Poet, Yogi, Rishi, Prophet, Genius

The Poet, the Yogi and the Rishi

It is quite natural for the poets to vaunt their métier as the highest reach of human capacity and themselves as the top of creation; it is also natural for the intellectuals to run down the Yogi or the Rishi who claims to reach a higher consciousness than that which they conceive to be the summit of human achievement. The poet indeed lives still in the mind and is not yet a spiritual seer, but he represents to the human intellect the highest point of mental seership where the imagination tries to figure and embody in words its intuition of things, though that stands far below the vision of things that can be grasped only by spiritual experience. It is for that the poet is exalted as the real seer and prophet. There is too, helping the idea, the error of the modern or European mentality which so easily confuses the mentalised vital or life being with the soul and the idealising mind with spirituality. The poet imaging mental or physical beauty is for the outer mind something more spiritual than the seer or the God-lover experiencing the eternal peace or the ineffable ecstasy. Yet the Rishi or Yogi can drink of a deeper draught of Beauty and Delight than the imagination of the poet at its highest can conceive. (রসা তৈ সং — The Divine is Delight.) And it is not only the unseen Beauty that he can see but the visible and tangible also has for him a face of the All-Beautiful which the mind cannot discover.

10 November 1934

* You seem almost to say that the poet is necessarily not a seer or Rishi. But if the mere poet is not a Rishi, the Rishi after all can be a poet — the greater can contain the less, even though the less is not the greater.

11 November 1934
A Rishi is one who sees or discovers an inner truth and puts it into self-effective language— the mantra. Either new truth or old truth made new by expression and intuitive realisation.

He [Ramana Maharshi] has experienced certain eternal truths by process of Yoga—I don't think it is by Rishilike intuition or illumination, nor has he the mantra.

10 February 1936

A Rishi may be a Yogi, but also he may not; a Yogi too may be a Rishi, but also he may not. Just as a philosopher may or may not be a poet and a poet may or may not be a philosopher.

Poetic intuition and illumination is not the same thing as Rishi intuition and illumination.

11 February 1936

The Poet and the Prophet

Essentially the poet's value lies in his poetic and not in his prophetic power. If he is a prophet also, the intrinsic worth of his prophecy lies in its own value, his poetic merit does not add to that, only it gives to its expression a power that perhaps it would not have otherwise.

7 November 1934

The Poet and the Verse Writer

No poet feels his poetry as a “normal phenomenon” — he feels it as an inspiration — of course anybody could “make” poetry by learning the rules of prosody and a little practice. In fact many people write verse, but the poets are few. Who are the ordinary poets? There is no such thing as an ordinary poet.

30 June 1936

All that is written in metre is called verse. If it is written with inspiration, it is poetry.

27 May 1937
The “Born” Poet

You must remember that you are not a “born” poet — you are trying to bring out something from the Unmanifest inside you. You can’t demand that that should be an easy job. It may come out suddenly and without apparent reason like the Ananda — but you can’t demand it. The pangs of delivery cannot always be avoided. 8 June 1934

A born poet is usually a genius, poetry with any power or beauty in it implies genius. 13 February 1936

Poetic Genius

Poetic genius — without which there cannot be any originality — is inborn, but it takes time to come out — the first work even of great poets is often unoriginal. That is in ordinary life. In Yoga poetic originality can come by an opening from within, even if it was not there before in such a way as to be available in this life. 22 March 1934

For poetry one must have a special inspiration or genius. With literary capacity one can write good verse only.

Genius usually means an inborn power which develops of itself. Talent and capacity are not genius, that can be acquired. But that is the ordinary rule, by Yoga one can manifest what is concealed in the being. 22 September 1934

Genius

I never heard of anyone getting genius by effort. One can increase one’s talent by training and labour, but genius is a gift of Nature. By sadhana it is different, one can do it; but that is not the fruit of effort, but either of an inflow or by an opening or liberation of some impersonal power or manifestation of unmanifested
power. No rule can be made in such things; it depends on persons and circumstances how far the manifestation of genius by Yoga will go or what shape it will take or to what degree or height it will rise. 28 July 1938

Of course it is quite possible to be an idiot and a genius at the same time — one can, that is to say, be the medium of a specialised and specific force which leaves the rest of the being brute stuff, unchanged and undeveloped. Genius is a phenomenon *sui generis* and many anomalies occur in its constitution by Nature. 13 February 1936