, excitement or impurity due to wrong impulses; this is caused by rajas. The signs of the mode of tamas are ignorance, delusion, crudeness of intelligence, unsystematic thinking, laziness, too much sleep, irritation owing to inertia in work, pessimism, despondency, fear — in short, whatever nourishes lack of effort. Inertia and disinclination are the results of ignorance; excitement and bad inclinations, of wrong knowledge. But if the impurity of tamas is to be removed it can be done only by the increase of rajas. Rajas is the cause of impulsion and effort and these are the first steps to detachment. He who is inert is not truly detached — the state of

<sup>1</sup> Included in Sri Aurobindo's Bengali book, *Kara Kahini*.

inertia is devoid of knowledge; and knowledge indeed is the path of spiritual detachment. He who engages himself in works without desire is detached; mere renunciation of work is not freedom. This is why Swami Vivekananda, noticing the deep *tamas* of India, used to say, “*Rajas* is needed, the country needs heroes of action, let the strong current of impulsion flow. Even if evil follows in its wake, it will be a thousand times better than this *tamasic* inertia.”

It is true indeed that sunk in deep *tamas* but using *sattwa* as an excuse we are pretending and boasting as being highly *sattwic*. I notice that many people hold the view that we have been conquered by *rajasic* nations because we are *sattwic*, that we are degraded and backward because we are spiritual. They try to prove the superiority of Hinduism to Christianity by using that argument. The Christian nations believe in practical results; they try to establish the superiority of a religion by showing the results it produces in this world. They say that the Christian nations are paramount in the world, therefore Christianity is the greatest religion. And many among us argue that this is wrong; it is not possible to decide upon the superiority of a religion by recounting what one gains from it in this world; rather its consequences in the next world should be considered; because the Hindus are more religious they are subject to a powerful and titanic nation. But this argument involves a serious mistake which is opposed to the Aryan wisdom. *Sattwa* can never be the cause of downfall; indeed a nation which is predominantly *sattwic* cannot remain bound in chains of slavery. The spiritual power of the true Brahmin is the chief result of *sattwa*, the prowess of the *Kshatriya* is the foundation of spiritual power. From calm spiritual power, when it receives a blow, sparks of the prowess of the *Kshatriya* fly in all directions, everything catches fire as it were. Spiritual power cannot survive where there is no *Kshatra*-prowess. If there is one true Brahmin in

the land he can create a hundred Kshatriyas. The cause of the downfall of this country is not an excess of sattwa but want of rajas and a preponderance of tamas. Owing to the lack of rajas, the sattwa inherent in us becomes weak and concealed in tamas. Along with laziness, delusion, ignorance, disinclination, pessimism, despondency and lack of dynamic effort, the sad condition and degradation of the country become worse. This darkness was thin and rare at first; however, in course of time it gradually became so dense, and we, sunk in the obscurity of ignorance, became so utterly devoid of high aspiration and great endeavour, that in spite of the advent of great men sent by God, that darkness has not dissipated entirely. Then the Sun-god decided to save the country through the impulsion roused by rajas.

It is true that tamas tends to disappear when rajas is roused and powerfully active. On the other hand, there is the danger of demoniac qualities like licentiousness, evil impulses, complete lack of restraint, etc. If the force of rajas operates under its own momentum for the sole satisfaction of large assertive inclinations for the fulfilment of wrong ends, then there is enough reason for apprehension. Rajas cannot endure long if it goes along its own path without any control; ennui follows, tamas appears, as the sky, instead of becoming clear, is overcast and becomes devoid of the movement of air after a storm. This was the fate of France after the revolution. There was in that revolution a frightful manifestation of rajas and at the end of it, a resurgence of tamas to some extent, then another revolution, followed by tiredness, loss of force and more degradation — this is the history of France during the last century. Whenever there arose in the heart of France a sattwic inspiration born of the ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity, rajas tried to fulfil its own tendencies after gradually becoming predominant and turning itself into a demoniac mode opposed to sattwa.

Consequently, as a result of a reappearance of *tamas*, France, having lost its former force, is in a sad and desperate but uncertain state like *Harishchandra* who stood neither in heaven nor on earth. The only means of avoiding such a result is to engage powerful *rajas* in the service of *sattwa*. If the *sattwic* disposition is roused and becomes the guide of *rajas*, then there will be no danger of the re-emergence of *tamas*, and uncontrolled force, being disciplined and controlled, can do the country and the world a great deal of good according to high ideals. The means to rouse *sattwa* is the spiritual temperament — to renounce selfish interests and deploy all one's energies for the good of others — to make the whole of life a great and pure sacrifice by surrendering oneself to the Divine. It is said in the *Gita* that *sattwa* and *rajas* when together suppress *tamas*; *sattwa* alone cannot conquer *tamas*. This is the reason why God has in modern times spread the force of *rajas* all over the land after rousing the religious spirit and the *sattwa* inherent in us. Great souls and religious leaders like *Rammohan Roy* have ushered in a new age by reawakening *sattwa*. In the nineteenth century there was not the same awakening in politics and society as in religion. The reason was that the field was not ready. That is why there was no crop though plenty of seeds were sown. In this also can be seen how kind and pleased with India God has been. An awakening caused only by *rajas* cannot be enduring or completely beneficial. It is necessary to rouse the spiritual force to some extent in the mind and heart of the nation. It is because of this that the current of *rajas* was arrested for so long. Owing to this, the tendency towards an uncontrolled enthusiasm does not cause much alarm, since this is the play of *rajas* and *sattwa*; whatever excitement there is in this will soon be controlled and regulated. Not by any external power but by the inner spiritual force and the *sattwic* disposition will this be conquered and disciplined.

We can only nourish that sattwic temperament by spreading the religious spirit.

I have already said that one of the means of increasing sattwa is to devote all one's powers to the good of others. And there is plenty of evidence of this spirit in our political awakening. But it is difficult to maintain this spirit. It is difficult for the individual, more so for the nation. Selfish interest, unnoticed, gets mixed up with the good of others and if our understanding is not very pure, we may fall into such delusion that we may seek only our own selfish ends in the name of service to others and thus submerge the good of our fellow-beings, our country and humanity and yet not detect our mistake. Service of God is another means of increasing sattwa. But even in that case good may turn into its opposite. There may gather in us sattwic apathy towards works after we have achieved the joy of nearness to God. We may turn our back to the service of our distressed land and humanity. This is the bondage of the sattwic temperament. Just as there is rajasic egoism, so also there is sattwic egoism. Just as sin binds men, so does virtue. There cannot be complete freedom unless we surrender ourselves to God, being fully free from desire and giving up egoism. In order to renounce these two harmful things, we must have pure understanding. To attain mental freedom after eschewing the idea that the body and the spirit are the same is the stage preceding the purification of understanding. When the mind becomes free, then it becomes subject to the soul. After that, conquering the mind and with the help of the understanding, man can to some extent be free from selfishness. Even then it does not cease altogether. The last selfishness is the desire for spiritual liberation, the wish to be rapt in one's own delight forgetting the misery of others. Even that has to be given up. Its antidote is to realise and serve Narayana in all creatures; this is the perfection of sattwa. There is still a higher state

than this, and that is to take refuge in God utterly by transcending sattwa and going beyond the modes of Nature. The Gita describes one who is beyond the modes thus:

*nānyaṃ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṃ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati  
guṇebhyaśca paraṃ vetti madbhāvaṃ so'dhigacchati (14.19)*

*guṇānetānātīya trīndehī dehasamudbhavān  
janmamṛtyujarāduḥkhairvimukto'mṛtamaśnute (14.20)*

*prakāśaṃ ca pravṛttiṃ ca mohameva ca pāṇḍava  
na dveṣṭi saṃpravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati (14.22)*

*udāsīnavadāsīno guṇairyo na vicālyate  
guṇā vartanta ityeva yo'vatiṣṭhati neṅgate (14.23)*

*samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ  
tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyanindātmasaṃstutiḥ (14.24)*

*mānāpamānayostulyastulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ  
sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate (14.25)*

*mām ca yo'vyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate  
sa guṇānsamatītyaitānbrahmabhūyāya kalpate (14.26)* <sup>1</sup>

“When the soul becoming a witness sees the three modes, that is God's Power of the three modes as the sole doer of all works and also knows the Lord who is even beyond the modes and is the mover of Shakti, then he attains the status and nature of the Divine. The embodied soul then transcends the three modes born of the two types of body, namely, the gross and the subtle, and becoming free from birth and death and decay and suffering enjoys immortality. He does not abhor knowledge produced by sattwa or impulsion caused by rajas or the clouding of the mind and body created by tamas, resulting in sloth, torpor and delusion; he remains steadfast like one seated high above maintaining equilibrium in face of the appearance and disappearance of

<sup>1</sup> The Gita, Chap. XIV, Verses 19, 20 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

the three modes which cannot disturb him and firm because all these are the modifications born of the intrinsic character of the modes. He to whom happiness and unhappiness, the pleasant and the unpleasant, praise and blame are the same, gold and mud are both like a piece of stone, who is calm and quiet and unshaken within himself, to whom honour and insult are alike and friend and enemies are equally dear, who does not do anything by his own initiative, but does all works surrendering them to the Divine and only under His inspiration, is described as one above the modes. He who worships Me by the yoga of faultless love and devotion becomes fit to attain the Brahman by going beyond the three modes.”

Though this state beyond the gunas is not attainable by all, it is not impossible for the pre-eminently sattwic man to achieve the state preceding it. The first step to that is to give up sattwic egoism and to see in all action the play of the Divine's Power of the three gunas. Knowing this, the sattwic doer, renouncing the idea that he is the doer, does all his works surrendering himself to God.

What we have said about the gunas and the transcendence of them is the fundamental teaching of the Gita. But this teaching has not been widely accepted. Till now what we have known as the Aryan education has been mostly the cultivation of the sattwic temperament. The appreciation of the rajasic mode has come to an end in this country with the disintegration of the Kshatriya order. And yet there is a great need for the rajas-force in national life. That is why the attention of the nation has again been drawn to the Gita. The teaching of the Gita, though based on the ancient Aryan wisdom, goes beyond it. Its practical teaching is not afraid of the rajas quality, there is in it the way to press rajas into the service of sattwa and also the means of spiritual liberation even through the path of works. How the mind of the nation is being prepared for the practice of this teaching I could first

understand while in jail. The current is still not clean but contaminated and impure; but when its excessive force slows down a little, then there will be the action of the pure Energy in it.

Many of those who were accused with the same offence as myself and were in jail with me have been acquitted as not guilty. Others have been convicted as being involved in a conspiracy. There is in human society no graver crime than killing. The personal character of the man who commits murder in the interests of the nation may not be blackened. But that does not lessen the gravity of the crime from the social point of view. It must also be admitted that there is as it were a blood-stain on the mind, an invasion by cruelty, if there is an impression of killing on the inner being. Cruelty is a quality of the savage; it is the chief among those characteristics from which mankind is becoming free in the evolution of its upward march. A dangerous thorn will be uprooted from the path of the ascent of humanity if we can renounce it completely. If we assume the guilt of those who have been accused, it must be understood that it is only an excessive but temporary and uncontrolled manifestation of rajas-force. There is in them such hidden sattwic force that this temporary lack of discipline is not a cause for alarm.

The inner freedom I have mentioned before was a natural quality of my companions. During the days we were lodged together in a big verandah, I observed with great attention their conduct and psychological dispositions. Apart from two of them, I never saw even a trace of fear in the face or speech of anyone. Almost all were young men, many mere boys. Even strong-minded people were likely to be quite upset at the thought of the dire punishment to be given to the accused if found guilty. But these young men did not really hope to be acquitted at the trial. Especially, on observing the frightful paraphernalia of witnesses and written evidence



at the court, people not versed in law would have easily formed the idea that even the innocent could not find a way of escape from that net. Yet instead of fear or despondency on their faces there were only cheerfulness, the smile of simplicity and discussion about their country and religion, with forgetfulness of their own danger. A small library grew up as everyone in our ward had a few books with him. Most books in the library were religious — the Gita, the Upanishads, the works of Vivekananda, the life and conversations of Ramakrishna, the Puranas, hymns, spiritual songs, etc. Among other volumes were the works of Bankim, patriotic songs, books on European philosophy, history and literature. A few of the men practised spiritual disciplines in the mornings, some used to read books, still others used to chat quietly. Occasionally there were roars of laughter in the peaceful atmosphere of the morning. If the court was not in session, some slept, a few played games — it might be anything, nobody was attached to a particular one. On some days, a quiet game with people sitting in a circle, on others, running and leaping; there was football for a few days, though the ball was made of a unique material; blind man's buff was played on some days, on others a number of groups were formed for lessons in ju-jitsu, high and long jumping or for playing draughts. Except a few reserved and elderly people everybody joined in these games at the request of the boys. I observed that even those who were not young had a childlike character. In the evenings there were musical soirées. Only patriotic and religious songs were sung; we used to sit around and hear Ullas, Sachindra, Hemdas, who were experts at singing, sing. For the sake of amusement, Ullaskar sang comic songs or did acting, ventriloquism, miming or told stories about hemp addicts on some evenings. Nobody paid any attention to the trial but all passed the days in religious pursuits or in just being gay. This unperturbed disposition is

impossible to one used to evil actions; there was not the slightest trace in them of harshness, cruelty, habitual evil-doing or crookedness. Laughter, conversation or play, all was joyful, sinless, full of love.

The result of this freedom of the mind began to show itself soon. The perfect fruit can be obtained only if the spiritual seed is sown in this kind of field. Pointing at some boys Jesus said to his disciples, "Those who are like these boys will attain the Kingdom of God." Knowledge and delight are the signs of sattwa. They alone have the capacity for yoga who do not consider misery as misery but are full of joy and cheer in all situations. The rajasic attitude does not get any encouragement in jail and there is nothing there to nourish the tendency to worldly pleasures. Under these circumstances, since there is a dearth of things to which it is used and in which its rajas can be indulged, the demoniac mind destroys itself like a tiger. There follows what the Western poets call "eating one's own heart." The Indian mind when in seclusion, though there be external suffering, turns through an eternal attraction to God. This is what happened with us too. A current, I do not know from where, just swept us all. Even people who had never taken God's name learnt to practise some spiritual discipline and realising the grace of the most Gracious became steeped in Joy. Those boys achieved in a few months what yogis take a long time to attain. Ramakrishna Paramahansa once said, "What you are seeing now is really nothing — such a flood of spirituality is coming into this land that even boys will attain realisation after three days' sadhana." To see these boys was not to have any doubt about the truth of this prophecy. They were as it were the manifest precursors of that spiritual flood. The sattwic waves overflowing the prisoners' docks swept over all, except four or five persons, with great joy. Anyone who has tasted that once cannot forget it nor can he acknowledge

any other joy as comparable. This satwic temperament is indeed the hope of the country. The ease with which brotherliness, self-knowledge and love of God possess the Indian mind and express themselves in action is not possible in the case of any other nation. What is necessary is the renunciation of *tamas*, the control of *rajas*, and the manifestation of *sattwa*. This is what is being prepared for India in accordance with God's secret purpose.

