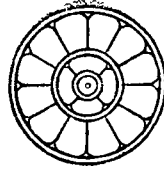


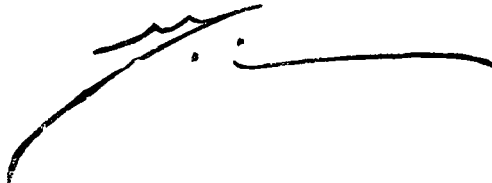
MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY 1960

Price : Re. 1.



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XI

No. 12

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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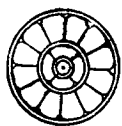
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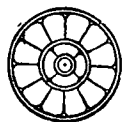
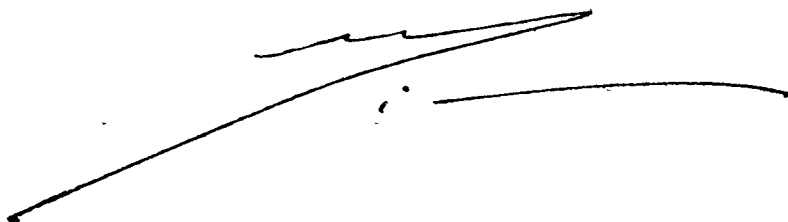
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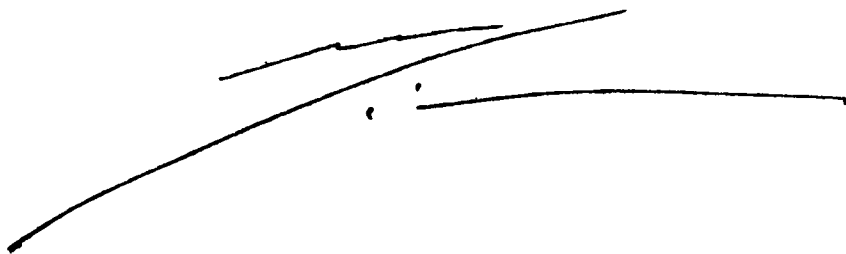
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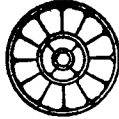
Connaitre est bien,
vivre est mieux,
être, voilà la perfection.



1960

To know is good,
to live is better,
to be, that is perfect.





January 6, 1960

To be or become something, to bring something into being is the whole labour of the force of Nature; to know, feel, do are subordinate energies that have a value because they help the being in its partial self-realisation to express what it is and help it too in its urge to express the still more not yet realised that it has to be.

The Life Divine

SRI AUROBINDO

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

I

(A Talk between the Mother and Group Captain Mona)

G.C.M. : Mother, we could not have our final practice yesterday, owing to the rain. It is really upsetting.

MOTHER : My child, these things are necessary for purging all of their insincerity—are they not ? The rain pours down as if to wash you completely and purify you.

G.C.M. : True, Mother; the rain has its good effects, but, just before our important days, the 1st and 2nd of December, to get drenched and fall ill ?

MOTHER : My dear, illness comes of resistance. You must learn to receive and hold and not resist the power of the higher Nature which is working here. The higher Nature has its own way of developing and, if you learn to keep up with it, many new splendours will open before you and, instead of illness, you will experience just the contrary.

When it rains, people run about excitedly, putting something on themselves or getting under shelter. They act with inherent fear in them and thereby fall ill. They forget that illness is due to causes within oneself, some wrong inner movement. This can be taken as universally true.

Do not resist the power for transformation and you will never fall ill.

30-11-1959

II

(A Talk àpropos of Test Cricket at Madras)

SADHAKA : X has decided not to go to Madras to see the Match.

MOTHER : Now people are showing some sense.

SADHAKA : If they know that the Mother does not like it, they won't go.

MOTHER : That is not the proper way of saying it. There is no question of my liking or disliking. I see things as they are. Sometimes I make no objection. But when people sink in an abyss of desire and excitement, I naturally react. To see a match or not to see it is not in itself important. I do not mind if one goes and sees a match. But when people lose all control over themselves, it then certainly concerns me.

12-1-1960

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

THE INTELLECT*

SELF : My teacher of English and I read the following passage of yours :
“What has to be surpassed and changed is the intellectual reason which sees things from outside only, by analysis and inference—when it does not do it rather by taking a hasty look and saying ‘so it is,’ or ‘so it is not.’”

Here did you mean to say that the intellect usually judges things by hasty conclusions and when it cannot do that it takes to analysis and inference ? That is how my teacher interpreted it. While my understanding of it is just the opposite. It is only when the intellect cannot decide by analysis and inference, which is its usual (normal) process, that it begins to form hasty conclusions. Well, which of the two is really correct ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Neither is correct. Each of these statements is a hasty conclusion of the intellect. 31-1-1936

SELF : I would say that if even the intellect takes a hasty look without logical reasoning why should people spend so much time, energy and money developing their intellect ? The growth of the physical mind would serve their purpose !

SRI AUROBINDO : People don't take time etc. for developing the intellect. It is only one man out of thousands who has a trained intellect. In others it is either ill-developed, undeveloped or very partially developed. 31-1-1936

(Apropos of the above, Sri Aurobindo wrote the following in a separate place)

The intellect of most men is extremely imperfect, ill-trained, half-developed—therefore in most the conclusions of the intellect are hasty, ill-founded and erroneous or, if right, right more by chance than by merit or right working. The conclusions are formed without knowing the facts or the correct or sufficient data, merely by a rapid inference and the process by which it comes from the premisses to the conclusion is usually illogical or faulty—the process being unsound by which the conclusion is arrived at, the conclusion also is likely to be

* A few letters from this series appeared in *Mother India* of April 24, 1953. They are now set in their full context (Editor).

