

FROM THE EDITOR

CAN INDIA SKIRT THE MACABRE OLYMPIC?

August 15th is the birthday of Sri Aurobindo "the Prophet of Indian Nationalism." It became the birthday of free India. A message which Sri Aurobindo gave at the request of the All India Radio, broadcast on the 14th of August 1947, contained this warning: "But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired and even frustrated. This must not be; ..."

The forebodings have proved true. The partition of the country, far from solving a single problem, bred one new problem after another. Hardened communal mistrust and strife, the aftermath of the creation of Pakistan such as the Kashmir problem, the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani military rulers on the people of what emerged as Bangladesh, the plight of the migrant Muslims in Pakistan and of the non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh, the exodus of hapless refugees into Assam and the subsequent troubles there, the deliberate promotion of communal fundamentalism by guilty and nervous dictatorial rulers in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, patronisation of terrorists in Punjab by Pakistan—and so on and so forth.

Civil strife has been always possible in India and they are directly or indirectly linked with the partition; the country's internal development has suffered, even attempts at invasion—which could not have been dreamt of by a neighbour if Indian subcontinent were united—have been possible.

The communal partition of India was the handiwork of man's evil genius. The same evil-genius is now gleefully pushing both the countries to the brink of yet another devastation: making of the nuclear bomb, as if the two chunks of the sub-continent were not already spending fortunes—the common man's fortunes—on the conventional arms!

But Sri Aurobindo, who pronounced the forebodings, also dreamt of possibilities quite different in nature. He dreamt of a "world union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind." If India could "develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement."

Sri Aurobindo also dreamt of India's spiritual heritage playing a great role in the life of man; "... amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice."

Sri Aurobindo's final dream was a step in evolution which will raise man to a higher and larger consciousness. "Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers."

Sri Aurobindo concluded: "Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India."

He outlined the potentiality India has in no uncertain terms. Everything depends on the will of the new and free India. Should we the Indians aspire to fulfil these dreams, we cannot just let ourselves be swept by the common course of events as creatures too weak or unwilling to resist. Somewhere we have to stop and stand against the current, come what may, and be ourselves and

assert our faith in man. For example, there is an immediate choice before India: should we make nuclear bombs? The very process through which the atomic power is manipulated into the bomb is a process that goes against the Nature's law of fusion and harmony. It is a hostile device—a subtle example of yet another trick of the evil genius that created Pakistan and is now using it to stimulate India into bomb-making. It requires a strong conviction and psychic strength to wriggle out of the trap set by the darker forces. Once we have mastered these qualities, we will be in a sound position to rescue the world from it.

India must choose. Either she decides to be brave, truthful and play her role in the sublime fruition of a Providential scheme for the future of mankind, or be entrapped and roped into the macabre Olympic—the race to determine who can deliver death faster.

India can choose the first of the two alternatives. But let us remember, it is INDIA which can make such a choice, not a few politicians or bureaucrats who head a government at a certain time. The INDIA that can make such a choice is the India consisting of people who will and aspire for such a destiny, not of people who make rapacious polarisations around petty interests, each group fighting for its own gains in total disregard of the consequences to be suffered by the others. We have to be a people different from what we appear to be today, for today we have surrendered ourselves to a false appearance whereas the soul of India is gloriously different. Surely, we have not been able to choke the soul of India to death. We can let it emerge and lead us to light

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

ACCENT ON PONDICHERRY

"The most ancient Pondicherry lives in legends," says the inaugural sentence of a book on the subject.

Indeed, a legend can suddenly assume a new significance in the light of modern research. If Pondicherry was the seat of the legendary sage Agastya, Prof. Jouveau-Dubreuil, the French archaeologist, said that he had reasons to believe that the Ashram of Agastya was situated on the very site where is to be found the main building of Sri Aurobindo Ashram containing the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. We wish, the scholar were there to elaborate his thesis.

Every mythical figure combines history with symbolism. What did the legend of the Vindhya rising higher and higher to obstruct the passage of the sun symbolise? Gods requesting Agastya to humble the Vindhya who was his disciple, Agastya appearing on the scene, the Vindhya bowing down to him, the guru asking the obedient disciple to remain in that position till he returned and the mighty Vindhya continuing to obey him for thousands of years awaiting the guru's return make a moving story. But one feels that there is more to it than a mere story. Does it hold in it some mystic or astronomical secret? (It is also said that the guru had promised to return when the astrological moment of his crossing the Vindhya repeats and it is yet to repeat!)

Thousands of year later it was the turn of another sage to come down South—again never to return.

But Agastya's or Sri Aurobindo's movements are not required to be physical. They are splendours of Consciousness. The Consciousness they personify remains with mankind. It carries on its work through inertia and darkness characterising human conditions.

Does such a Consciousness leave a special impress on a place? It is difficult to deny the experience that it does. Pondicherry carries such an impress.

And, of course, Pondicherry has other historical significances. It was French India, in contrast with the rest of the subcontinent which was British India.

The issue of THE HERITAGE marked by special features on Pondicherry has behind it, apart from the labour of the editors and the publishers, memorable goodwill of all those whose cooperation we have sought— the very sympathetic officers of the Government of Pondicherry and our authors—and scholars stationed in Paris who have delved into the old records in the archives and libraries there and have written for us. We are grateful to Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust for their permission to consult source materials and to publish extracts and photographs. For lack of space we are obliged to leave some more articles we had planned to carry. Pondicherry would also bring to the mind of our readers the unique experiment that is Auroville. But the subject requires exclusive attention and we propose to focus on it in the future.