## New Birth

**I**N the Gita Arjuna asks Sri Krishna: “He who takes up yoga but before going through to the end, wanders away and falls from it, what happens to him? Does he lose both worldly and spiritual gains and perish like a cloud dissolving?” In answer Sri Krishna said: “Neither in this life nor hereafter is there destruction for him. Never does any one who practises good come to woe. Having attained to the world of the righteous and having dwelt there for immemorial years, he who fell from yoga is again born in the house of such as are pure and glorious and driven by his longing for yoga, acquired during past lives, he tries even more for perfection and, finally, through the practice of many lives gets rid of all sins and achieves the supreme end.”

The theory of re-incarnation which has been always held in the Aryan religion as a part of the knowledge acquired through yoga, had lost its position among the educated folk, due to the influence of western learning. After the advent (*līlā*) of Sri Ramakrishna and the spread of Vedantic knowledge and the study of the Gita that truth is being re-established. Just as heredity is the chief truth of the physical world, so, in the subtle world, re-incarnation is the chief truth. There are two truths implied in Sri Krishna's statement. Persons who have fallen from the path of yoga are born with the tendencies (*saṁskāras*) of learning acquired in their past lives, and, like a boat moved by the wind, the tendencies bring them to the path of yoga. But, in order to achieve results, for the production of a suitable body it is necessary to be born into a family that is fit and proper. An excellent heredity produces a fit body. When one is born in

a pure and glorious home, one has a pure and strong body, born in a family of yogis one has an excellent body and mind and has the advantage of the requisite education and mentality.

For the past few years in India one can see as if a new race is being created in the midst of the old that was dominated by the gross influences. The earlier children of Mother India were born in an irreligious atmosphere or one of religious decline and receiving an education in keeping with that, they had grown short-lived, small, selfish and narrow in spirit. Many powerful great souls were born among these people and it is they who have saved the race in its hour of great peril. But without doing work commensurate with their energy and genius, they have only created a field for the future greatness and the marvellous activity that awaits this race. It is because of their good deeds that the rays of the new dawn are brightening up all the corners. These new children of Mother India, instead of getting the qualities of their parents, have grown bold, full of power, high-souled, self-sacrificing, inspired by the high ideals of helping others and doing good to the country. That is why, instead of being obedient to their parents, the young men go their own way, there is a difference between the old and the young, and in deciding a course of activity there is a conflict between the two. The old are trying to keep these youth, born of divine emanations, the pioneers of a golden age, confined to the old, selfish and narrow ways, without understanding they are trying to perpetuate the Age of Iron. The youth are sparks born of the Great Energy, *Mahāśakti*, eager to build the new by destroying the old, they are unable to be obedient or submit to the laws of respect for the parent. God alone can remedy this evil. But the will of the Great Energy cannot be in vain, the new generation will not leave without fulfilling the purpose for which they have come. In the midst of the

new the influence of the old lingers on. Because of the fault of inferior heredity and an *āsuric* education many black sheep have also taken birth; and those who have been ordained to inaugurate the new age are unable to manifest their inherent force and strength. Among the youth is a marvellous sign of manifesting the age of gold, a religious bent of mind, and in the hearts of many, a longing for yoga and half-expressed yogic powers.

Ashok Nandi, accused in the Alipore Bomb Conspiracy Case, belongs to this second category. Those who know him would hardly believe that he might be involved in any conspiracy. He had been sentenced on slender and rather incredible evidence. He was not overwhelmed, like the other young people, by a strong desire to serve the national cause. In intellect, character and life he was wholly a yogi and devotee, he had none of the qualities of a man of the world. His grandfather was a realised Tantric yogi (*siddha*), his father too was known to have acquired powers through the pursuit of yoga. The rare birth in a family of yogis of which the Gita speaks, that had been his good fortune. Signs of his inherent yogic powers had shown themselves intermittently even at a tender age. Long before his arrest he had come to know that he was destined to die while young, hence his mind did not take to schooling or the preliminaries of leading a worldly life, yet on his father's advice, by ignoring the 'failure' (*asiddhi*) of which he had earlier intelligence, he was pursuing what he considered to be his duty and had taken to the path of yoga. It was then that he was suddenly arrested. At this danger, which was the result of his own action, Ashok remained unperturbed and in the jail he devoted his entire energies to the pursuit of yoga. Many of the accused in the case had adopted this path, and though not foremost he was one among these. In love and devotion he was inferior to none. His generous character, sober devotion and loving

heart charmed every one. At the time of Gossain's murder he was ailing in the hospital. Before regaining his health he began to fall ill frequently during his solitary confinement. Even when sick he had to stay during the chilly nights in a room that was open on all sides. Because of this he developed tuberculosis and then, when there was no chance of his surviving, sentenced to the heaviest punishment, he had been kept once again in that death-cell. Thanks to the petition of the barrister Chittaranjan Das arrangements were made to remove him to the hospital, but he was not given bail. In the end, due to the Governor's generosity, he was allowed to die in his own home, looked after by his own people. Before he could be freed through appeal God released him from the body's prison. Towards the end Ashok's yogic powers developed considerably; on the day of his passing away, overwhelmed by the power of the Lord as Vishnu, 'distributing' the holy, salvation-inducing Name and spiritual advice he gave up the body with the Name on his lips. Ashok Nandi had been born to work out the consequences due to a previous incarnation, hence all this misery and his untimely death. The energy needed to usher in the Age of Gold did not descend in him, but he has shown a brilliant example of the natural yogic powers. Men of good deeds spend a little time in this world to work out their previous sins, then, freed from all sins, they leave the defective body and, assuming another body, they come to express their inherent energies and to do good to men and creatures.





## **X. LETTERS**



# Letters to Mrinalini

(1)

30th August 1905

Dearest Mrinalini,

Your letter of the 24th August is to hand. I was sorry to learn that your parents have once again the same kind of bereavement, but you have not mentioned which of their sons died. However, how does sorrow help? Seeking happiness in the world inevitably leads one to find suffering in the midst of that happiness, for suffering is always intertwined with happiness. This law holds good not only in regard to the desire for children, but it embraces all sorts of worldly desires.

In place of twenty rupees I read ten rupees (in your letter) and so I wrote that I will send you ten rupees; if you need fifteen, I shall of course send you fifteen rupees. This month I have sent the money for the clothes which Sarojini bought for you in Darjeeling. How could I know that you have already made a loan? As was needed, I had sent fifteen rupees; if you need three or four rupees more, I will send the same next month. I will send you twenty rupees this time (i.e. next month).

Now, let me tell you about that matter. You have, perhaps, by now discovered that the one with whose destiny is linked yours is a very strange kind of person. Mine is wide apart from what the people in this country have at present as their mental outlook, their aim of life and their field of work. It is quite different in all respects; it is uncommon. Perhaps you know how the ordinary people view extraordinary ideas, uncommon efforts, extraordinary high aspirations. They

label all these as madness, but if the mad man succeeds in the field of action then instead of calling him a lunatic, they call him a great man, a man of genius. But how many succeed in their efforts? Out of a thousand persons only ten are extraordinary, and out of these ten one succeeds. For me, success in the field of action is far away: I have not yet been able to enter into it fully; so, I may be considered a mad man. It is very unfortunate for a woman to be married to a mad man; for all the hopes of women are limited to the joys and the agonies in the family. A mad man would not bring happiness to his wife — he would only inflict suffering.

The founders of the Hindu religion understood this matter very well, and they loved very much characters, action and hopes which were extraordinary; they regarded highly all uncommon persons, whether great or insane. But what remedy could be there for the terrible plight to which women were put by such things? The Rishis decided upon this remedy: they said to women, “Know that, for you, the husband is the supreme Guru; this and nothing else, is the only *mantra*. The wife is the husband's co-partner in the practice of Dharma. She will help him, advise him and encourage him in the work he chooses for his Dharma; she will obey him as God, feel happy in his happiness and suffer in his suffering. It is the man's right to choose the work, to help and encourage him is the right of the woman.”

Now the question is which would you choose, the path of the Hindu Dharma or that of the new so-called cultured Dharma? That you have married a lunatic is a fruit of faulty actions of your previous life. It is better to make a settlement with one's fate; but what kind of settlement would it be? Swayed by the opinion of others, will you also dismiss him as a mad man? The mad man will, by all means, run on the path determined by his madness. You will not be able to hold him back; his nature is stronger than yours. Will you then just sit

in a corner and weep and wail, or join him in his run and try to become the mad wife to match the mad husband, like the queen of the blind king who covering her eyes with a piece of cloth lived as blind? Whatever be the impact on you of the education you have received in a Brahma school, you are, after all, a daughter of a Hindu family; the blood of Hindu ancestors runs in your veins, and I have no doubt that you will choose the latter path.

I have three madnesses. Firstly, it is my firm faith that all the virtue, talent, the higher education and knowledge and the wealth God has given me, belong to Him. I have the right to spend only so much as is necessary for the maintenance of the family and on what is absolutely needed. Whatever remains should be returned to the Divine. If I spend all on myself, for personal comfort, for luxury, then I am a thief. Up till now I have been giving only one-eighth of my money to God and have been spending the rest of it for my personal happiness — thus trying to settle the account and remain immersed in worldly pleasures. Half of the life has already been wasted; even an animal feels gratified in feeding itself and its family.

I have realised that all these days I had been pursuing the life of the animal and of the thief. Having realised this, I have felt much repentant and have grown a repulsion for myself; no more of it, — this sinful act I abandon for good. Giving the money to the Divine means using it for works of *dharma*. I have no regrets for the money that I gave to Sarojini or to Usha, because helping others is *dharma*, to protect those who depend on you is a great *dharma*, but the account is not settled if one gives only to one's brothers and sisters. In these hard days, the whole country is seeking refuge at my door, I have thirty crores of brothers and sisters in this country — many of them die of starvation, most of them weakened by suffering and troubles are somehow

dragging on. They must be helped.

What do you say? Will you be, in regard to this, the copartner of my *dharma*? We will eat and dress like simple people and buy what is really essential, and give the rest to the Divine. That is what I would like to do. If you agree to it, and can make the sacrifice, then my urge can be fulfilled. You were complaining, "I could not make any progress." Here is a path to progress that I point to you. Would you proceed in that path?

The second madness has recently taken hold of me; it is this: by any means, I must have the direct experience of God. The religion of today, that is, uttering the name of God every now and then, in praying to Him in front of everybody, showing to people how religious one is — that I do not want. If the Divine is there, then there must be a way of experiencing His existence, of meeting Him; however hard be the path, I have taken a firm resolution to tread it. Hindu Dharma asserts that the path is there within one's own body, in one's mind. It has also given the methods to be followed to tread that path. I have begun to observe them and within a month I have been able to ascertain that the words of the Hindu Dharma are not untrue. I am experiencing all the signs that have been mentioned by it. Now, I would like to take you also along that path; you would of course not be able to keep up with me as you have not yet acquired so much knowledge, but there is nothing to prevent your following me. Anybody can have the realisation by following the path, but it is left to one's will to choose to enter the path. Nobody can force you to enter it. If you are willing, I will write more on the subject.

The third madness is this: whereas others regard the country as an inert piece of matter and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and the rivers, I know my country as the Mother, I worship her and adore her

accordingly. What would a son do when a demon, sitting on his mother's breast, prepares to drink her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals or go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he rather run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race; not a physical strength, I am not going to fight with a sword or a gun, but with the power of knowledge. The force of the *kṣatriya* is not the only force, there is also the force of the Brahmin which is founded on knowledge. This is not a new feeling in me, not of recent origin, I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission. At the age of fourteen the seed of it had begun to sprout and at eighteen it had been firmly rooted and become unshakable. Listening to the words of Aunt N you thought that some wicked person had led your simple and good-natured husband to the evil path. In fact, it was your good-natured husband who brought that person and hundreds of others to that path, be it good or evil; and he will bring thousands more to it. I do not say that the work will be accomplished while I live, but it will certainly be accomplished.

Now I ask you: What do you want to do in this matter? The wife is the *śakti* (the power) of the husband. Are you going to be the disciple of Usha and adulate the sahibs? Would you be indifferent and diminish the power of your husband? Or would you double his sympathy and enthusiasm? You might reply: "What could a simple woman like me do in all these great works? I have neither will power, nor intelligence, I am afraid even to think of these things." There is a simple solution for it — take refuge in the Divine, step on to the path of God-realisation. He will soon cure all your deficiencies; fear gradually leaves the person who takes refuge in the Divine. And if you have faith in me, and listen to what I say instead of listening to others, I can give you my

force which would not be reduced (by giving) but would, on the contrary, increase. We say that the wife is the *śakti* of the husband, that means that the husband sees his own reflection in the wife, finds the echo of his own noble aspiration in her and thereby redoubles his force.

Would you always remain like this? “I shall dress well, eat good food, laugh and dance and enjoy all possible pleasures” — such a state of mind is not called progress. Nowadays the life of women in our country has assumed a very narrow and humiliating form. Abandon all these things and come with me. We have come to the world to do God's work, let us begin it.

There is one defect in your nature — you are too simple. You listen to all that people say. This always keeps the mind restless, does not allow intelligence to develop, and there is no concentration in any work. This has to be corrected; you must acquire knowledge by listening to one person only, accomplish the work with a firm aim and firm mind, you have to disregard the slander and ridicule of people and keep your devotion firm.

There is another defect also — not of your nature but of the times. The times have become like that in Bengal; people are unable to listen seriously even to a serious talk; they laugh at and make fun of all that is high and noble, Dharma, philanthropy, high aspiration, great endeavour, liberation of the country; they try to laugh away everything. You have developed this fault a little by your association with the Brahma school; Barin also had it, and to some extent we all are subject to this fault, but it has increased to a surprising degree among the people of Deoghar. It is necessary to throw out this mentality with a strong resolution; you will be able to do it easily, and once you cultivate the habit of thinking, your real nature will blossom; you are already inclined to philanthropy and sacrifice; only what is wanting is



the strength of mind. You will get that strength from your devotion to God. Your praying to God will bring you that strength.

This was my secret. Without divulging it to anybody, reflect over these things with a tranquil mind. There is nothing to be afraid of, but plenty to think about. In the beginning you won't have to do anything more than to devote half-an-hour every day to meditate on God. You should put before Him your strong aspiration in the form of a prayer. The mind will get gradually prepared. You should always offer to Him this prayer: "May I not come in the way of my husband's life, and his ideals, and in his path to God-realisation; may I become his helper and his instrument." Will you do it?

Yours

(2)

23 Scotts Lane  
Calcutta  
17th February 1907

Dear Mrinalini,

I have not written to you for a long time. If you do not, out of your own goodness, pardon me for this eternal fault of mine, then I am helpless. What is in the marrow cannot be got rid of in a day. I may have to spend this whole life trying to correct this fault.