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

fallacious. At the same time the intellect is usually arrogant and presumptuous, confidently asserting its imperfect conclusions as the truth and setting down as mistaken, stupid or foolish those who differ from them. Even when fully trained and developed, the intellect cannot arrive at absolute certitude or complete truth, but it can arrive at one aspect or side of it and make a reasonable or probable affirmation; but untrained, it is a quite insufficient instrument, at once hasty and peremptory and unsafe and unreliable. That is why I laid stress on its habit of hasty look and conclusion. 31-1-1936

SELF : You said "the intellect of most men is extremely imperfect, ill-trained, half-developed." What is the right way of training the intellect in order that it may become perfect, fully developed and turn always to the truth and be able to deal with more than one side of the truth ?

SRI AUROBINDO : To look at things without egoism or prejudice or haste, to try to know fully and accurately before judging, to try to see the truth behind other opinions than your own, etc. etc. 3-2-1936

SELF : To hark back to the quotation from you. Let me ask you again : Did you not mean that when the intellectual reason cannot decide about things by analysis and inference, then it begins to take a hasty look ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Not at all. It is the nature of the untrained intellect to do that.

SELF : If neither of our two interpretations is correct, what is the third and correct one ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Both the interpretations are absurd. I have said nothing about "cannot". I have said "when it does not rather", and that means that what it ordinarily does is to take a hasty look, that is what most people usually do, and the habit of careful analysis and inference (which is no doubt the proper function of the intellect) is the exception.

SELF : Is it not the usual function of the intellect to see, reason, analyse, infer, scrutinise, judge ?

SRI AUROBINDO : If it is its function, what prevents it from trying to do all that by a hasty look ? Does everything in this world discharge its function perfectly ? Very few people scrutinise before they judge. 5-2-1936

*

*

MOTHER INDIA

SELF : Some people write high things from the intellect as if they were living them out, but we do not find them actually doing so.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. The intellect easily deceives itself, putting forth the idea and saying "it is done" when all along the vital reactions are there.

10-2-1936

*

*

SELF : When I try to give intellectual answers to my friends they all seem to be dry. Why so ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Answers about what ? Intellectual answers about spiritual things are usually dry, except to the intellect.

12-2-1936

From NAGIN DOSHI

INNER VISION—SYMBOLS—COLOURS

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Nirranjan from the Bengali Letters in "Patravali")

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.

★

★

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.

★

★

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 vital, the physical and the subconscious.

★

★

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.

★

★

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

MOTHER INDIA

the vital was the half moon. There had been an eclipse of the moon. The colour green means the true vital force. The sunrise here is the manifestation of the true consciousness in the vital plane.

★

★

The moon=spiritual light.

The elephant=strength.

The golden elephant=strength of the true consciousness.

Green is the colour of the light of emotions.

★

★

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.

★

★

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.

★

★

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.

★

★

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.

COMMEMORATION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S TRIAL

UNVEILING OF TABLETS IN ALIPORE JUDGE'S COURT

(*"Amrita Bazar Patrika"*, Calcutta, 27-9-1959)

THE unveiling ceremony of two marble tablets installed in memory of Sri Aurobindo, at the very place in the Alipore Judge's Court premises where his dauntless fight for freedom for Indian independence culminated in a trial of historic importance, was performed by Sri Surajit Chandra Lahiri, Chief Justice, Calcutta High Court before a distinguished gathering on Saturday afternoon.

The President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, in a message on this occasion said, "I send my humble tribute to the memory of this great revolutionary and Saint Philosopher Sri Aurobindo who is one of those great Souls who link modern India with the lofty traditions of its hoary past. Let me hope this memorial tablet will serve to inspire our people at a time when clear thinking and high moral standards are needed as never before in our history."

The entire area was filled up with crowds who listened to the speeches in a reminiscent mood to visualise the scenes of the historic trial that took place 50 years ago.

Of the two tablets, one has been placed at the main entrance of the court room, where the then Additional Sessions Judge Mr. C. P. Beachcroft held the trial. The second tablet has been fixed on the wall inside the court room where the trial actually took place for about a year.

The tablet reads: "In this room was held in 1908-9 the historic trial of the fighters for Indian emancipation including Sri Aurobindo, the Prophet of Life Divine."

PROPHET OF NATIONALISM

Also inscribed in the tablet are the prophetic words uttered by Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, who stood in Sri Aurobindo's defence. The words are: "He will be looked upon as the Poet of Patriotism, as the Prophet of Nationalism and the Lover of Humanity."

After the 'Mangalacharanam' by Prof. Krishnagopal Goswami, Sri D. M. Chakladar, District Judge, in a short introductory speech stressed the

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importance of the occasion and proposed the name of the Chief Justice to preside over the function.

Dr. Naresh Chandra Ghose, Ayurvedacharya, Chairman of the reception committee, in his address of welcome explained how their efforts for such an occasion had been made possible through the active help of some earnest persons, both in official circles and outside.

SOUL'S EMANCIPATION

The Mayor of Calcutta, Sri B. K. Banerjee, who was Chief Guest, referred to the life and writings of Sri Aurobindo and said that to this saint the emancipation of India was linked with a greater struggle for the emancipation of the human soul and the whole of mankind. Sri Aurobindo realised that the trial was presided over by none but NARAYANA himself and Deshabandhu was a "Sadhaka".

The Mayor proposed that through the joint efforts of the Government, the Public and the Corporation, the entire court compound should be turned into a national park named after SRI AUROBINDO.

PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE

Sri Surajit Lahiri, Chief Justice, in his address said that this court room would be looked upon as a place of Pilgrimage by Sri Aurobindo's fellow countrymen and would continue to inspire them in the pursuit of the ideals shown by him. One of those ideals was that our Motherland is not a mere conglomeration of inanimate objects like hills and forests, fields and rivers, but the personification of the Divine Mother Herself—which ideal was also at the root of the famous national song, *Bande Mataram*.