I was to come on the eighth of January, but I could not come; this did not happen of my own accord. I had to go where the Lord led me. This time I did not go for my own work, I had gone for His work. The state of my mind has at present undergone a change; about that I would not reveal in this letter. Come here, then I will tell you what I have to say.

The only thing that can be stated for the moment is that henceforward I am no longer subject to my own will: I must go like a puppet wherever the Divine takes me; I must do like a puppet whatever He makes me do. At present you will find it hard to grasp the meaning of these words. But it is necessary to tell you about it lest my activities cause you regret and sorrow. You may think that I am neglecting you and doing my work. But do not think so. So far I have been guilty of many wrongs against you and it is but natural that you were discontented on that account; but henceforth I have no freedom of my own, you will have to understand that all that I do depends not on my own will but is done according to the command of the Divine. When you come here, you will realise the significance of my words. I hope the Lord will show you the light of His infinite Grace which He has shown me, but that depends on His will. If you want to be the co-partner of my *dharma*, then you must try most intensely so that He may point out to you the path of His Grace by the sheer force of your concentrated will. Do not allow any one to see this letter for what I have written is extremely secret. I have not spoken about it to any one but you. That is forbidden. This much for today.

Your husband

P.S. I have written to Sarojini about the family matters, it is not necessary to write to you separately about them; when you see that letter you will know.

(3)

6th December 1907

Dear Mrinalini,

I received the letter day before yesterday; the shawl was

sent the same day; I do not understand why you did not get it.

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At present I have not got a moment to spare; the burden of writing is on me, the burden of works regarding the Congress is on me, and also that of settling the affairs of Bande Mataram. I can hardly cope with the work. Besides I have my own work to do which I cannot neglect.

Would you listen to a request of mine? I am passing through very anxious times, the pressure from all sides is enough to drive one mad. If you too get restless now, it would only add to my anxiety and worry, a letter of encouragement and comfort from you would give me much strength, and I can overcome all fears and dangers with a cheerful heart. I know, it is hard for you to live alone at Deoghar, but if you make your mind firm and rest on faith, then the feeling of sorrow cannot dominate your mind. This suffering is your inevitable lot, since you have married me. At intervals there is bound to be separation, because unlike ordinary Bengalis, I am unable to make the happiness of the family and of the relations the main aim of my life. In these circumstances, what is my *dharma* is also your *dharma*; and unless you consider the success of my mission as your happiness, there is no way out. One thing more: most of the persons with whom you are staying at present are our elders, and even if they say hard things or pass unjust remarks, do not be cross with them. Also, do not believe that all that they say is what they really mean, or that they say it with a purpose to hurt you. Many a time words come out of anger without thought; it is no good holding on to them. If you find it absolutely impossible to stay there, then I will speak to Girish Babu to arrange for your grandfather to come and stay in the house while I am away for the Congress session.

Today I am going to Midnapore. On my return I will make all arrangements here and then proceed to Surat; that will probably be on the 15th or 16th. I will return on the 2nd of January.

Yours

# A Letter to Barin

Pondicherry

Date unfixable [April 1920]

Dear Barin,

I have received your three letters (and another one to-day), but up till now I have not managed to write a reply. That now I sit to write is itself a miracle, because I write letters once in a blue moon, especially letters in Bengali. This is something I have not done even once in the last five or six years. If I can finish the letter and post it, the miracle will be complete.

First, about your yoga. You want to give me the charge of your yoga, and I am willing to accept it. But this means giving it to Him who, openly or secretly, is moving me and you by His divine power. And you should know that the inevitable result of this will be that you will have to follow the path of yoga which He has given me, the path I call the Integral Yoga. This is not exactly what we did in Alipur jail, or what you did during your imprisonment in the Andamans. What I started with, what Lele gave me, what I did in jail — all that was a searching for the path, a circling around looking here and there, touching, taking up, handling, testing this and that of all the old partial yogas, getting a more or less complete experience of one and then going off in pursuit of another. Afterwards, when I came to Pondicherry, this unsteady condition ceased. The indwelling Guru of the world indicated my path to me completely, its full theory, the ten limbs of the body of the yoga. These ten years he has been making me develop it in experience; it is not yet finished. It may take another two years. And so long as it is

not finished, I probably will not be able to return to Bengal. Pondicherry is the appointed place for the fulfilment of my yoga — except indeed for one part of it, that is, the work. The centre of my work is Bengal, but I hope its circumference will be the whole of India and the whole world.

Later I will write to you what my path of yoga is. Or, if you come here, I will tell you. In these matters the spoken word is better than the written. For the present I can only say that its fundamental principle is to make a synthesis and unity of integral knowledge, integral works and integral devotion, and, raising this above the mental level to the supramental level of the Vijnana, to give it a complete perfection. The defect of the old yoga was that, knowing the mind and reason and knowing the Spirit, it remained satisfied with spiritual experience in the mind. But the mind can grasp only the fragmentary; it cannot completely seize the infinite, the undivided. The mind's way to seize it is through the trance of samadhi, the liberation of moksha, the extinction of nirvana, and so forth. It has no other way. Someone here or there may indeed obtain this featureless liberation, but what is the gain? The Spirit, the Self, the Divine is always there. What the Divine wants is for man to embody Him here, in the individual and in the collectivity — to realise God in life. The old system of yoga could not synthesis or unify the Spirit and life; it dismissed the world as an illusion or a transient play of God. The result has been a diminution of the power of life and the decline of India. The Gita says: *utsīdeyurime lokā na kuryām karma cedaham*<sup>1</sup>, “These peoples would crumble to pieces if I did not do actions.” Verily “these peoples” of India have gone down to ruin. What kind of spiritual perfection is it if a few ascetics, renunciates, holy-men and realised beings attain liberation, if a few devotees dance in a frenzy of love, god-intoxication and bliss, and an entire race, devoid of life and intelligence, sinks to the

<sup>1</sup> *The Gita* (3.24)

depths of darkness and inertia? First one must have all sorts of partial experience on the mental level, flooding the mind with spiritual delight and illuminating it with spiritual light; afterwards one climbs upwards. Unless one makes this upward climb, this climb to the supramental level, it is not possible to know the ultimate secret of world-existence; the riddle of the world is not solved. There, the cosmic Ignorance which consists of the duality of Self and world, Spirit and life, is abolished. Then one need no longer look on the world as an illusion: the world is an eternal play of God, the perpetual manifestation of the Self. Then is it possible fully to know and realise God — *samagram̄ māṁ jñātum̄ praviṣṭum̄*, “to know and enter into Me completely”, as the Gita says. The physical body, life, mind and reason, Supermind, the Bliss-existence — these are the Spirit's five levels. The higher we climb, the nearer comes a state of highest perfection of man's spiritual evolution. When we rise to the Supermind, it becomes easy to rise to the Bliss. The status of indivisible and infinite Bliss becomes firmly established — not only in the timeless Supreme Reality, but in the body, in the world, in life. Integral existence, integral consciousness, integral bliss blossom out and take form in life. This endeavour is the central clue of my yogic path, its fundamental idea.

But it is not an easy thing. After fifteen years I am only now rising into the lowest of the three levels of the Supermind and trying to draw up into it all the lower activities. But when the process is complete, there is not the least doubt that God through me will give this supramental perfection to others with less difficulty. Then my real work will begin. I am not impatient for the fulfilment of my work. What is to happen will happen in God's appointed time. I am not disposed to run like a madman and plunge into the field of action on the strength of my little ego. Even if my work were not fulfilled, I would not be disturbed. This work is not mine,

it is God's. I listen to no one else's call. When I am moved by God, I will move.

I know that Bengal is not ready. The spiritual flood which has come is for the most part a new form of the old. It is not a real change. But it too was needed. Bengal has been awakening within itself all the old yogas in order to exhaust their ingrained tendencies, extract their essence and with it fertilise the soil. First it was the turn of Vedanta: the doctrine of non-dualism, asceticism, the Illusionism of Shankara, and so forth. Now, according to your description, it is the turn of the Vaishnava religion: the divine Play, love, losing oneself in the delight of spiritual emotion. All this is very old and unsuitable for the new age. It cannot last, for such excitement has no lasting power. But the Vaishnava way has this merit, that it keeps a certain connection between God and the world and gives a meaning to life. But because it is a partial thing, the connection and the meaning are not complete. The sectarianism you have noticed was inevitable. This is the law of the mind: to take one part and call it the whole, excluding all the other parts. The realised man who comes with an idea keeps, even if he leans on the part, some awareness of the whole — although he may not be able to give it form. But his disciples are not able to do this, because the form is lacking. They are tying up their bundles — let them. When God descends completely on the country, the bundles will open of themselves. All these things are signs of incompleteness and immaturity. I am not disturbed by them. Let the force of spirituality have its play in the country in whatever way and through as many sects as there may be. Afterwards we shall see. This is the infancy, the embryonic state, even, of the new age, just a hint, not yet the beginning.

Then about Motilal's group.<sup>1</sup> What Motilal got from me is

<sup>1</sup> The Prabartak Sangha of Chandernagore. West Bengal, founded by Motilal Roy, an early associate of Sri Aurobindo.



the first foundation, the base of my yoga — surrender, equality etc. He has been working on these things; the work is not complete. One special feature of this yoga is that until the realisation has been raised to a somewhat elevated level, the base does not become solid. Motilal now wants to rise higher. In the beginning he had a number of old fixed notions. Some have dropped off, some still remain. At first it was the notion of asceticism — he wanted to create an Aurobindo order of monks.<sup>1</sup> Now his mind has admitted that asceticism is not needed, but the old impression in his vital being has still not been thoroughly wiped out. This is why he advocates renunciation and asceticism while remaining a part of the life of the world. He has realised the necessity of renouncing desire, but he has not fully been able to grasp how the renunciation of desire can be reconciled with the experience of bliss. Moreover, he took to my yoga — as is natural to the Bengali nature — not so much from the side of knowledge as from the side of devotion and service. Knowledge has blossomed out a little; but much more is yet to come, and the fog of sentimentality has not been dissipated, though it is not so thick as it used to be. He has not been able to get beyond the limitations of the sattwic nature, the temperament of the moral man. The ego is still there. In a word, his development is progressing, it is not complete. But I am in no hurry. I am letting him develop according to his own nature. I do not want to fashion everybody in the same mould. The real thing will be the same in all, but it will take many aspects and many forms. Everyone grows from within; I do not wish to model from outside. Motilal has got the fundamental thing; all the rest will come.

You ask, “Why is Motilal tying up his bundle?” I will

<sup>1</sup> Today I have received a letter from Motilal. He writes that he never had this idea, he was misunderstood. [Sri Aurobindo's note.]

explain. First, some people have gathered round him who are in contact with him and with me. What he received from me, they too are receiving. Secondly, I wrote a small article in *Prabartak*<sup>1</sup> called “About Society”<sup>2</sup> in which I spoke about the *saṅgha* or community. I do not want a community based on division. I want a community based upon the Spirit and giving form to the unity of the Spirit. This idea Motilal has taken up under the name *deva-saṅgha* (divine community). I have spoken in my English writings of the “divine life”. Nolini has translated this as *deva-jīvana*. The community of those who want the *deva-jīvana* is the *deva-saṅgha*. Motilal has begun an attempt to establish this kind of community in seed-form in Chandernagore and to spread it across the country. If the shadow of the fragile ego falls upon this sort of endeavour, the community turns into a sect. The idea may easily creep in that the community which will be there in the end is this very one, that everything will be the circumference of this sole centre, that all who are outside it are not of the fold or, even if they are, that they have gone astray, because they are not in accord with our current line of thinking. If Motilal is making this mistake — he may have some tendency to make it, though I do not know whether he has done so or not — it will not do much harm, the mistake will pass. Much work has been done and continues to be done for us by Motilal and his little group — something nobody else has been able to do up till now. The divine power is working in him, there is no doubt about that.

You will perhaps ask, “What is the need of a *saṅgha*? Let me be free and fill every vessel. Let all become one, let all take place within that vast unity.” All this is true, but it is

<sup>1</sup> A magazine published by Motilal Roy's *Prabartak Sangha*.

<sup>2</sup> Presently published Under the title “The Chariot of Jagannath” (*Jagan-nather Rath*).

only one side of the truth. Our business is not with the formless Spirit only; we have to direct life as well. Without shape and form, life has no effective movement. It is the formless that has taken form, and that assumption of name and form is not a caprice of Maya. The positive necessity of form has brought about the assumption of form. We do not want to exclude any of the world's activities. Politics, trade, social organisation, poetry, art, literature — all will remain. But all will be given a new life, a new form. Why did I leave politics? Because our politics is not the genuine Indian thing; it is a European import, an imitation of European ways. But it too was needed. You and I also engaged in politics of the European style. If we had not done so, the country would not have risen, and we would not have had the experience or obtained a full development. Even now there is a need for it, not so much in Bengal as in the other provinces of India. But now the time has come to take hold of the substance instead of extending the shadow. We have to awaken the true soul of India and to do everything in accordance with it. For the last ten years I have been silently pouring my influence into this foreign political vessel, and there has been some result. I can continue to do this wherever necessary. But if I took up that work openly again, associating with the political leaders and working with them, it would be supporting an alien law of being and a false political life. People now want to spiritualise politics — Gandhi, for instance. But he can't get hold of the right way. What is Gandhi doing? Making a hodgepodge called *satyā-graha* out of “*Ahimsa parama dharma*”<sup>1</sup>, Jainism, *hartal*, passive resistance, etc.; bringing a sort of Indianised Tolstoyism into the country. The result — if there is any lasting result — will be a sort of Indianised Bolshevism. I have no objection to his work; let each one act according to his

<sup>1</sup> “Non-violence is the highest law.”

own inspiration. But it is not the real thing. If the spiritual force is poured into these impure forms — the wine of the spirit into these unbaked vessels — the imperfect things will break apart and spill and waste the wine. Or else the spiritual force will evaporate and only the impure form remain. It is the same in every field of activity. I could use my spiritual influence; it would give strength to those who received it and they would work with great energy. But the force would be expended in shaping the image of a monkey and setting it up in the temple of Shiva. If the monkey is brought to life it may grow powerful, and in the guise of the devotee Hanuman do much work for Rama — so long as the life and strength remain. But in the temple of India we want not Hanuman but the Godhead, the Avatar, Rama himself.

I can associate with everyone, but only in order to draw them all onto the true path, while keeping the spirit and form of our ideal intact. If that is not done we will lose our way and the true work will not be accomplished. If we are spread out everywhere as individuals, something no doubt will be done; if we are spread out everywhere in the form of a *saṅgha*, a hundred times more will be accomplished. But the time has not yet come for this. If we try to give it form hastily, it will not be the exact thing I want. The *saṅgha* will at first be in a diffused form. Those who have accepted the ideal, although bound together, will work in different places. Afterwards, bound into a *saṅgha* with a form like a spiritual commune, they will shape all their activities according to the Self and according to the needs of the age. Not a fixed and rigid form like that of the old Aryan society, not a stagnant backwater, but a free form that can spread itself out like the sea with its multitudinous waves — engulfing this, inundating that, absorbing all — and as this continues, a spiritual community will be established. This is my present idea; it is not yet fully developed. What is being developed is what came to

me in my meditations at Alipur. I shall see what shape it finally takes later. The result is in God's hands — let his will be done. Motilal's little group is just one experiment. He is looking for the means to engage in trade, industry, agriculture, etc. through his *saṅgha*. I am giving force and watching. There may be some materials for the future and some useful suggestions to be found in it. Do not judge it by its current merits and demerits or its present limitations. It is now in a wholly initial and experimental stage.

Next I will discuss some of the specific points raised in your letter. I do not want to say much here about what you write as regards your yoga. It will be more convenient to do so when we meet. But there is one thing you write, that you admit no physical connection with men, that you look upon the body as a corpse. And yet your mind wants to live the worldly life. Does this condition still persist? To look upon the body as a corpse is a sign of asceticism, the path of nirvana. The worldly life does not go along with this idea. There must be delight in everything, in the body as much as in the spirit. The body is made of consciousness, the body is a form of God. I see God in everything in the world. *Sarvam idaṁ brahma, vāsudevaḥ sarvamiti* (“All this here is the Brahman”, “Vasudeva, the Divine, is all”) — this vision brings the universal delight. Concrete waves of this bliss flow even through the body. In this condition, filled with spiritual feeling, one can live the worldly life, get married or do anything else. In every activity one finds a blissful self-expression of the divine. I have for a long time been transforming on the mental level all the objects and experiences of the mind and senses into delight. Now they are all taking the form of supramental delight. In this condition there is the perfect vision and experience of Sachchidananda — the divine Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Next, in reference to the divine community, you write, “I

am not a god, only some much-hammered and tempered steel." I have already spoken about the real meaning of the divine community. No one is a god, but each man has a god within him. To manifest him is the aim of the divine life. That everyone can do. I admit that certain individuals have greater or lesser capacities. I do not, however, accept as accurate your description of yourself. But whatever the capacity, if once God places his finger upon the man and his spirit awakes, greater or lesser and all the rest make little difference. The difficulties may be more, it may take more time, what is manifested may not be the same — but even this is not certain. The god within takes no account of all these difficulties and deficiencies; he forces his way out. Were there few defects in my mind and heart and life and body? Few difficulties? Did it not take time? Did God hammer at me sparingly — day after day, moment after moment? Whether I have become a god or something else I do not know. But I have become or am becoming something — whatever God desired. This is sufficient. And it is the same with everybody; not by our own strength but by God's strength is this yoga done.

It is good that you have taken charge of *Narayan*. The magazine began well, but later it drew a narrow sectarian line around itself, fostered feelings of faction and began to rot. At first Nolini wrote for *Narayan*, but later he was obliged to turn elsewhere, because it gave no scope to free opinion. There must be the free air of an open room, otherwise how can there be any power of life? Free light and free air are the primary nourishment of the life-force. At present it is not possible for me to contribute anything. Later I may be able to give something, but *Prabartak* also has its claim on me. It may at first be a little difficult to satisfy calls from both directions. We shall see when I begin to write in Bengali again. At the moment I am short of time; it is not

possible for me to write for anything except the *Arya*. Each month I alone have to provide 64 pages; it is no small task. And then there is poetry to write; the practice of yoga takes time; time is also needed for rest. Most of "On Society", which Saurin has with him, has probably appeared in *Prabartak*. The rest of what he has must be a draft; the final revision has not been done. Let me have a look at it first. We shall see then whether it can be published in *Narayan*.

You write about *Prabartak* that people cannot understand it, it is misty, a riddle. I have been hearing the same complaint all along. I admit that there is not much clear-cut thinking in Motilal's writing; he writes too densely. But he has inspiration, force, power. In the beginning Nolini and Moni wrote for *Prabartak* and even then people called it a riddle. But Nolini's thinking is clear-cut, Moni's writing direct and powerful. There is the same complaint about the *Arya*; people can't understand it. Who wants to give so much thought and consideration to his reading? But in spite of this, *Prabartak* was doing a lot of work in Bengal, and at that time people did not have the idea that I was writing for it. If now it does not have the same effect, the reason is that now people are rushing towards activity and excitement. On one side there is the flood of devotion, on the other side the effort to make money. But during the ten-year period that Bengal was lifeless and inert, *Prabartak* was its only fountain of strength. It has helped a lot in changing the mood of Bengal. I do not think its work is over yet.

In this connection let me tell you briefly one or two things I have been observing for a long time. It is my belief that the main cause of India's weakness is not subjection, nor poverty, nor a lack of spirituality or religion, but a diminution of the power of thought, the spread of ignorance in the birthplace of knowledge. Everywhere I see an inability or unwillingness to think — incapacity of thought or "thought-

phobia". This may have been all right in the mediaeval period, but now this attitude is the sign of a great decline. The mediaeval period was a night, the day of victory for the man of ignorance; in the modern world it is the time of victory for the man of knowledge. He who can delve into and learn the truth about the world by thinking more, searching more, labouring more, gains more power. Take a look at Europe. You will see two things: a wide limitless sea of thought and the play of a huge and rapid, yet disciplined force. The whole power of Europe is here. It is by virtue of this power that she has been able to swallow the world, like our *tapaswis* of old, whose might held even the gods of the universe in terror, suspense, subjection. People say that Europe is rushing into the jaws of destruction. I do not think so. All these revolutions, all these upsettings are the first stages of a new creation. Now take a look at India. A few solitary giants aside, everywhere there is your simple man, that is, your average man, one who will not think, cannot think, has not an ounce of strength, just a momentary excitement. India wants the easy thought, the simple word; Europe wants the deep thought, the deep word. In Europe even ordinary labourers think, want to know everything. They are not satisfied to know things halfway, but want to delve deeply into them. The difference lies here. But there is a fatal limitation to the power and thought of Europe. When she enters the field of spirituality, her thought-power stops working. There Europe sees everything as a riddle, nebulous metaphysics, yogic hallucination — "It rubs its eyes as in smoke and can see nothing clearly." But now in Europe not a little effort is being made to surmount even this limitation. Thanks to our forefathers, we have the spiritual sense, and whoever has this sense has within his reach such knowledge, such power, as with one breath could blow all the immense strength of Europe away like a blade of grass. But power is



needed to get this power. We, however, are not worshippers of power; we are worshippers of the easy way. But one cannot obtain power by the easy way. Our forefathers swam in a vast sea of thought and gained a vast knowledge; they established a vast civilisation. But as they went forward on their path they were overcome by exhaustion and weariness. The force of their thought decreased, and along with it decreased the force of their creative power. Our civilisation has become a stagnant backwater, our religion a bigotry of externals, our spirituality a faint glimmer of light or a momentary wave of intoxication. So long as this state of things lasts, any permanent resurgence of India is impossible.

It is in Bengal that this weakness has gone to the extreme. The Bengali has quickness of intellect, a capacity for feeling, intuition. In all these qualities he is the foremost in India. Each of these qualities is necessary, but they are not in themselves sufficient. If there were added to them depth of thought, manly force, heroic audacity, proficiency and delight in prolonged labour, the Bengali would become the leader not only of India, but of the world. But the Bengali does not want this; he wants to pick up things the easy way — knowledge without thought, results without labour, spiritual perfection after an easy discipline. He relies on emotional excitement, but excessive emotion devoid of knowledge is the very symptom of the disease. What has the Bengali been doing from the time of Chaitanya onwards, from long before that, in fact? Catching hold of some easy superficial aspect of spiritual truth and dancing about for a few days on waves of emotion; afterwards there is exhaustion, inertia. And at home, the gradual decline of Bengal, the ebbing away of her life-force. In the end, what has the Bengali come to in his own province? He has nothing to eat and no clothes to wear, there is wailing on every side. His

wealth, his business and trade, even his agriculture begin to pass slowly into the hands of outsiders. We have abandoned the yoga of divine power and so the divine power has abandoned us. We practise the yoga of love, but where there is no knowledge or power, love does not stay. Narrowness and littleness come in. In a narrow and small mind, life and heart, love finds no room. Where is there love in Bengal? Nowhere else even in this division-ridden India is there so much quarrelling, strained relations, jealousy, hatred and factionalism as in Bengal.

In the noble heroic age of the Aryan people there was not so much shouting and gesticulation, but the endeavour they set in motion lasted many centuries. The Bengali's endeavour lasts for a day or two. You say what is needed is emotional excitement, to fill the country with enthusiasm. We did all that in the political field during the Swadeshi period; everything we did has fallen in the dust. Will there be a more auspicious outcome in the spiritual field? I don't say there has been no result. There has been; every movement produces some result. But it is mostly in an increase of possibilities. This is not the right way to steadily actualise the thing. Therefore I do not wish to make emotional excitement, feeling and mental enthusiasm the base any longer. I want to make a vast and strong equality the foundation of my yoga; in all the activities of the being, which will be based on that equality, I want a complete, firm and unshakable power; over that ocean of power I want the radiation of the sun of Knowledge and in that luminous vastness an established ecstasy of infinite love and bliss and oneness. I do not want tens of thousands of disciples. It will be enough if I can get as instruments of God one hundred complete men free from petty egoism. I have no confidence in guruhood of the usual type. I do not want to be a guru. What I want is for someone, awakened by my touch or by that of another, to manifest

from within his sleeping divinity and to realise the divine life. Such men will uplift this country.

Do not think from reading this lecture that I despair of the future of Bengal. I too hope for what they are saying — that this time a great light will manifest in Bengal. But I have tried to show the other side of the shield, where the defects, failings and deficiencies lie. If these remain, that light will not be great, nor will it endure. The saints and great men you have written about appear to me rather dubious. Somehow I do not find in them what I am looking for. Dayananda<sup>1</sup> has all sorts of wonderful powers. Illiterate disciples of his do remarkable automatic writing. All right, but this is only a psychic faculty. What I want to know about is the real thing in them and how far it has progressed. Then there is another — he stirs a person to his depths just by touching him. Very well, but what does that thrill lead to? Does the person become by this touch the kind of man who can stand like a pillar of the new age, the divine Golden Age? This is the question. I see you have your doubts about this. I have mine too.

I laughed when I read the prophecies of those saints and holymen — but not a laugh of scorn or disbelief. I do not know about the distant future. The light God sometimes gives me falls one step ahead of me; I move forward in that light. But I wonder what these people need me for. Where is my place in their great assembly? I am afraid they would be disappointed to see me. And as for me, would I not be a fish out of the water? I am not an ascetic, not a saint, not a holyman — not even a religious man. I have no religion, no code of conduct, no morality. Deeply engrossed in the worldly life, I enjoy luxury, eat meat, drink wine, use obscene

<sup>1</sup> A yogi of eastern Bengal, alive when this letter was written. Not to be confused with Swami Dayananda of the Arya Samaj.

language, do whatever I please — a Tantrik of the left-hand path. Among all these great men and incarnations of God am I a great man or an incarnation? If they saw me they might think I was the incarnation of the Iron Age, or of the titanic and demoniac form of the goddess Kali — what the Christians call the Antichrist. I see a misconception about me has been spread. If people get disappointed, it is not my fault. The meaning of this extraordinarily long letter is that I too am tying up my bundle. But I believe this bundle is like the net of Saint Peter, teeming with the catch of the Infinite. I am not going to open the bundle just now. If it is opened too soon, the catch may escape. Nor am I going back to Bengal just now — not because Bengal is not ready, but because I am not ready. If the unripe goes amid the unripe, what can he accomplish?

Your Sejdada<sup>1</sup>

P.S. Nolini writes that you are coming not at the end of April, but in May. Upen<sup>2</sup> also wrote about coming. What about that? Is he staying with you or elsewhere? Mukundilal has sent me a letter to be redirected to Sarojini.<sup>3</sup> But I don't know where Sarojini is, so I am sending it to you. Please forward it.

I have received a letter from Motilal. I gather from it and from some other circumstances that the shadow of a misunderstanding has fallen between him and Saurin.<sup>4</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> Elder brother.

<sup>2</sup> Upendranath Bannerjee. Like Barin, he was sentenced to transportation for life for his part in the Alipur Bomb Conspiracy. In 1919 or 1920 both were granted amnesty.

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo's sister.

<sup>4</sup> A cousin of Sri Aurobindo's wife; he was staying with Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, but at the time of this letter was in Bengal.

may develop into mutual dislike. It is most improper that such a thing should happen among ourselves. I shall write to Motilal about this. Tell Saurin to be careful not to give the least occasion for the opening of such a breach or rift. Somebody told Motilal that Saurin has been telling people (or giving them the impression) that Aurobindo Ghose has nothing to do with *Prabartak*. Saurin certainly never said anything like this, for *Prabartak* is our paper. Whether I write for it in my own hand or not, God through me is giving the force that enables Motilal to write. From the spiritual point of view, the writing is mine; Motilal just adds the colour of his mind. Probably what Saurin said is that Aurobindo Ghose himself does not write *Prabartak's* articles. But it is not necessary to say even that. It may create a wrong impression just opposite the truth in people's minds. I have to some extent kept it a secret who writes or does not write for *Prabartak*. *Prabartak* ("The Initiated") itself writes *Prabartak*. The Power itself is the writer; it is not the creation of any particular individual. This is the truth of the matter. *Devajanma*<sup>1</sup> and other publications with articles by Nolini and Moni have come out in book form and there too no names have been given. It is the same principle. Let it be like that until further order.

<sup>1</sup> A collection of essays.

# Letters to N. and S.

## Obstacles and Difficulties

The vital does not like the state of vastness where there is no movement of thought. It wants movement, any movement whether of knowledge or of ignorance. A serene condition without any restlessness seems dry to it.

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Nobody can ever progress in sadhana through pain, despair, and lack of enthusiasm. It is better not to have them.

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Not only the experience of the higher but also the transformation of the lower nature is necessary. Pleasure, sadness, despair and sorrow are the ordinary play of the vital, impediments to progress — one has to go beyond them and bring down the vast unity and equality from above into the vital and in all the being.

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As long as desire and subjection to the mercy of any whim, demand and imagination are strong, the vital will dominate. All this is nourishment to the vital, and when you give nourishment why should it not become huge and powerful?

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If you entertain a desire, become impatient for the fruits of sadhana, then how will you remain peaceful and silent? A great work like the transformation of human nature, can it be done in a moment? Remain quiet, let the force of the Mother work in you, then in time everything will be accomplished.

If you remain peaceful within, in a state of surrender, then obstacles and difficulties will not be able to disturb you. Unhappiness and anxiety and “Why is this not happening? When will it happen?”, if you allow these feelings to enter into you, then obstacles and difficulties will find strength. Why do you pay so much attention to them? Concentrate on the Mother. Remain peaceful and surrendered within. The petty defects of the lower nature cannot be got rid of so easily. It is useless to be agitated over them. When the Mother's Force fully occupies the entire being down to the subconscious, they will go. The length of time necessary for that does not matter. The complete transformation requires time.