The Chief Justice then referred to the persistent question as to why Sri Aurobindo had left the political scene for a life of asceticism and remarked that for Aurobindo the Political Independence of India was not an end in itself but a means for the attainment of a still higher goal, that was the establishment of a federation of nations on the basis of the Spiritual teachings of the Indian Rishis.

HIS POLITICAL IDEALS

Sri Hemendra Prasad Ghose in his speech referred to the political ideals of Sri Aurobindo and read an excerpt from his writing which says, "Our attitude is a political Vedantism. India free, one and indivisible, is a Divine Realisation

COMMEMORATION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S TRIAL

to which we move, emancipation our aim, to that end each nation must practise the political creed which is the most suited to its temperament and circumstances, for that is the best for it which leads most surely and completely to national liberty and national self-realisation."

Sri Satinath Roy of the Indian Association proposed a vote of thanks.

Among the various messages read at the meeting was one from the Vice-President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan, who said, "It will continue to inspire our young generation."

SEER & SAVANT

The Governor of West Bengal, Sm. Padmaja Naidu, said, "Sri Aurobindo, the great Seer and Savant of India, was the outward symbol of all our national aspirations and by his writings and counsel he roused the nation to a consciousness of its great destiny."

Dr. B. C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, said, "Let the hallowed memory of Sri Aurobindo, the savant, the patriot, and the intrepid fighter for India's Freedom be a source of perennial inspiration to all of us."

The only two living co-accused in this historic trial—Sri Abinash Chandra Bhattacharjee and Sri Purna Chandra Sen, were introduced to the audience by the president at the meeting. Sri Hemachandra Ghosh, the only living person among the counsel for the defence, also spoke at the meeting.

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US*

REMINISCENCES OF VARIOUS PEOPLE IN CONTACT WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the October issue)

MASTERY OVER MISHAP

THE car was a Hindustan Landmaster, No. P.1921. (1921 is not the year of its manufacture but the registration number.) It was always my trusted car in Delhi and therefore I sent it to Pondicherry for our use over there. And it was in this Landmaster that on the morning of 23rd October, 1959, I left for Madras from where I was to take the plane for my return to Delhi.

The car had a full load, for, besides the driver and a colleague of mine, there were my wife, youngest daughter, youngest son, and the grown-up son who usually drives me down to Madras. Thus there were seven persons in all in the car, all of whom, except my colleague and myself, were travelling primarily to leave me at Madras and then return to their permanent abode—Pondicherry.

Our programme was approved by the Mother and it was after Her gracious blessings that we left Pondicherry in the early morning.

Narendra, my grown-up son, was behind the steering, driving with skill and confidence. All along the journey, the atmosphere in the car was full of hilarity. It was raining quite heavily when we reached the outskirts of Madras. The rain-sodden fields on the two sides of the road presented a charming and fast-shifting scenery. The wipers on the screen were wiping off the torrents of rain-water with a rhythm.

And then suddenly the car skidded. It began to swerve, now going this way and the next second the other way. We all did feel that the car was swerving, but none took any particular notice of it. Narendra was quite a picture of confidence holding the steering wheel firmly in both hands. The swerving, however, continued for about two furlongs. And lo! the car suddenly overturned throwing all of us over one another. It had more or less turned turtle near the brink of the road just beyond which was a *khud*, about 5 to 6 feet deep, full of water. The front screen together with the steel frame flew off and fell nearly 20 feet away on the road without, however, the glass being broken. The dicky of the car broke down and the entire luggage, including

* Readers are invited to send their experiences to the Editor or to the Compiler.

suitcases, beddings and tiffin carrier etc. went flying away and lay scattered on the road. The luggage carrier also went off from the top of the car and fell at some distance. The engine caught fire while the car with its two wheels raised in air lay on the road on its left side so that the left-hand side-doors were completely blocked by the ground.

But the overturning of the car was so slow and gentle that we all felt as if we had just turned on our sides in bed. One by one we came out of the car through the new exit made possible by the flying away of the front screen while the engine was still on fire. As we crept out, almost all of us smiled spontaneously and gratefully because to our pleasantest surprise none of us had received even a scratch or a bruise. Looking at the smashed overturned car and then looking at ourselves, we could not help laughing.

Did we laugh at the utter failure and defeat of the forces which had dared attack and harm the children of the Mother who carried with them Her gracious blessings ?

I tried vainly to read or detect signs of shock in the visage of Dayawati, my wife, who is generally very nervous and afraid while travelling in the car, in the face of Purnima, still in her teens, and in the face of the little kid, Victor. But no, none of them, and for that matter, none of the rest of the party, including Narendra who sat behind the steering during the fateful journey, betrayed even the slightest sign of fear or alarm or nervousness. The way all were calm added to the magnificence of the miracle.

The scene of this frightful accident had, in the meantime, attracted some passers-by with whose help we brought the car back to its normal position. But no sooner were all the four wheels back on the ground than the car suddenly moved backward on the slope and fell into the *khud*. None of us was standing behind.

Leaving Narendra and the driver to look after the car, the rest of us left for Madras, which was hardly 16 miles ahead, in a public transport. A few hours later came another Ashram car by which Sri Keshavdev Poddar and Sri Him-matsingka and others were travelling to Madras. This car picked us up in Madras and brought us back to Pondicherry—to the feet of the Mother.

Throughout our journey to Madras and then to Pondicherry, after the accident, we kept on laughing. Yes, laughing at the stupidity and futility of the Asuric forces which were perhaps unaware that the Mother had sent, I might say, a number of gods with us even though our journey was so brief and simple. Each god had a specific duty to perform in this wonderful demonstration of the Mother's powers.

Thus the first god was there to control and halt all traffic on the road for the time during which our car was swerving, thus eliminating the horrible possi-

MOTHER INDIA

bility of our car colliding against any other passing vehicle. Otherwise how was it that for about a minute or two while our car was dangerously swerving, and until it ultimately overturned, not a single vehicle or even a pedestrian passed that way—on such a busy highway ?