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We have neither moved away from you nor abandoned you. When your mind and vital become disturbed, then these false ideas enter into your mind. Even if the ego rises and the difficulties come you must not lose faith in the Mother. Keep on calling her quietly and remain calm, the difficulties and the ego will leave you.

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The truth is that you must not be subject to the ego or the external nature in your work. If you are, the work cannot

form a part of the sadhana; instead, it becomes equivalent to trivial and ordinary work. Even the work must be done from within in a spirit of surrender.

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The external consciousness is full of ignorance, and seems to make a false transcription, a wrong imitation or translation of what comes from above, to remould that in its own way; as if trying to turn that to some imaginary enjoyment, or some outward selfish interest or the pleasure of the ego. This is the weakness of human nature. One should want the Divine for the sake of the Divine and not for one's own satisfaction. When the psychic being inside becomes strong, then the defects of the external nature begin to lessen till finally one becomes pure.

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Any average man reacts like this — to be pleased when praised and offended when blamed. There is nothing strange about that. But it is absolutely essential for a sadhak to get over this weakness; he must remain unshaken by praise or criticism, honour or insult. But it cannot be easily done, it will take time.

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This is the state and outlook of the true consciousness. If you can have this attitude when you go deep inside or come out in the external consciousness, then everything will



rightly move towards the divine purpose.

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Falsehood is a great barrier in the path of this yoga. Falsehood of any kind must not be given a place in thought, speech or action.

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There is no connection between the tamasic surrender and the tamasic ego. The tamasic ego seems to think: "I am a sinner, I am weak, there will be no progress for me, the sadhana is impossible for me, I am unfortunate, the Divine does not accept me, death is my only salvation, the Mother does not love me but she loves all others," etc., etc. The vital nature likes to hurt itself by demonstrating its own smallness. It wants to satisfy its ego-sense in a negative way, by showing itself as the worst person, the most unhappy, wicked and tortured of all. The rajasic ego is exactly the opposite. By saying, "I am great," etc., it likes to exaggerate about itself.

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Ignorance, ego and desire are hindrances. If the mind, life and body become instruments of the Higher Consciousness, this divine light can descend into the body.

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The human mind itself is full of sceptical imaginations,

wrong ideas, distrust, ignorance and unhappiness. This ignorance is the cause of distrust, the source of anguish. The human intelligence is an instrument of ignorance. Very often wrong thoughts and false ideas come to it, yet it believes that its ideas alone are true. The mind is not even inclined to consider whether there is any mistake in its thought or, if so, where lies the mistake. When the mistake is pointed out, it does not like to own it and becomes angry and unhappy, yet it derives great pleasure from finding fault with others. When it hears any criticism of others, it immediately accepts that as true without even considering how far it might be true. It is difficult for faith and trust to grow in this type of mind. That is why you must not listen to ordinary human beings or accept their influence within you. If you want to hear the truth, you have to go within you and awaken the psychic being and from there true intelligence will grow in the mind, true emotion and feeling will come to the heart, true inspiration will rise in the vital; the psychic light will bring a new vision of man, objects, circumstances and the world; ignorance of the mind, wrong seeing, incorrect thinking, disbelief and mistrust will cease for ever.

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There is probably some resistance to meditation in the body, that is why it does not want to sit down. But it also happens with many that their sadhana goes on automatically. There is no need to force oneself to sit for meditation. Whether one is sitting, walking or lying down or even sleeping, the sadhana goes on.

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All this has happened probably because of some external contact. These vital disturbances are now occurring repeatedly in some people. Like a disease they go from one person to another; especially the feeling, "I want to die, I do not wish to keep this body, it is not possible to do yoga and sadhana in this body," is strong. However, the idea, "By leaving the body I shall attain the realisation in yoga without any difficulty in another body," is extremely erroneous. If you give up the body in this way, there will be still greater difficulties in the next birth and you will not have any relation with the Mother. All this is an attack of the hostile forces. Their aim is to break the sadhana of the sadhak, break the health of the Mother, break the Ashram and our work. You must be on your guard. Do not allow them to enter into you.

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"An outsider scolds me. I am very much hurt. I wish to die" — these are words of the vital ego, not of a sadhak. I am giving you a fair warning — "Do not give any place to the ego." If anybody says anything to you, remain undisturbed, in a peaceful state of mind, free from any egoism and united with the Mother.

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Merely dying does not solve anything. How do you think the difficulties you have not overcome in this life will leave you in your next birth? You have to clear them up in this very life.

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If you allow these futile lamentations of the vital to rise, how will the true experience come? Even if it comes, how can it endure or bear fruit? This weeping of the vital can only be a bar.

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These words of moaning and bewailing are obstacles to progress on the path of yoga and nothing else but that — only a kind of tamasic play of the vital. If you can give them all up and quietly pursue your sadhana, there will be a rapid progress.

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What you have seen is true — but what you call an evil force is only the ordinary nature. This nature makes man do almost anything — in the sadhana one has to overcome its influence, but it cannot be easily done. By quiet and determined effort, in the end it is entirely overcome.

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When the sadhak begins to live in the true consciousness, the other parts still continue to exist; only in proportion as the power of the true consciousness increases, does it gradually weaken the others.

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What else but an evil force can pull you down so low, make you so weak and agitated? Many forces of this nature

are moving about in the atmosphere because the sadhaks give them shelter. If they come to you, call the Mother and send them away. They will not be able to do anything; they will not be able to endure. Obstacles cannot be fully got rid of so easily. By a constant opening and a heightening of consciousness, the physical consciousness is transformed, the difficulties will then completely disappear. Before that, they will decrease, go out and remain outside you. Instead of getting upset by these difficulties, detach yourself from them. Do not accept the difficulties as your own, because if you do your power will diminish.

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Every one has to go through difficulties, even those who do not work are subject to their violent attacks.

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Difficulties are there because the outer nature does not leave you. They will no longer remain when the outer nature has a new life.

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I have repeatedly told you about this that difficulties do not go in a moment. Difficulties are the results of the outer nature of human beings. This nature does not change in a day or in a few days, not even in great sadhaks. But if you can entirely depend on the Mother and aspire to her in silence and calm and go on without anxiety, then the

difficulties can do nothing, even if they come in your way. In time their force will diminish, perish and no longer exist.

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Every one has this kind of difficulty. Identification with the Mother at every moment cannot easily be done. It is done by a steady spiritual practice.

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Difficulties matter little. They are nothing but what exists in the outer nature of human beings. Gradually they will be driven out by the Force of the Mother. So there is no cause for anxiety or depression.

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Always remember the Mother. Call upon her. Then the difficulties will go away. Do not be afraid, do not be perturbed by the difficulties. Call upon the Mother steadily.

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However infinite the difficulties may seem to be, this *appearance* is not real. It is merely the demoniac illusion. Treading the way of truth the path becomes clear at last.

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It is something like that. But difficulty does not leave any one so easily, even a very great Yogi. It is a bit easier to get rid of the mental difficulty than of the vital and the physical. It takes time to be free from the vital and physical difficulties.

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What does it matter? Even great sadhaks are open to difficulties. If one can live in the *psychic state*, if one is united with the Mother, then these attacks must go in vain.

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A sadhak has often these two difficulties. The first from the vital, the second from the physical consciousness. If one remains aloof from them, they decrease and finally diminish.

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These difficulties come to everybody. If it were not so, then the perfection in Yoga would take place within a few days.

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Human nature, as a rule, cannot always remain inside. But when one can *feel* the Mother in every condition, within and without, this difficulty lingers no more. Try to have this state.

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It is the impurities in nature that create difficulties for a sadhak. Sex-desire, ignorance and so on are among the impurities in human nature. These are in everybody. When they appear, one should calmly detach oneself from them and reject them without being perturbed. If you say, "I am a sinner" and so on, that adds to your weakness. You ought to say, "This is man's impure nature. If it remains part of his ordinary life, it may remain there. I don't want all this. I want God alone. I want the Divine Mother. These are not things of my true consciousness. As long as they come I will steadily reject them. I will not allow myself to be agitated."

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Sex-force is in every human being. This impulse is one of nature's main instruments by which it drives man, creates family, society and world. The life of creatures depends much on it. That is why the sex-impulse is there in everybody. Nobody is an exception. Even in spite of sadhana it does not easily cease to cling on. It recurs in the body and the vital till the nature is transformed. But then the sadhak should keep on his guard, control, reject and drive it out as many times as it comes. In this way it vanishes in the end.

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Go on quietly with your sadhana. Slowly and steadily all the things of the old nature that still exist in you will go.

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Every one has difficulties. There is no sadhak without them. Remain calm within. You will get help even in difficulties. True consciousness will develop on all the planes.

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It is a great obstacle on your part always to think that you are bad, you are bad.

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The only way to transform nature is to depend on the Mother and quietly reject the ordinary nature and conquer it by degrees.

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All difficulties are not the products of hostile forces — they are the products of ordinary impure nature which exists in everybody.

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One has to keep this kind of *feeling* and unquestioning faith. For this *faith*, belief and *conviction* in a sadhak greatly help the Mother's Force to act.

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Spiritual practice must be done with a firm and calm mind and with an unshakable faith and reliance on the Mother.

*Depression* must find no place there. If it comes, it must be refused and cast aside. "I am low and mean, nothing can be done by me. The Mother has driven me off. I shall go away." When these ideas come in, then you must know that they are the *suggestions* of the lower nature and are quite contrary to the truth of Yoga. Give no quarter to such ideas.

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Why do you feel sorry? If one depends on the Mother and remains unperturbed in all circumstances, there can be no question of sorrow. Vainly does man expect happiness and peace from his fellow beings.

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Once an inner union with the Mother has been formed, instead of this thought and fear one has to keep this certitude and the faith in the Mother that Her victory is inevitable, in spite of thousands of difficulties, innumerable mistakes and all obscurity in the outer nature.

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Always one has to keep absolute faith in the Mother that one is in her hands, that everything will be done through her power. And therefore the obstacle can create no sorrow and despair.

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Don't worry on that account. It is not easy always to remember the presence of the Mother. When the whole being is filled with the Mother's *presence*, then you will remember her automatically, and you can by no means forget her.

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Go on with your sadhana in a quiet manner. Sorrow or despair will no longer remain in you. All darkness will disappear in the long run.

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It happens to everybody. It is very difficult to remain always in a good condition. It takes much time — go on steadily with your meditation. Don't be perturbed. Everything will be done in time.

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Sadhana means to *feel* the Mother near and within, to feel that the Mother is doing everything and to *receive* everything of the Mother in oneself. Having this state if one pays attention to studies, then there can be no harm.

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Yes, if one weeps like that one becomes weak. At every moment, in each condition, steadily and silently depend on the Mother and aspire for her. Then the good conditions reappear.

## Parts of the being

It is not possible to leave out any part of the being; all of it has to be transformed. A particular movement of Nature may be given up but the parts of the being are permanent.

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In course of sadhana there comes a state when it seems as if there were two distinct beings. One remains occupied with the inner things, pure and tranquil it lives in the vision and experience of the divine truth or is identified with it; the other is busy with the outer details. Then a divine unity is established between the two — the higher and inner world and the external world become one.

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Only the front is awake in ordinary people, but this frontal awakened consciousness is not really awake but ignorant, full of obscurity. Behind it stretches the field of the inner being which in appearance seems to be asleep. But when this envelope is removed, the consciousness behind is seen uncovered and it is there that the light, force and peace first descend. This inner being can easily accomplish what is not possible to the external awakened consciousness. By opening itself to the Divine and the universal consciousness, it

can become the vast free consciousness.

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If these attacks cannot enter or if, when they do, they do not last, it has to be understood that the outer being has become conscious, and there has been a great progress in its purification.

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When the tamasic state, rising from the subconscious, attacks the body, one feels as if one were ill. Call the Mother's force from above into your body, all this will go away.

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To get rid of the subconscious difficulties, first one has to recognise them, next reject them, and finally bring the inner or the higher light of the Mother into the body consciousness. Then the ignorant movements of the subconscious will be driven away and the movements of the other consciousness will be established. But this cannot be done easily; you have to do it patiently; a determined patience is required. Trust in the Mother is the only means. However, if one can remain inside and maintain the inner vision and consciousness, there is not much suffering and labour — but it is not always possible to do this and it is then that faith and patience are particularly necessary.

When the physical consciousness becomes strong, it covers up everything and tries to spread all over the being, this state is produced because when the physical consciousness in its distinct nature expresses itself, everything seems to be full of inertia and obscurity, void of the light of knowledge and the drive of force. Do not give your assent to this condition — if it comes, call the Mother's light and force to enter into the body-consciousness and make it luminous and powerful.

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The physical centre is situated at the end of the vertebral column, in what is called the muladhar; it does not often reveal its position but its presence can be felt.

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This is the vital purusha who has his seat in the emotional vital. There are three layers of the vital purusha — in the heart, in the navel and below the navel. In the heart he is the emotional being; in the navel the being of desire; and below it the sensational being, in other words, busy with the pull of the senses and the small instincts of life.

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Only the Self is so vast and limitless, etc. When the mind, vital and physical consciousness are fully open, they also become like that — the external mind, life and body are only instruments for the play and transaction with external nature. When the external mind, vital and body become full of light and consciousness they then no longer

seem to be narrow and limited. They also become one with the inner.

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There are many movements of mind which have no coherence; this is as true of a sadhak as of an ordinary person, this happens to all. But the sadhak observes and is aware of them, whereas an ordinary person does not know what is happening within himself. By constantly turning everything to the Divine the mind becomes unified.

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There are three layers of the ordinary mind. The layer of thought or intellect, the layer of will-power (will directed by the intellect) and the outgoing intelligence. There are also three layers above the mind — higher mind, illumined mind, and intuitive mind. Since you see them inside the head, they must be those three layers of the ordinary mind open to what is above it and in each one a special divine force is coming down to work.

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When this vast condition prevails in the head, it means the mind is widening to become one with the universal mind. The throat etc. becoming vast indicates that the consciousness in those respective centres is also beginning to widen.

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To live in the higher mind is not so difficult — it begins when the consciousness rises a little above the head. But the ascent to the Overmind takes a long time, one cannot do it unless one is a very great sadhak. If one can live in these planes, the limitations of the mind are broken down, the consciousness becomes vast, the petty ego-sense decreases, everything is one, all is in the Divine, etc. — then the divine or spiritual knowledge comes easily.

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The sadhana is done according to the needs of the time. Formerly, it was the inward sadhana, the stage of simple meditation. Now it is necessary to unite the inner and the outer — down to the body-consciousness.

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There are many kinds of knowledge depending on the consciousness. The knowledge of the higher consciousness is true and spotless — the knowledge of the lower consciousness is a mixture of knowledge and ignorance and is stained. The knowledge of the intellect is of one particular nature, the knowledge of the Supramental Consciousness is of a different nature, beyond the intellect. The peaceful knowledge belongs to the higher consciousness.

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This is the staircase of the higher consciousness — there are many levels of this consciousness. One mounts by these



stairs from plane to plane till one reaches the Supermind — the boundless, luminous and blissful infinity of God.

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The world above is the plane of the higher consciousness and it is descending by our sadhana. The material world at present is full of a violent dance of the hostile vital world and heading towards destruction.

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The psychic being is a portion of the Divine; it has a natural attraction for the truth and the Divine but that attraction is desireless, free from demands and lower cravings. The psychic emotion is pure and stainless. The emotional vital is a part of it and has much desire, demand, pride and indignation, etc. It wants the Divine in order to satisfy its pride and desire but the psychic touch can make it pure and immaculate.

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The psychic being remains behind the mind, vital and body, in contact with them. Beyond the mind is the spiritual being and the higher consciousness.

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The place of the psychic being is behind and all the centres are situated behind; for instance, the heart centre,

the vital centres, the physical centre are connected there with the vertebral column and have their base there. That is why the condition of the consciousness behind is very important.

All depends on the predominance of the psychic — the external nature is busy satisfying its little ego, desires and cravings; the mental being is occupied with the self, but the petty ego derives little pleasure from that, it longs for pettiness. The psychic being is occupied with the Divine, it alone can do the surrender — only the psychic being can control the external nature.

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Either the psychic being must become the director (ruler, driver and guide) and open the intellect, mind, vital and physical consciousness or the higher consciousness must descend right into the physical consciousness and occupy the entire vessel, then a solid foundation will be established in the material consciousness.

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It is the consciousness of the psychic and the heart that has opened — what comes from above is the light and peace of the higher mind and the Divine Consciousness. What looks like the moon rising is the current of spiritual aspiration flowing from the psychic.

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That is what is wanted — to open the lotus in the heart, to bring the whole nature under the control of the psychic being, this will bring about the New Birth.

# Foundations of Yoga

## Self-control — Purification of Nature — Peace and Surrender

To have self-control — not to be attracted to anyone, not to encourage the vital pull of anyone and not to throw any vital spell or attraction on a person this is called remaining sincere within oneself.

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Why do you speak of sin — it is not sin but human weakness. The soul is ever pure, the psychic being too is always pure and the inner mind, vital and physical can also become pure, yet the old weaknesses of character stick to the outer nature of the external being for a long time; it is difficult to acquire a perfect purity, complete sincerity, determination; patience and an ever wakeful vigilance are necessary. If the psychic being remains in front, ever awake, exercising its influence, there is nothing to fear, but often it is not so. The Rakshasi Maya, the evil nature, dupes the mind and finds a way of entry through this old weak point. So every time it has to be chased away and the road blocked.

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The vital must not be destroyed; no work can be done without it, indeed life could not be maintained. The vital

has to be transformed and made into an instrument of the Divine.

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Keep within you the peace and the Mother's force and light and do everything peacefully — then there is no need of anything else — all this will clear up.

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This is a conflict of two opposite influences — when the influence of the forces of truth touches the body, everything is cured — the influence of ignorance brings back disease, pain and neurosis.

All that is in the ignorance dwells as light-darkness within a universal consciousness, but that does not mean that light and darkness have the same value. One has to reject darkness and welcome light.

It is not at all necessary to observe rules. If one refuses calmly, quietly and with determination, then gradually the hold of ignorance falls away. If one is upset, (impatient, blind or loses hope), then the forces of ignorance become stronger and gather more courage to attack.

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The difficulties do not go away easily. Even all the difficulties of a very great sadhak do not disappear in a moment on a fixed day. I have already said it many times that one has to remain peaceful and unagitated and slowly advance with full trust in the Mother — it cannot be done in an instant. “I want everything today”: if you make this de-

mand, it may create more difficulties. One has to remain calm and quiet.

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There cannot be any ego behind the psychic and the psychic condition. However, the ego coming from the vital tries to associate itself with the psychic. If you observe anything of this nature, do not accept it but surrender it to the Mother in order to be freed from it.

The straight road is the way of the psychic; it goes up without winding on the strength of surrender and in the light of true vision; somewhat straight, somewhat circuitous is the path of the mental askesis and completely tortuous is the path of the vital, full of desire and lacking in knowledge; but as the vital has true yearning, it is nevertheless possible to go by that road.

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First, the consciousness must be empty and vast in which the light and force from above can find room. If it is not emptied, the old movements continue to play and the things from above do not find a suitable place.

This kind of emptiness comes to the sadhak when the higher consciousness descends into the mind and the vital in order to prepare them before occupying them. Also when the Self is experienced, its first touch brings a vast peaceful emptiness; later on a vast and massive peace and silence, a calm and immutable Ananda descend into that emptiness.

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In this yoga the realisation cannot be attained by going upwards alone — the realisation will come when the higher truth, peace and light, etc. descend and get fixed in the mind, vital and body.

If the higher consciousness comes down and you reject all the falsehood of the mind, vital and body, the truth will be established.

It will not do to be entirely silent nor is it good. In the early stage to remain silent and grave as much as possible is favourable to sadhana — when the external nature will be full of the Mother, the true consciousness will remain even while speaking and laughing, etc.

Contact with the higher consciousness and descent of the nature of that higher consciousness, its peace, knowledge and depth — are the only means of obtaining siddhi in the yoga.

The vital has to be controlled and the Force allowed to occupy the mind, vital and body.

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This state of sleep is very good. Sleep must be conscious like this.

It happens like this when sleep becomes conscious — the sadhana continues in sleep as in waking.

The rule in this sadhana is to bring down everything, to have all the spiritual experiences in the waking state. Of course, in the early stages there is more meditation and it may be very beneficial right to the end — but, if the experiences are obtained in meditation only, the entire being is not transformed. For this reason to have them in a waking state is a good sign.

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Peace is the first to come; unless the whole instrument becomes full of peace, it is difficult for the knowledge to descend. Once peace is established, the vast infinite consciousness of the Mother manifests itself; the ego is drowned in it and finally disappears without leaving any trace. In that infinity only the Mother and her eternal portion are left.

This is very good. It is a genuine experience. When this peace spreads in the entire being and becomes firm, solid and durable, the first foundation of the spiritual consciousness is established.

To bring down peace and force in the nervous system is the only way to strengthen the nerves.

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What you have been told from within is really true. Only errors, blunders, falsehood and suffering come from the external consciousness which is a field for the play of the little ego. One has to remain within — the real consciousness which has true feeling and true vision and is free from the least taint of ego, pride and desire; let that grow. Then the Mother's consciousness will be established in you. Pride, conflict and the difficulties of the human nature will come to an end.

The more one thinks of the obstacles, the more power they have over one. One should open oneself to the Mother and think more of the Divine, of the light, peace and Ananda.

This limitless peace, the more it increases, the better it is. Peace is the foundation of the yoga.

When this empty state comes, remain calm and call the Mother. Everyone has this empty state, only when it is full of peace, can it be beneficial. If there is unrest, it gives no result.

## **Experience, Direct Perception and Realisation**

Experiences are not useless — they have their place; in other words, they prepare the direct perception, help the being to open and bring knowledge of other worlds and different planes. Integral experience and establishment of the divine peace, equality, light, knowledge, purity, vastness, Presence, experience of the Self, divine felicity, experience of the universal consciousness (which destroys ego), desireless pure divine love, vision of the Divine everywhere, etc. bring the true realisation. The first step leading to these experiences is the descent of peace from above and its firm foundation in the being and all around it.

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These experiences are valuable and contain some truth and help one to progress in the sadhana. But these are not enough — what is wanted is the realisation, the divine peace, equality, purity, the descent and establishment of knowledge, power and Ananda of the higher consciousness — that is the real thing.

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Plants have a life and a consciousness. It is easy to



exchange feelings with them.

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This feeling is very good. One has to feel what the Mother is giving within — people make so many mistakes by looking at the outward appearance. They forget to accept the inner gift or are incapable of receiving it.

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The diamond light is the Mother's light at its strongest. It is only natural for this light to come out of the body of the Mother like this and fall on the sadhak if he is in a good condition.

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This to happen in the head means that the mind has fully opened and accepted the higher consciousness.

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This is what is wanted — the external things going inwards, becoming one with the inner and accepting the inner attitude.

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It is good to look upon the body in this way. However, even if the consciousness does not remain confined to the

body and becomes vast and limitless, still one should consider the body as a part of the consciousness and an instrument of the Mother and one should transform the physical consciousness as well.

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It is a very good sign; the lower consciousness is rising to unite with the higher.

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This is your *ājñā cakra*, that is to say, the centre for the inner intelligence, thought, vision and will-power. Owing to the pressure, it has now opened and become luminous to such an extent that it has joined with the higher consciousness and spread its influence throughout the being. No, it is not imagination and it is not false either. The temple above is the higher consciousness, the temple below is the transformed consciousness of this mind, vital and body — the Mother has come down and erected this temple below and from there she is spreading her influence everywhere within you.

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Good, the higher consciousness has to be brought down in this way, as a calm universalising of oneself, first in the head (in the mental plane, then in the emotional vital and the psychic in the heart), next in the navel and below the navel (in the vital), finally in the entire range of the physical.

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This change (in the back) is very good. Often attacks of this nature come from behind but if the Mother's force and consciousness are there, they cannot enter any more.

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A white lotus signifies that the Mother's consciousness is manifesting there.

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The place of the higher consciousness is above the head. It starts just above the head and rises upwards to infinity. You are experiencing the presence of the vast peace and silence that are there. One has to bring down all this peace and consciousness into the entire being.

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This greater plane may be the spiritual consciousness with the temple of truth in it. A connection has been established between your vital and that plane, and the higher force is going up and down as if over a bridge.

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Many do not get the experience of the awakening of the Kundalini, some have it; the purpose of this awakening

is to open up all the planes and join them to the higher consciousness, but this purpose can be served by other means as well.

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An emanation or a part of Her being and consciousness comes out of the Mother to each sadhak and as her image and representative remains with him to help him. In fact, it is the Mother Herself who comes out in that form.

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You have to live above in the vastness you are experiencing and inside in the depths, you have to live within that alone, — moreover, you have to bring down that vastness everywhere in nature, even in the lower nature. Then the transformation of the lower and the external nature can be permanently established. For, this vastness is the infinity of the Mother's consciousness.

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When the narrow lower nature is liberated into the vastness of the Mother's consciousness, it will then be transformed to the very roots.

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If experiences are disclosed in speech or writing, then they decrease or stop. And this happens to many. That is

why the Yogins never tell their experiences to anybody or tell only when they are firmly established. But if you tell them to the Mother, they will not decrease, but increase. You must get settled in the habit of telling the experiences to the Mother.

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The boy is God dwelling in your heart, and, no doubt, the Shakti is the Mother Herself.

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The wheel is turning. It means that the Mother's Force is at work in the *outer being* — its transformation will take place.

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What you feel in the head is the *physical mind*, and what you feel below the navel is the *lower vital*.

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This kind of identification with the Mother is the true sign of liberation.

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Thus the transformation of the physical is possible when

the body is filled with the Mother's light.

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This experience is very beautiful and true. Every *ād-hāra* should be a temple like this. What you have heard — that the Mother will do everything and that you must remain immersed in her — is a great truth.

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The girls you mention in your letter are the powers of the Mother on different planes. Your experiences are very good — your present condition is good — *sadhana* also is going on well. The difficulties come from the outer nature just to disturb you. Never accept them.

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It is no imagination. The Mother has many *personalities*, each having a different form. They reveal themselves at times in her body. The Mother comes down with light and power in tune with her sari. For each colour represents a *force*.

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What you have seen is perfectly true. There is a centre of consciousness in the throat, and that is the centre of the externalising mind or the physical mental; that is to say, the mind that has the experience of *speech*, the mind that

sees everything of the *physical* and is busy with it. The lower part of the head and the mouth are in its possession. If this mind is connected with the higher or inner consciousness and expresses them, then it is good. But it has a more intimate connection with Muladhar which is the centre of the *lower vital and physical consciousness*. That is why it happens so. It is very necessary to control that mind and speech so that it can be accustomed to express the inner and the higher consciousness and not the inert and the lower consciousness.

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This kind of going down into the physical consciousness takes place in all the sadhaks, for without going down the transformation of nature is difficult.

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It is a very good opening — the light of truth coming down from the Sun is a truth high above the higher mind.

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The consciousness is opening towards the higher truth. The golden peacock is the victory of truth. The Mother's Force is descending down to the physical. As a result, the golden light is descending and you are advancing quickly towards the Mother.

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That part is the most unconscious which is behind the body and becomes illumined last of all. What you have seen is true.

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Yes, what you have seen is correct. There are seven lotuses or seven circles above the head. But unless the higher mind is opened they cannot be seen.

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What you have felt is the infinite vast of the higher consciousness, of something that is above. The head that comes circling down is of course not a gross physical head, but the mind-intellect. It goes up into the vast and comes down that way.

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There are two states of void. One is physical, the inert (tamasic) material stillness within oneself. The other is that which precedes the descent of a vast peace and the sense of the self of the higher consciousness. One has to see which of the two has come, for both result in a stillness and the consciousness is left void.

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The gifts of Maheshwari are peace, equanimity and the wideness of liberation. Because you need these things the



Mother appears before you at your call.

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This is a union of your inner mind and the inner mind of the Mother. In the forehead is the centre of the mind. When union takes place, then it awakens an attraction in the inner mind for the divine truth and it begins to rise.

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A constant good state, a constant inner vision of the Mother do not fall to the lot of even the best of sadhaks. These can take place only when the sadhana has reached the stage of fulfilment. Every one has states of void as well as of fullness. Even in the void one should remain calm.

## Dependence on the Mother

“How far have I come, how far yet have I to go?” — such questions are not of much avail. With Mother as Pilot, swim up-current. She will take you to your destined port.

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The Mother alone is your destination. She contains everything in herself. To have her is to have everything. If you live in her Consciousness, there will be an automatic flowing of every other thing.

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The Mother's attitude never changes. It remains always the same. When a sadhak sees her according to his mental ideas, he finds her attitude changed. But this is not true.

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If there is ruin, how can there be transformation? Rather the old nature of the vital and of the body should be ruined and not the vital and the body.

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It is true that the Mother is in everybody and we should have a relationship with her there. But that is no human or personal relationship; it is oneness with her vast unity.

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On one side is the increase of peace and the true consciousness; on the other, surrender. This alone is the real way.

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It is a wrong desire to destroy the vital — if the vital is destroyed, the body cannot live; if the body does not live, sadhana cannot be done.

Perhaps, you have pulled down so much power that the body cannot bear it. Everything will become all right if you can remain a little quiet.

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You are not without the Mother Divine. The Mother is really with you. It is to bring down the higher light and the higher consciousness that a sadhak goes down to hell. With this belief go on with a steady heart. The light and consciousness are sure to descend.

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The Mother is already within you. The work of Shakti is going on behind the screen of the *physical nature*. Final-

ly with the Light of the Mother the screen will become *transparent*.

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One has to practise spirituality silently, calmly, fearlessly with the constant belief that the victory of the Mother is sure to take place.