The second god saw to it that the process of overturning was so slow and gentle as not to cause any of us even a violent jerk. In addition, this god was also there to see that the overturning car did not go farther than the road-edge.

God Number Three was in charge of providing the emergency exit and he did a splendid job of it by making the opening from the front through which everyone of us came out without the least inconvenience.

And yet another god kept the fire under control—until we had got out of the car. He did not allow the engine fire to flare up or burst out.

And then there was the fifth god who brought another Ashram car which drove us back to the blessed abode of the Mother.

The next day, the Mother sent for Narendra and the automobile engineer of the Ashram, Abhaya Singh, and, with a handbook on the Hindustan Land-master in her hand, held a small conference wanting to know the reasons of the accident. I guess that the Mother meant to investigate what Asuric power was the mischief-maker behind the material circumstances.

Before my departure from Pondicherry, the Mother, while showering Her blessings, had given me a flower as a token of them. I now looked at it intently, and discovered that it was the flower of GRACE.

SURENDRA NATH JAUHAR

LUCKY ACCIDENT

My daughter had been living in the Ashram at Pondicherry, since we first visited the Ashram in 1954. Before leaving for Central Africa I wished her to spend a few days at our village.

I went to the Ashram in November 1956 to fetch her and, before leaving, we had the Mother's Blessings.

As we wanted to come back before the November Darshan Day, I asked a relative of mine to take us in his car to the station, which is 7 miles away from the village. When we had reached half way the car suddenly stopped. He tried his best to get the machine moving but failed. In the meanwhile, the intended train left the station. We decided to go by the next day's train.

And we did travel the next day. On reaching Pondicherry on the Darshan Day, we heard the news that the train in which we had intended to travel had met with a dangerous accident. Our relatives at the village thought we had been on that train and were much worried. They sent somebody to find

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

out what actually had happened. When he found we were living in the Ashram he was surprised.

It was through the Mother's Grace that we were saved by the breakdown of the car which was to take us to the station in time for the ill-fated train.

PREMILABEN B. PATEL

GRACE WITHIN GRACE

One afternoon I sat up to read in the *Mother India* of December 5, 1959, the article : "The Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother." I was so deeply moved that it created in me reverberations of gratitude to the Master and the Mother. When I recovered from the immensity of them, I found it was already 3.15 p.m. My God ! lost in the Grace, I had forgotten to attend my Professor's lecture on Eliot's "The Burial of the Dead" in *The Waste Land*, which was to begin at 3 p.m. "Did Grace fail me or did I fail it ?" This was the first thought that struck me. Then came second thoughts : "Well, let me give a fair man's chance to the Grace. If, by some freak, the lecture has not yet begun, I can still attend and get the benefit."

With this thought I rushed up to the Lecture Hall and found to my disappointment that the lecture had started. Then the faith in me said, "What if the lecture has started ? Still there are 40 minutes to go (it was 3.20 p.m.). Why don't you profit by them ?" To this the sceptic in me came up with his objection and resistance : "My boy, you will be disturbing the harmony of the class if you intrude in the middle." It was at this time that the third thought (not thoughts !) sprang from my mind : "Come what may, get into the class." I invoked the peace of the Mother, took courage in both hands and managed to enter. There was, to my surprise, absolutely no reaction to my intrusion. To my greater surprise and even wonder, I found that the lecture on Eliot had not begun after all ! The Professor was doing the concluding part of his lecture on Middle English (which, of course, I had not intended to hear) and the one on Eliot was to follow. Needless to say, I attended the whole lecture and enjoyed it exceedingly.

Only that night I could realise (I had known it before, but only yesterday I could realise it) that the Grace of the Divine is for those who wait without hope. Before going to bed, I prayed to the Mother in the aspiration that the sceptic in me might be educated and, then in the words of Eliot,

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope.

I hope this letter of mine does not come as too much of an anti-climax to that article in *Mother India*.

S. KANDASWAMI

(Compiled by HAR KRISHAN SINGH)

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM—A SYMBOL OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of Decembr 5, 1959)

PRANAM

(1)

“PHYSICAL means (like darshan and touch in the Pranam) can be and are used in the approach to divine love and worship; they have not been allowed merely as a concession to human weakness, nor is it the fact that in the psychic way there is no place for such things. On the contrary, they are one means of approaching the Divine and receiving the Light and materialising the psychic contact, and so long as it is done in the right spirit and they are used for the true purpose they have their place. It is only if they are misused or the approach is not right because tainted by indifference and inertia, or revolt or hostility, or some gross desire, that they are out of place and can have a contrary effect—as the Mother has always warned people and has assigned it as the reason why she does not like lightly to throw them open to everyone.”

(2)

“No one should look upon the Pranam either as a formal routine or an obligatory ceremony or think himself under any compulsion to come there. The object of the Pranam is not that sadhaks should offer a formal or ritual daily homage to the Mother, but that the sadhaks may receive along with the Mother’s blessings whatever spiritual help or influence they are in a condition to receive or assimilate. It is important to maintain a quiet and collected atmosphere for that purpose.”

(3)

“If you attach any value to the Darshan it is better to be *recueilli*. If her coming is only one incident of the day’s routine like taking dinner, then of course it does not matter.”

(4)

“The best way for Darshan is to keep oneself very collected and quiet and open to receive whatever the Mother gives.”

(5)

“It (the wish to make pranam to others) is a wrong suggestion from somewhere. It is very necessary not to take the attitude of pranam to others or to give even in thought a place at all approaching or similar to the Mother’s.”

(6)

“Mother’s contact is there all the day and the night also. If one keeps the right contact with her inwardly all day, the Pranam will bear its right fruit, for you will be in the right condition to receive. To make the whole day depend upon the Pranam, the whole inner attitude depend on the most outer aspect of the outer contact is to turn the whole thing topsy-turvy. It is the fundamental mistake made by the physical mind and vital which is the cause of the whole trouble.”