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Who will go away? Those who have no sincerity, no faith and trust in the Mother; those who look upon their own imagination as something greater than the will of the Mother, they might go away. But he who seeks the Truth, who has faith and confidence, who wants the Mother, has nothing to be afraid of; even if there are a thousand difficulties, he will surmount them; if he has numerous defects in his nature, he will rectify them; even if he falls, he will rise again and finally one day he will reach the goal of his sadhana.

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\*   \*

This is not the right attitude, your sadhana has not been ruined; the Mother has not abandoned you; she has neither moved away from you nor is she displeased with you — these are vital imaginations and should not be given any place. Keep a simple and quiet confidence in the Mother. Without being afraid of the difficulties call in the Mother's Force. All that you have received is inside; there will be even further progress.

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Remain quiet and conscious. Call the Mother, the good condition will return. To make full surrender takes time. Surrender all that you find still remaining over. Only thus, by repeating it constantly, the surrender becomes complete.

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Be always calm and let the higher Consciousness of the Mother descend into you — this alone will gradually transform your external consciousness.

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\* \*

Advance quietly by surrendering more and more. Whatever transformation of the old is required will gradually be effected.

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There is no sadhak, in spite of his being a child of the Divine, who has not numerous little defects in his nature. As soon as one becomes aware of them, they have to be rejected; one has to aspire more ardently for the Mother's Force so that these little defects of the nature may slowly be eradicated; but faith, surrender and reliance on the Mother must always remain intact. To get rid of these defects entirely is a matter of time; one must not be disturbed because they are there.

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\* \*

This should not upset you. In the path of yoga such a condition invariably comes — when it is time to descend into the physical consciousness and the subconscious, and it may last long. But the Mother is there behind the veil and she will reveal herself later on; this lower kingdom will be transformed into the kingdom of light that is above — keep this strong faith and, by constantly surrendering all, advance towards the end of this stage that is full of difficulties.

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Relation with the outer world must be maintained but all that must remain on the outer surface. You should live within, close to the Mother and watch everything from there — this is what is wanted. It is the first step of the Karmayoga. Then from within conduct all external work with the help of the Mother's force. This is the second step. If you can do this, then you will not have any further trouble.

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First of all, you must find the Mother within. Later on, when the external being comes under full control, you will constantly feel her even there.

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This you should always remember, that if you go forward with full trust in the Mother, then whatever may be the circumstances and the difficulties, however long a time may be necessary, you will most certainly reach your goal

— no obstacle, delay or adverse condition can mar the ultimate success.

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In this sadhana just as you have to get rid of restlessness, so also sorrow must be given no place. You must rely on the Mother and advance with a steady heart and a quiet and cheerful mind. If you have full trust in the Mother, then where is the place for sorrow? The Mother is not far away but constantly near you. You must maintain this faith and knowledge.

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It is not right to assume from her outer appearance during the Pranam or Darshan that the Mother is pleased or displeased. People are constantly making this error that the Mother is displeased, the Mother is severe, the Mother does not want me, she is keeping me away from her, etc. and so many other false notions; then yielding to despair they create their own difficulties on the way. Instead of doing all this, maintain an unshakable trust in the love and help of the Mother within you and go forward on the path of sadhana with a quiet and cheerful mind. Those who do that are safe. When the difficulties come and the ego rises up, they are not touched; they say, "The Mother is there, whatever she does is all right; though I may not see her for the time being, still she is with me, all around me; I have nothing to fear." This is what you should do. One has to maintain this trust and continue to do the sadhana.

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The condition must be such that the consciousness within remains united with the Mother, her force works in the being and the external consciousness acts as an instrument of that force. But this condition does not come fully or easily. Slowly, and by constant sadhana it becomes complete.



## Inner Vision — Symbols — Colours

During the meditation, just as one can see different scenes, one can also see writings. We call these writings “inscriptions or sky-writings”. They can be seen with eyes closed or open.

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These are symbols — a white flower is a symbol of consciousness, the sun represents Knowledge or Truth, the moon stands for the spiritual light, the star indicates creation, fire symbolises tapasya, askesis or aspiration.

Golden rose = love and surrender full of the true consciousness.

White lotus = the Mother's Consciousness (Divine Consciousness).

The cow is a symbol of consciousness and light. A white cow means the higher pure consciousness.

The child is your psychic being who is bringing out the true things from within you — the road is that of the Higher Mind going up towards the Truth.

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There are five fires in the Vedic sacrifice. If the five are not there, the sacrifice is incomplete. We may say that we need these five fires in the psychic, the mental, the vi-

tal, the physical and the subconscious.

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The tree is the spiritual life within. Golden peacocks, sitting on every part of it, are symbols of victory of the Truth. The moon is the light of the spiritual force.

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\* \*

The lotus situated above the head is the centre of the Higher Consciousness. Probably this lotus wants to bloom. The spirituality that began to shine in the vital was the half moon. There had been an eclipse of the moon. The green colour means the true vital force. The sunrise here is the manifestation of the true consciousness in the vital plane.

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The moon = spiritual light.

The elephant = strength.

The golden elephant = strength of the true consciousness.

Green is the colour of the light of emotions.

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The sun has many forms and light many colours. The sun can equally be red, golden, blue or green, etc.

Blue = higher Mind.

Sunlight = Light of Divine Truth.

Bright red = Divine Love or Force of the Higher Consciousness.

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The upward movement of the vital being is towards the Divine and the Truth. The power of Truth (golden light) and of the Higher Mind (blue light) has manifested and is coming down and moving in that ascending vital consciousness.

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The blue light is mine, the white light is the Mother's. When the Higher Consciousness with its universality first begins to descend into the being, it is very natural to see blue light.

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This is the Higher Consciousness above the mind from where peace, light, force, etc. come — the white lotus is the Mother's Consciousness, the red lotus is my consciousness — knowledge and light of the Truth are always there.

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Blue is the colour of the higher mind. Blue lotus: it is the opening of that higher mind in your consciousness.

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White light is the light of the *divine consciousness*. Blue light is the light of the *higher consciousness*. The silver light is the light of spirituality.

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The snake is a symbol of *energy*. A higher energy stands on the *higher consciousness* above the head.

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\*   \*

Water is the symbol of consciousness. What rises up is desire or the askesis of consciousness.

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It is my light if it is *whitish blue*. If pure blue, it is the light of the higher knowledge.

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The significance of the colour of an orange is to have union with the Divine and to have the touch of a higher consciousness.

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Muladhar is the inner centre of the physical. The pond is the *opening* or formation of consciousness. The red lotus is the symbol of Sri Aurobindo's presence in that con-

sciousness and the rosy light signifies the descending love in the *inner physical*.

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The snake is an energy of nature. Muladhar (*physical centre*) is one of its main seats. It remains asleep there in a coiled state. When awakened by sadhana, it unites itself with the higher truth. With the descent of the Mother's Force it has become golden, that is to say, filled with divine Truth.

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All these experiences are the symbols of earthly outer nature.

Red lotus = The Divine Harmony.

Blue light = The higher consciousness.

Golden Temple = The temple of the Divine Truth.

Remain calm and quiet, then all these will slowly develop in your outer nature and life as well.

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The white rose signifies loving surrender to the Mother. Its result will be the spread of light and truth in your *ādhāra*. The white lotus means the Mother's fully awakened Consciousness on your mental plane. The *red-gold* is the radiance of the *Supramental* in the physical.

## Devotion — Faith — Reliance

Don't forget what I have said many times. Do your sadhana in a calm and quiet manner without getting agitated. Then everything will slowly come right. Crying aloud is no good. Call upon the Mother calmly. Open yourself to Her. The more quiet becomes the vital the more steadily goes on the sadhana without swerving.

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\* \*

Sitting calm and quiet remember the Mother and open yourself to her. This is the rule of meditation.

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To do both is best. If it were possible to do sadhana from a distance, that would be the best, but that cannot always be done. But the fact is that you have to do your sadhana by creating a place of safety or a fort in the psychic — that is to say, rely on the Mother calmly and quietly without getting restless, say cheerfully that what she says is right. These small imperfections are a greater obstacle than big ones. But they have to be slowly brought out and imperfections turned into perfections. This cannot be done all at once.

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So, it is not good to feel sorry and be impatient. The Mother's Force will gradually do everything.

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The straight road to truth is open in the heart. Whatever is offered goes up to the Mother and gets merged in her Truth and becomes all truth.

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Don't be afraid or upset. This is the way of Yoga. You have to get over the dark state; you have to remain quiet even in darkness.

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The tapasya is this: to be quiet, to call upon the Mother, to reject calmly restlessness, despair, desires and lusts.

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At the outset peace, truth, etc., get established within, then they turn into action.

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It is not right to fear the void. It is into the void that the divine Peace comes down. The Mother is always with-

in you. But one cannot feel this unless truth, power and light are there.

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Is it not a big boast that all this has happened only for you? “I am very good, very powerful, everything is being done by me, without me the Mother's work cannot be done.” This is undeniably a kind of vanity. “I am worse than the worst. Everything has come to a stand-still owing to my opposition. God cannot carry on his work.” This is, in an opposite way, another sort of vanity.

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Always remain quiet, calmly calling in the Mother's Force and throwing aside all worry.



## The Psychic Being

The child is your psychic being. It is the difficulty of the outer nature that rises up and climbs down from the chest. It does not want to admit the inner truth and wants to cover it up.

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That place is the place of the psychic being in the middle of the spine. What you have described are all the signs of the psychic being.

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Yes, the centre of man's consciousness is in the heart and there is the seat of the *psychic being*.

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That straight, illumined path is the real one. But it takes time to get to it. Once that path is reached, there will not be much difficulty and hindrance.

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If you take to the path of the psychic and, like a child, lie on the lap of the Mother, then this kind of sex-impulse

and so on can do nothing even if they attack. Finally they will not be able to come.

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I have already given you answers to this sort of questions. Keep within your depths. Look at everything from within. Don't look with your outer eyes. If you remain in the outer consciousness, then you may make many mistakes under the cloak of thought. The *psychic being* gradually becomes strong within. It is the *psychic being* that sees the truth and turns everything into its fullness.

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These experiences are good — this fire is the *psychic fire* — and the condition you have described in the *psychic condition* into which nothing impure can come.

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Truly seen. The road of the psychic lies above in the truth-consciousness. Centring round the psychic all the planes begin to turn to the Divine in one and the same way. That road leads upward. The little baby is your *psychic being*.

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That is what is wanted — the lotus in the heart should always remain open, the whole nature should remain under

the control of the psychic being. Thus a new birth can take place.

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*Yes, this is the true psychic attitude.* One who can have always this state in all circumstances can go straight to one's goal.

## **Pride — Impurity — Grief — Despair**

When the consciousness becomes wide and universal and sees the Mother in the whole universe, then the ego does not stick. Only your true being, which is the Mother's child and her portion, rests on the Mother's lap.

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To be sure, we have not left you. When depression comes in then you brood over this kind of thought. At times you come to the outer consciousness and do not feel the Mother. And simply because of that it is not proper to think that the Mother has forsaken you. Once more go deep within, you will feel Her there.

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It means that the stamp of pride, ignorance and desire remains for a long time even in the good periods of good sadhaks. But when the consciousness becomes purer — as it has begun to become in you — then the mixture of ignorance will disappear.

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These difficulties are useless disturbances of the vital. One has to proceed silently along the path of spirituality.

No quarter should be given to sorrow and despair.

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Of course, in this kind of talk much impurity of the vital can get in. Irritation and dislike towards the Mother, envy of others, depression, sorrow — these are the things one has to get rid of.

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Always one has to keep this condition, this true knowledge. One should see men and things with a spiritual sense, with the vision of the psychic and not in the pride of knowledge.

## Planes of Consciousness

From Muladhar down to the sole of the foot is called the physical plane. Below is the domain of subconsciousness.

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There are many planes above and below. But mainly there are four planes below. They are the mental, the psychic, the vital and the physical. And above there are many planes, the Supermind and Sachchidananda being the highest.

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If it happens that you go down at all, bring down there the Mother's light and power by your aspiration. Establish the kingdom of the Mother below as it is above.

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When the consciousness descends into the physical, it does not mean that the results of all sadhana have gone, they really remain behind the veil. One has to bring down the consciousness, the light and the power of the Mother into the obscure physical. When these are established the former state will not recur. But if you are perturbed, depressed and think that nothing can be done in this life and that to die is preferable and so on, then it becomes an obstacle for the consciousness, the power and the light to descend. That is why these wrong feelings have to be rejected and you should depend on the Mother and silently aspire to Her.

## **XI. POETRY**





# The Mother Awakes

It is midnight; the world is asleep in silence,  
The Earth is asleep in the lap of darkness;  
Asleep are the heavens, breathless the wrathful winds;  
The stars twinkle not in the dense blackness of the clouds.  
The birds wrap their eyes with their wings  
And rest self-absorbed in their nests;  
Animals wander not, nor are footsteps heard.  
Then the Mother awakes;  
The Mother awakes with a terrible cry.  
The Mother awakes; opens Her frightful eyes,  
As though a pair of suns.

The Mother awakes, not a leaf moves;  
The still flame of the lamp is dying in the room:  
In the lonely paths of the city, in the fields and the  
woodlands and the hills  
Plunges in sleep all life.  
The surges of the sea-waters  
Break not in laughter upon the shores:  
Utterly still, unmoving, the ocean is voiceless.  
Why then does the Mother awake?  
Who can tell what has She heard and is awake?  
In the night whose is the silent prayer that has awakened the  
Mother  
To rise with a terrible cry?

When the Mother fell asleep, who ever hoped  
That even in the midst of blind darkness She will awake?

Sunk in the night, void of hope, the heart broken for good in  
sorrow

Even in sleep is startled to hear the fall of a leaf.

The royal Fortune of the mighty Asura,

Proud and cunning and overpowering,

Has besieged the earth.

Suddenly a terrible cry is heard, the cry of the Mother;

Suddenly like the roar of hundreds of oceans is heard the  
voice of the Mother;

To awaken Her sons called aloud the Mother

Like a thunder-clap.

With a grieving heaving heart was there none awake

In the darkest of night for the sake of the Mother?

A few only with saffron robes covering their bodies

Sat in the temple with the bare sword in hand,

Devotees of the terrible Mother,

To anoint with their own blood

The Mother's feet, wakeful they passed the night.

Hence rose the Mother:

With a mighty thirst, in wrath awoke the Mother;

With a lion's roar filling the universe awoke the Mother

To awaken the world.

A raucous laughter spurts out of Her mouth, a lightning flash  
gleams in Her eyes;

Frightful is the blood-red flower of Her anger,

In wrath She swings in Her hands the heads of two titans.

The Mother rises and sends out a grim invocation.

Who art thou at this dead of night swinging the titan heads in  
Thy hands?

Thou sprayest rain of blood over the land.

The two eyes are like hearths of fire; fearful is the Mother,

Shaking the earth She roams about.

With a loud roar "Arise! Arise!"  
Thy voice rises to chase  
All sweet indolence.  
It is our Mother!  
She comes, on Her forehead burns Her eye of death.  
Dancing to the rhythm of the clanging of Her necklace of  
human skulls,  
Lo! the Mother comes.