SRI AUROBINDO

In 1926 pranam and meditation used to take place upstairs just in front of the room which afterwards the Mother utilised for darshan. The Mother would be on the seat which is still there and the sadhaks sat semi-circling her. After meditation, personal interviews would begin and they would last till 12.

From that time onward this hall has been known as the Meditation Hall. The number of sadhaks was nearing 70. When the number increased, the Mother began to come down. Downstairs, in the beginning the pranam started in the small room which is now occupied by Bula; afterwards it was shifted to the verandah just below the hall on the first floor. Now this came to be known as the Meditation Hall. Some call it the Pranam Hall.

During the meditation, various experiences came to the sadhaks. After one occasion, a sadhak wrote : “To-day while meditating in the Pranam Hall I saw that from a sky filled with blue light a beautifully paved path was coming down to earth, and the Mother was slowly descending along this path. The Mother’s entire body was of white and golden light which was spreading out on all sides. When the Mother reached the end of the path and came down on earth her body got mixed with the earth. Then I suddenly woke up from meditation. Was this a vision ? What does it signify ?

MOTHER INDIA

The Master sent the reply : "Yes, it is a vision from the plane of mind (not ordinary, but higher mind). It indicates the descent of the Mother with the light of purity and truth (white and golden) into Matter."

After the Siddhi Day of November 24, 1926, there used to be meditation four times a day. The morning meditation finished by 7 a.m. After the interviews which lasted till noon, the Mother came down and fed a cat, called Bushy, with bread and milk kept in a bowl where at present there is the notice-board. In the evening, on her return at 7 p.m. she would open the cover of a soup-pan and give a cup to each of those present after herself taking a sip. At first, the soup was distributed in the verandah of the Prosperity Hall. Then in 1927 it was brought down into the Reception Room.

The sadhaks gathered there and sat in meditation. The light was dim. The Mother first went to the Prosperity Room upstairs. A few sadhaks, about two dozen, would be with her. Talk on several subjects went on : some of it is reported in *The Words of the Mother, Series III*. At times there would be little games meant to quicken the faculty of intuition. Prizes were given in the form of chocolates. Occasionally the talk took a humorous turn and all laughed happily.

After an hour or so the Mother came down to the Soup Room. A cauldron of hot soup would be put in front of her. She went into deep meditation and after a while, although her eyes were still shut, her arms stretched out over the cauldron, as if blessing it or pouring spiritual power into it. Then her eyes would open and sadhak after sadhak went with his cup to her. She poured the soup into it, took it up to her lips, then gave it to the sadhak. At this time she would be in half meditation. Often she would be completely lost in the inner consciousness and hold the cup empty or half-filled or completely filled. Suddenly she would emerge from the trance or inner vision and, with a smile, continue her work.

The introduction of the soup was quite a new thing in the long history of the spiritual sadhana of India. There is a deeper and inner meaning as to why it was introduced just after the great *siddhi* of November 24, 1926 and it had its immediate effect upon those who could receive it but it is a pity that we could not assimilate the effect.

Its significance is thus described by the Master :

"The soup was instituted in order to establish a means by which the sadhak might receive something from the Mother by an interchange in the material consciousness."

Between the end of 1926 and the end of 1927, the Mother was trying to bring down the Overmind gods into our beings. But the *adhars* were not ready to bear them; on the contrary there were violent reactions though some had

very good experiences. There was a sadhak whose consciousness was so open that he could know what the Mother and the Master were talking about. One sadhak would get up while meditating and touch the centre of obstruction in someone else's body. There were others who thought that the Supermind had descended into them. One or two got mentally unbalanced because of inability to stand the pressure. So the whole procedure of the sadhana had to be changed. The Mother stopped giving soup with her own hands and it lost its special and spiritual significance. But for the sake of health it is still given to those who need it. First it was given from the Ashram dispensary. Now it is distributed in the Dining Room. A Scottish sadhika gives it.

In 1930-32 sadhaks used to offer pranams to the Mother in the morning and she used to come for a walk on the terrace in the evening. In the hope of seeing the Mother some sadhaks started standing on the road in front of the Balcony in the morning. There was a sadhika who would not take her food without seeing the Mother. Slowly the number began to increase. This was how the Balcony Darshan began. Since its beginning there have been many changes in its timings, but it has never stopped. Due to the pressure of work or other engagements the Mother would sometimes come at 10 or 11 a.m. or even after 12 but some of us would remain waiting on the footpath. At present she comes punctually at 6.15 a.m. After that starts the daily routine of the Ashram.

Naresh Bahadur writes in the *Pioneer of Supramental Age*, about the Balcony Darshan:

“Every custom, even a ritual, grows stale by repetition. But the Balcony Darshan is an ever-new ever-revealing phenomenon. For all is perennial freshness at Spirit level. The physical dawn that unrolls the broad canvas of the light of common day for the creature-kind is followed at the Ashram by a spiritual sunrise for the creators—big and small—of a new world out of the old.”

In 1932/33 pranam used to start at 6.30 in the morning. From 6 a.m. the sadhaks would pour into the Ashram. When the Meditation Hall would get filled with the fumes of resin, incense-sticks and sandalwood, it would appear as if the concentrated aspiration of the sadhaks was rising high in order to bring about more and more the descent of peace surcharging the whole atmosphere of the place.

In those days many of the sadhaks had long hair. Taking their bath before sunrise and allowing their hair to spread on the back the sadhaks would rush towards the meditation hall. A poet might say that it was as if various rivers were flowing to meet the sea. At that time there was no hair-cutting service in the Ashram. No one liked to go to the market and allow his body to be touched by an outsider for this purpose.

MOTHER INDIA

The Mother would be in a sari put on in the Indian style and would sit with her legs crossed. Each of us would offer his pranam, placing his head at her feet and receiving her blessings. To some she gave her blessing by putting both her hands on their heads. A dish of flowers remained at her right side, artistically decorated. After Blessings she gave a flower to each. It took an hour and a half. What we used to receive with our pranams in those days is still fresh in our minds.

Regarding the significance of the Mother's giving flowers, when a question was put—"What is the significance of the Mother's giving us flowers at pranam every day?"—the answer came from Sri Aurobindo: "It is meant to help the realisation of the thing the flower stands for."

To another question—"Are flowers mere symbols and nothing more? Can the flower symbolising silence, for example, help in the realisation of silence?"—the Master replied: "It is when the Mother puts her force into the flower that it becomes more than a symbol. It then can become very effective if there is receptivity in the one who receives."

The number of sadhaks in those days was nearing a hundred. Each had his own fixed seat in the hall. Newcomers used to sit in the open space in front of the hall. It was a time when the sadhana of each of us was under the direct care of the Mother. The smallness of the number of the sadhaks enabled the Mother to keep each one personally within her consciousness and attend to his individual needs in the most direct manner.

Before the pranam the sadhaks would meditate, sitting in a semi-circle about the Mother for only two or three minutes but one could feel some divine power entering the body, and its action would continue the whole day. Those who could not join in the meditation because of work would feel its influence from their working-places and know that the Mother had come down and the meditation had started. Their intuition was corroborated on several occasions by inquiry afterwards.

A question was put to the Master: "I feel that when the Mother comes down to give meditation in the Meditation Hall, the atmosphere of the Hall extends to all the Ashram houses. Am I right in my feeling?"

The answer came: "It is natural that it should be so as the Mother, when she concentrates on the inner work, is accustomed spontaneously to spread her Consciousness over the whole Ashram. So to anyone who is sensitive, it must be felt anywhere in the Ashram, though perhaps more strongly in the nearer houses on an occasion like the evening meditation."

(to be continued)

NARAYANPRASAD

WORLD—LITERATURE

III

WE shall now try to probe to the bottom the question why the literature which we call plebeian or popular cannot form the best literature. The reason we have indicated is that such literature is exclusively confined to a particular time and clime ; the free air of the world, the myriad waves of the vast cosmic life have no play there, it does not see man and creation in the perspective of the universe as a whole. That is not the sole reason of the matter, but we should clearly understand the deeper implication of this thing. For universal feeling does not necessarily mean cosmopolitanism. It is not true that a literature must be beautiful and sublime simply because it has connection and acquaintance with all the ages and countries and that it will be parochial precisely because it lacks these things. Cosmopolitanism is a thing especially of the modern age. In the days of yore there was not that close association and exchange of culture among different countries as we now find. It was not possible for our forefathers to know and assimilate the gifts of other civilisations as we can do now. But who would merely on this ground dare to say that the literature of the ancient peoples was unrefined or insignificant ? A Turgeniev, an Amiel, a Leconte de Lisle or a Pierre Loti can take birth only in the present age. Dante, Homer, Valmiki or the most ancient Vedic sages—none of them, like Turgeniev, Amiel, Leconte de Lisle or Pierre Loti, sought for the tales of various other ages and countries, and yet have these modern poets and littérateurs been able to create anything similar to that standard world-literature ?

The sense of universality means transcending the limitations of time and clime. Now, the main reason why man remains confined to a particular time and clime is this that he clings to a particular avocation or religion or institution—his very nature is to live within the confines of time and space. External life (life of the outside world)—that is to say, mixing with men of various countries, acquaintance and intimacy with the experiences and realisations of the different countries and epochs—can and do break and melt the narrowness to a considerable degree but cannot remove it altogether. For what is required is to cast a look at ourselves, to change something of our inner nature. One who has not been able to change this inner attitude will not get any genuine universality or all-pervading sovereignty even if he travels over the whole

world. So what is required is to discover the universal soul in the heart and not outside. And, for that, three boundaries have to be crossed, three walls overleaped and this also in our inner being, in our inner chamber. The Vedic sage Shunahshepa says that the God Varuna has three knots and they have to be cut away : then and then alone man will ascend to the infinite wideness of Varuna and will get the limitless and unfathomable ocean of delight of Eternal Life. And what are these three knots ? They are the knots of the Body, the Vital and the Mind. For the poets and littérateurs too there are three similar knots. First, the knot of the body, that is to say, the physical sight, mere perception of the senses—to accept that which is external as absolute truth and to draw a picture of the outer form visible to the eyes and palpable by the senses. In literature it has been termed ‘realism’. A thing must be shown exactly as it is seen with the physical eyes : this means that art is a photograph of nature, and it is the principle of ‘realism’. We can express in one word the objections that have been or may be raised against ‘realism’ : it has neither given nor can give birth to true or universal literature. For where do we find the universe, the whole ? That is not in the external, not in the body. What is exclusively external, what is merely a body is only a narrow field of differences and divisions and strifes. True, there is some concrete union or harmony of the universe. But so long as we remain bound to the body we cannot get a gleam of that thing. This is as much the case with the aspirant soul as with the artist. The artist who is engrossed with the exterior is compelled to be confined to a particular time and space. He is only archaeological in his outlook. He is likely to collect some materials for art but he himself cannot create anything of his own. The paintings of Ravi Varma can never be placed in the comity of the world, for we find there only the outer sheath, devoid of life. No doubt, that sheath may awaken some curiosity for its grotesqueness but never can it touch the heart. If Zola or Goncourt deserves a place in the assembly of nations, then I believe it is not for ‘realism’ but for something else, although ‘realism’ is in abundance there.