"Arise, arise," a violent voice calls  
Gods and titans and men, all,  
A cruel roar here, a high cry of joy there.  
It is my Mother!  
With burning eye of death upon Her forehead comes our  
Mother.  
Our Mother comes, the human skulls of Her garland dance  
to tune.

In the midst of storm and battle, sword crashes against  
sword, body to body resounding;  
Fire rains and rushes about in the fight, the skies are  
deafened  
With all the fierce noises, the ears burst, the earth sways,  
Blood flows and flows free as though flowing streams.  
When, oh when shall we know the Mother?  
When Her call goes out like the ocean roar  
Wiping off with Her mighty breath the whole kingdom of the  
titans and the violent goddess comes smiling  
Then shall we know the Mother.  
The Mother, when She dances bathing in the stream of  
flowing blood  
Then surely we know, it is the Mother awakened at last.

# Living Matter

I know not  
Where I had wandered about and then reached afar this  
dreamland:  
I found myself standing on the brink of a fluent river.  
Above, the vast empty pale azure  
Firm and high up. Here upon our globe  
Twin comrades Earth and Heaven ever  
Play their love-game intimate together.  
Green earth only looks upward  
Towards her lover's face, shivers in intense delight  
In the thousand tremblings of the leaves, among the cool  
grasses.

The blue sky holds in embrace  
The whole body of his Beloved enveloping it with delight,  
Lifts up his high head, spreads aloft his laughter of love.  
This is the play here. In our realm  
There is no cruel separation. But there  
Earth is dying as though in grief, in fear,  
Left alone in an empty universe. Swallowed in that Infinite,  
Frightened by the heights, surrounded by nightmare,  
Lies the little human life. Limitless expanse of land  
Silent vast empty pale grey  
Extends the unbroken wideness of the lifelessness  
Of the great Void. No tree is there,  
No grass, no stone, nor any human habitation  
Could one see. The eyes move ever forward, move ever,  
No end is there; yet though tired  
I am unable to return! A cruel landscape in its cruel pull  
Carries away a prisoner as though to an enemy-land

Afar, afar into a bourneless world  
In the stilled infinity.

I forced my eyes to return  
Towards the other shore. It is hard stone  
A fierce strength has moulded together, a long labour,  
As though the artcraft of a titan. During the wild rains  
On the banks abroad spreading its body all over the skies  
In rude delight the titan has laboured,  
Happy at Nature's cruel game.  
Fancy dawned in him to make it still more cruel.  
Line after line it has carved smilingly on the stone.  
Like a huge skeleton lies the wet shore of the river,  
The mere bones as it were, bereft of flesh, of dead earth:  
It lies immemorially with no solace of last rites done for it,  
At that solitary end of things, on that river-verge.  
No bend is in view, no grass nor flower. Erect, proud,  
Firm, solid, despising all softness  
Goes down into the water the lifeless heartless stone.  
Beyond afar, the desert land has moved lazily  
To unite with the stone. No softness,  
No love is there in the union, it is matter's love,  
Stone's kiss.

I looked towards the stream.  
It flows in silent speed — the stream of dreamland;  
Asleep, mighty, calm, as though the violent life-force  
Is imprisoned in Nature's arms on the crest of the Himalayas.  
Away lies the exit, the way out. Where the meadow  
Meets the stone, a narrow space, as though  
The throat of hungry death, there  
In the land's perilous life-line, Death himself

Lay asleep like a python with his stone-figure  
 Possessing the universe. With slow wide-moving speed  
 Proud of its long strides advances the dream-river.  
 In its winding, the miraculous Vedic steed Dadhikra,  
 God incarnate as life-force, bridled in his breast and face,  
 Lifting his proud neck rushes on taking man  
 On heaven's path to the world of Truth. But on that way  
 Is this the cataract of Life's river flowing down?  
 Is this the true consummation?  
 It hurtles down like a sinner in an unmeasurable speed  
 Towards a crueller country. The wailing  
 Of the river adown comes into my ears as though from a  
 thousand sufferers!  
 I looked about, my mind full of sadness,  
 And thought, "Oh, the dead land! the still world!  
 In the noise what a silence, in the speed what an immobility!  
 Will ever man come to live in this inert country,  
 Pour his own life-force and make it living!  
 Is there no Purusha for this Prakriti?"  
 Rejected, as if through fear, thought returns  
 Into her own dwelling. Motionless is the earth-life as ever.

All on a sudden I woke up and looked within myself.  
 With a startle I saw the inert realm alive,  
 Alive the waters, alive the cruel  
 Endless wasteland, even the sky up above  
 Conscious, alive the stretched neck of death, —  
 The stone-figure has assumed the shape of a sleeping python.  
 And the sound of the waterfalls carries afar  
 The mourning of a living soul. I understood why it is there  
 Erect and proud the stone with no softness  
 No pity, no happiness in it. I understood the hope  
 The river nourishes in its bosom, flowing towards its vast end  
 Beyond sight, as if the mighty life-force is in trance

Filled with its own force of speed. And I knew here  
None speaks of any other person, they know not each other  
They want not each other. Each is engrossed in trifles,  
Each is bound to himself, muses all alone,  
Each is confined to his own act and own mood.  
But when they stumble upon each other, they tremble within.  
The body, stunned and bound, thinks, "Lo, this is another I  
That falls upon my body, this touch is full of joy!"  
That is the end of it. There does not bloom the secret yearning,  
Neither in speech nor in movement nor in thought.

In my hopelessness  
I see as though the whole world is a prison.  
All on a sudden a sweet voice sounded within me:  
"Look back, understand the hope of Prakriti,  
Understand the dead prison-house is a mother's heart,  
The hidden significance understand that is in this game."  
I lifted my burning eyes, I saw afar  
In the wasteland human figures. A boy and a girl  
Embracing each other in mad delight in this expanse of matter,  
In this inert dreamland two living beings are there free  
With no fetters, rapt in trance in each other's delight.  
They disappeared from the sight. And that living matter  
With no hope in it, it is bound in its own mood as always.  
But my mind freed out of the matter's touch,  
I recognised the intent of the veiled conscious Being,  
I captured in my spirit Nature's hidden desire.  
My eyes capturing the whole landscape, consoled I returned  
To the earthly sphere.

# The Music of Silence

I have seized your soul, mighty Spirit of Time!  
Now the sky veers around, iridescent in the cataract of  
sun-rays,  
Creating the magic city of limpid Even-tide,  
I wandered along river banks seeking to attune my  
heart-strings  
To the murmur and music of life voiced by her rippling waves:  
Night infinite descended with silent steps,  
Casting the shadow of her coronet  
Upon the wide sky, flinging the hem of her robe,  
Laying down the soft darkness upon earth's expanse.  
Her eyes lost in thought,  
In this vast Night, plunged in the contemplation of the  
supreme Void,  
The dark Mother of the world in her ascetic mood lies in  
utter trance:  
She draws deep into her bosom all creatures stilled in peace,  
She plays her role of goddess Sleep,  
Comes and silences the Life's noise and its ceaseless play.  
Now is the honeyed banquet of stillness,  
The crowded stars like bees innumerable have flown out and  
gathered in the heavens:  
To smear with the rays of light the hearts of creatures,  
The luminous amphora of cooling ecstasy,  
The Moon, floats up in the night bejewelled with stars.  
In this darkness illumined by dream-moonlight  
The little human soul of mine  
I have drowned into this infinite Life  
And have heard the music of Silence.



# Ravana Vanquished

Titans, assembled here, the race supreme on this earthly  
globe!

A city supreme bejewelled in this sea-girt isle  
On a stony crest they shall set up in their own might,  
Fearless defying the King of the gods, in disregard of the  
world.

But listen! What is this rumour  
All along the walls surrounding the city of Lanka,  
What is this tumult unprecedented in this land?  
Is this the roar of a puny army in laughter and jeer,  
Dancing over the head of the Mother of Rakshasas, revelling  
in pride and victory?

But whom do I fear? Why am I confined, a prisoner in my  
own city?

Mute I look at their mad dance, hear their loud boast?  
Protected by Varuna in this sea one can never cross,  
We warriors enjoyed the wide universe.  
A little island has proudly trampled over the whole man-  
kind,  
And is the master of it, possessed as its own  
The wide earth with her million habitants.  
The haughty King of the gods, who names himself  
The imperial majesty of the triple worlds,  
Is himself imprisoned and works as a slave here today in our  
Lanka —

It is through the might of your arms.  
Here are we the same Titans. Here is our city, Lanka.  
Is that might of the arms turned limp?  
Say, Titans, has that pride lost its brilliance?  
Has that power evaporated unnoticed

As we lay courting sleep at night without care?

Who has stolen your blazing might?  
 Is it Krishna or Mahadeva or any other bold enough  
 In the still night trembling to enter Lanka while she lay  
asleep?

Oh! the irony of Fate! the unconquerable race  
 Is conquered at last in a petty skirmish!  
 Petty man is victorious in Titan's land!  
 I could understand if Rudra with his trident rushed in,  
 His cosmic might teeming with demi-gods and demons  
 And for days and nights and centuries battled and battered  
and broke through  
 And at last, Providence aiding, ravaged and destroyed the  
city of Lanka.

I could also understand if the great Vishnu spread  
 His net of duplicity, cast his spell of darkness  
 Upon the intelligence of the Rakshasas and stole away  
 The Fair Royal Deity of Lanka.

But we are conquered by the arms of Rama,  
 Men have trampled upon the city of Ravana!  
 Smile happily, O vanquished gods now in heaven,  
 There is no fear of punishment for you any more.  
 Smile, O Indra, in happiness, the lord of the gods is now free  
from slavery.

I do not blame you if you take pride in this victory  
 That should be a shame for you.  
 Luminous is the city of Heaven, eternal Spring is there,  
 Enjoy the garden of Paradise there through the mortal's  
grace.

Ravana, enemy of the gods, is vanquished at the hands of a  
human being.

Vanquished! Listen! O listen! on the mighty rock afar,

The fierce echo hears and laughs at the word:  
It is the daughter of the Mountain in this Isle of Lanka and  
her thundering voice.  
Vanquished! It rends the mind and heart to utter the word.  
A Titan's tongue cannot speak it out.  
A proud Rakshasa clad in iron-strength, with iron weapons,  
Not content with earthly victories I roamed in all the three  
heavens,  
Not content, I assailed the very crest of the triple world.  
You say that race is vanquished! A mirage is this truth,  
False is this history.  
Brothers, friends and sons are killed; in my vast bejewelled  
halls,  
Crowded with slaves and servants I wander all alone  
In search of friendly faces but in vain.  
The women's quarters are crowded too; there with a dry and  
desert heart  
I look upon mothers who have lost their sons.  
In the Assembly Hall, in the battlefield,  
In the joyless taverns, in the insipid playfield  
My eyes in vain look for the glories of Lanka.  
Silent is the lion roar. Into these ears used to be poured  
A torrent of delight, the trumpet call of victory,  
The wild war-cry, the leonine yell of my brother  
Kumbhakarna.  
But O Aksha, O Indrajit, why are you silent at this hour of  
peril!  
Why does not your ever victorious voice delight our ears any  
more!  
O my children, is the embrace of Death so fast, so sweet!  
Pardon me, Titans, for the first time today the earth  
Under Ravana's power is wet with Ravana's tears.

But nay, let them be slain, I am yet there.



Satisfied with a feeble revenge.

A little enjoyment does not enfeeble the ardour of these  
senses.

I am a Rakshasa, once more I shall conquer  
All the world and enjoy the Infinite itself.

Otherwise rest content, O jackals of Shiva's consort,  
Rest content, O you host of vultures —  
A deathbed for me shall I build up like a hill  
With thousands and thousands of human and ape heads.  
Or I shall throw into devouring fire, like faggots,  
All the rich treasures, things of beauty and art of ancient

Lanka —

I shall throw down all this peerless grandeur:  
This entire great city I shall light up into a titanic funeral  
pyre.

The three heavens with Earth I have won in battle,  
I imprisoned all the gods, I enjoyed fame incomparable;  
I am as though the all-enveloping world-eye of the Sun,  
I burn at noon of mid-summer; afflicted by its heat  
The world adores the scorching Fire.

I shine over the universe, displaying my effulgence.  
As the sun reddens the blue of the firmament with its own  
blood

And goes down at setting in all its glory,  
So shall I sink into the sea of Death.

I was at dawn, during my sway, head uplifted,  
Fierce and radiant.

And at the setting I will be there still,  
In death and destruction unconquerable, a fierce lustre and a  
mighty blaze.





True this desolate spot, true also the defeat.  
 Sorrow is true. Happiness is not true upon this earth,  
 Nor true is the kingdom. True it is that ignorance is  
punished,  
 Love is not true in this world filled with lamentation.

PRIEST

Delve then into your sorrowing heart and wallow in its slime,  
 Probe into your suffering soul and there find the secret of  
sorrow.  
 Finally you will recognise Krishna, full of delight, full of  
love.  
 It is the play of the great Lover, this life upon earth.

KING

The love that kisses with the lips of thunder,  
 The love that burns always with the agony of diseases,  
 The love whose guise is sorrow and hate and death,  
 That is of the lowest kind. Compassion is there in the human  
heart;  
 Creation is not kind, nor Nature, nor God.  
 Man builds an image of his own compassion, a fanciful idol  
 In his own heart. That shadow he worships as God. There is  
Brahman.  
 God is but a dream, another kind of dream,  
 A false consolation created by the imagination of the  
miserable.

PRIEST

O King, through your utterance, I am witnessing  
Krishna-play



And my body shivers in delight; I hear  
 As though Radha, the beloved, is chiding in the words of  
 your mouth.

Never shall I see his face nor hear his name,  
 Nor shall I know that he exists any more.  
 Such utterance in the mouth of a mother is the vain fancy of  
 an atheist,

I understand. So I say it is not a mere consolation,  
 O King! You will surely see my Krishna  
 Manifesting again in a befitting guise:  
 [*Here one line of the Bengali manuscript is illegible.*]

THE VOICE OF KRISHNA

The toy is mine. I have snatched it away and I have given it  
 back again

Only to teach you that I am your Master.

KING

My heart has no trust in these empty words.  
 Vainly human intelligence creates wordy brilliance  
 In order to dazzle one's own eyes. Have done with these  
 words.

PRIEST

I obey, but remember, O great King,  
 What the Vaishnava says.

KING

In vain is such an address.  
 The tiger is the king of this forest, not I.

As to a beggar, the forest deity doles out  
Scanty fruit and roots — just to appease the hunger.  
I roam about without my army, abandoned by relatives.  
The name king sounds a taunt to my ears.  
He is not a king who is abandoned by friends in danger,  
One who lies tired in this desolate spot.

## PRIEST

There are your subjects, we are there. Always everywhere  
You are the king, you are my father,  
In no other terms will you hear me address you.  
Neither in the woods nor in the city.

*Incomplete*



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