Therefore the idealist has put up a brave fight against the realist. The place of union of the universe is not in the body, but in the emotion of the vital being and the heart. Likewise vitalism stands over against materialism, and idealism or romanticism over against realism and naturalism. Bergson *contra* Haeckel, Paul Verlaine *contra* Guy de Maupassant and Théophile Gautier. But it does not mean that we shall arrive at the true universal literature if we solely cling to idealism, the vital being or emotion. True, the vital being is above the body, and the creation has been extended and liberted to a great extent in it, but the universal is not met even here. The vital being is the second bondage of man. The poetry that has been created or based exclusively on

the vital or the emotional stuff is clumsy and disorderly. There we find too much of the personality, the idiosyncrasy and fancy of the particular individual. Naturally it cannot bear the message of the vast universal life-force. The poet who is a slave of his emotional impulse must perforce live in the imaginative circle of his own temporary experience—his ego, the knot of his heart—and consider the narrow compass of his surrounding and time as vast and gigantic. The universe, the universal does not get a chance to be reflected in him. He can at best be a poet of a particular sect, of a group or limited collectivity.

So we find in literature another ideal which seeks to remove all the mist, the narrow horizon of the heart and emotions and stand supported by the mind and intelligence. And this ideal aims at a quiet and steady purity and wideness of thought. It is not possible for lawlessness, impurity, strife and narrowness to exist in the domain of thought in the same measure as it is possible in that of the vital being and the emotions. When we ascend to this domain we find a natural indifference or aloofness ; we find a poise in a wider and freer world overriding the boundaries of an ignorant ego and a bounded personality. In the ancient literatures—such as Greek, Latin and Sanskrit—there is no such emotionalism as indulged, for example, by the Romantics, nothing of that indiscriminate and uncontrolled, that dark and confused passion, born of rajasic inspiration. The main theme of those ancient literatures is ‘objective personality’, and so, wideness, vastness and universality are natural to them. In other words, a vitalistic literature is not classical literature ; classicism and the classics bring in higher terms of literary creation. But is that the highest ?

We say, “No.” Intellect may anoint the body of literature with a kind of *sattwic* quality, poise and grace ; it may even make it rich with a diversity of manner and theme, yet this *sattwic* quality, this largeness and elevation, often lack what may be called depth and substance. Here we may get something of the rich smiling surface of the ocean, but not the real vastness, the infinity of the cosmic creation, its immeasurability. The literature which is formed with the help of thought and mental discernment, brain-power and intellectual skill may be, as we have already said, classical, it is not classic—it is not *world-literature* ; it cannot focus and show the universal Muse, the figure of the cosmic beauty. It may at best give the frame-work of world-literature and never the inner *élan vital*, the secret soul of world-literature. For the sole function of intellect is to place a thing in a systematic form and not to discover or reveal anything. Intellect and intelligence play with the materials touched by the senses and concretely felt by the heart. So, in the action of intellect, there is always a sense of division, want and deficiency—elements that are inherent in the gross senses and emotions upon which the intellect is based after all. In

fact, the very function of the intellect is to see things divided and separated. It sees and understands the universe by analysing it, dissecting it. It fails to see the whole thing all at once, that is to say, simultaneously. It can never grasp the whole in a vast unity. Discerning intellect is, as the Upanishad says, a golden cover on the face of Truth, it cannot reveal the Truth in its reality, what it shows is a mere similitude or semblance of the Truth, its external grandeur, a remote expression of the Truth, and its divided and scattered rays. We can, of course, with the aid of intelligence form a workable acquaintance with the world. But that is not a true union. Based upon that ground alone classicism may easily become a store-house of lucid and decorative words and moral lessons, but it would find it extremely difficult to bring out the secret of things, the profound oneness with the universe. It is a very superficial judgment to say that the influence of the intellectual faculty, the power of quiet intelligence, is what made the Greek, Latin, Sanskrit literatures classics. A deeper light and power dwelling behind this intellectual faculty is the source of the glory of the ancient classics ; the intellectual faculty is only an outer robe of that inner spirit.

The Body, the Life and the Mind are only externals. What is exclusively physical, vital or mental is mainly a field of difference, for it is a field of the finite. The Soul alone is the inner reality. And nothing but the Soul is the centre of the universe. The diversity and manifold particularities in the creation have their oneness and a vast and concrete harmony in the Soul. And if we realise this Soul we can easily and without fail embrace the universe. When That is known everything is known. In other words, not the gross perception of the senses, nor the impulse of emotions nor even the dexterity of thought but a divine vision or revelation is needed to create world-literature. This literature is neither realistic nor romantic nor even classical; it is revelatory. A particular thing when seen through revelation or divine vision no longer remains partial ; it becomes integral, no more particular but universal. Time, place and subject become then embodiments of the Law of the Infinite, of the Rhythm of the all-encompassing Self, for it is only revelation, direct vision that can give the quintessence of all truths, the profoundest beauty of all the beauties.

Even in the body, in the perception of the gross physical senses, there is a profound Truth, a supernal Beauty, a universal Form. There is a universality also in the vital being and the emotions. A higher grandeur, a greater dimension of the universe is reflected in the powers of the mind and intellect. But that universal revelation of which we speak is not the proper characteristic of mind, vitality and body ; there is only an approach, a shadow, often a deformation of the Self in these fields. It is not that these lesser instruments are

WORLD-LITERATURE

to be neglected in the creation of world-literature. But they are to be seen from a higher, a transcendent plane. It is for this reason Kalidasa, a poet of physical joy and sensual pleasure, Valmiki, a poet of vital feeling and enchantment of the heart, and Vyasa, a poet of intellect and thinking power, are poets of all ages and countries.

We were dealing with the natural and the genuine in literature. That alone is real literature which sees a thing—whatever it may be—in the great words of Spinoza, *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the figure of Eternity. This is the fundamental principle, the bedrock of real literature or of world-literature. *Sub specie aeternitatis*—even a little of this saving factor saves us from a great peril. In the stark realism of a Balzac or in the winging romanticism of a Victor Hugo, or in the poised classicism of a Leconte de Lisle we get a glimpse of this very thing. That is why with all the defects we feel that the sleeping Brahman is, as it were, astir in them ; that a cosmic life-force, a generous universal breath sways by in their creation, and we do not hesitate to hail them as poets of the world.

The same thing holds good with regard to the literature of a particular nation. It is not true that poetry sweet and enthralling, the magic of the ballads, is not known to the Maoris or the Santals or the Bhils. If we leave aside the case of these uncivilised aboriginals, we come everywhere across a decent class of literature among the cultured and civilised peoples. But it is to be questioned whether that literature can be called a world-literature or, even if it be so, then to what extent ? Further, it has to be seen whether the poet there has been able to go beyond the reality of physical facts, the grandeurs of emotions or the dexterities of thought and has seen the thing—his time and space and subject—*sub specie aeternitatis*, with the lofty vision of the Soul of the divine poet, of the god Varuna, that surpasses the immediate and the superficial, whether he has been able to raise the natural object to its supra-natural prototype.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the original Bengali in “Sahityika”)

TRANSLATORS NOTE

TAGORE'S VIEW ON THE AUTHOR OF *Sahityika*

1936. Tagore strongly felt for the adorers of Bengali literature with no University degrees. To this end, he asked Dr. D.M. Sen¹, the then Principal

¹ The present Secretary of the Bengal Educational Department.

of Santiniketan to draw up a syllabus for a Degree Examination¹ for such men. Sri Sisir Kumar Mitra, the author of *The Liberator Sri Aurobindo*, who was then the Professor of History at Santiniketan and used to assist Mr. Sen informally, included *Sahityika* by Nolini Kanta Gupta and *Bharater Nava Janma*², a translation work by the same author, in the list of books selected for the purpose. Rabindranath was very much impressed by this inclusion and enquired if Sri Mitra had any personal acquaintance with the author of *Sahityika*. The Professor answered in the negative and admitted that he knew Nolini Kanta Gupta indirectly in connection with the Literature and the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. Thereupon Tagore remarked, "The Author of *Sahityika* has made a unique contribution to Bengali literature."

And as regards *Bharater Nava Janma*, as the original is a work of Sri Aurobindo and must have been ably rendered by Nolini Kanta Gupta, he said he had no need to go through it. He further added that such achievements on the part of Nolini Kanta Gupta were no wonder to him, for he was in the closest touch with a Master like Sri Aurobindo.

¹ An organisation called "The Association for Popular Education"

² *The Renaissance in India* by Sri Aurobindo.

METEORS AND FIREFLIES

WE may have long since ceased to be attracted by the mischievous or the wicked, yet still there remains for us with an even greater appeal the charms of the good.

But should we hasten to embrace Him in another, it is only to find that we have clutched at the shadow and the sweetness again has eluded us.

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A truer and wider sense of values admits to view something that seems comical about self-conceit, pride and arrogance.

Cinema-films of last-war 'goose-stepping' Nazis or dramatic dagger-hoisting Fascists were wont to produce in adult audiences not the anticipated awe and respect, but simply gales of mirth and laughter.

For after a certain point they ceased to impress and became amusingly absurd and grotesque.

Something theatrical, artificial, had given them an air of cheap bravado and reduced them to the status of naughty children—or dangerous clowns.

★

★

There is too a pride of understanding, an intellectual arrogance that is enamoured of its uniqueness, and partakes of the comical. Convinced of its superiority and distinction it struts like a peacock possessed of two tails and glances with disdain or condescension at its dun-coloured fellows.

★

★

When others 'hurt' us, it may be to remind us that we have no right to living in so vulnerable, exposed and shallow a place as our only too-human feelings.

★

★

Callousness is often a hard crust which we wear for self-defence. But, alas like the too-careful tortoise we grow one with our shell; while the soul, whose

MOTHER INDIA

real nature is tenderness, groans and struggles under the heavy and needless weight.

★

★

Brain-men there are a-plenty, as well as brawn-men, but the weary heart of the world longs for her soul and spirit-men, with brain and brawn at their service.

★

★

We fail to claim the All as our own, because we fear to lose the little we have and are. Blind beggars at a feast, we content ourselves with familiar crumbs and leave untouched the gorgeous repast.

★

★

Restlessness, dissatisfaction, discontent spring from our attempt to satisfy our thirst for the ocean of infinite love, from the tea-cup of finite pleasures.

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★

The arrow of self-will doubtless flies truer when it has strong and admirable feathers in its shaft. But whither its purpose unless it be aimed at the Divine target ?

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★

To have youth without the Divine is a waste, to have age without the Divine a tragedy.

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★

One of the greatest of graces is to comprehend the inestimable value of Divine Grace.

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★

When Culture is employed not for the development of the soul but merely for the aggrandisement of the ego, it takes its revenge by making its abuser effete, theatrical, artificial.

METEORS AND FIREFLIES

The truly cultured are never conscious of 'their' culture any more than the truly good are conscious of 'their' goodness.

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Our wonted evaluations of others reveal our own inner values. The intellectual asks, "How much does he know?"; the humanist, "What is he like?"; the status-lover, "How important is he?"; the athlete, "What are his dimensions?"; and the truth-seeker, "Has he seen God?"

When we would prefer a retirist mode in our Yoga, we are often by circumstance compelled to an outer action or exposed vocation; if we desire some external work we are often obliged to retire.

God's will for us may not be to our nature's liking, but ever to our soul's good.

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We make all-important mental pictures of ourselves and say: "This I am." We make mental pictures of others and then declare: "I know them." We fashion the whole universe to our liking and insist: "It is so." Thus do we nestle in a self-made world of tints and shades and shirk the bright resplendence of the truth we seek.

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Lest we watch, we swiftly adorn ourselves with the external seemings of an interior Grace, and deal like busy tradesmen in pretty appearances. Skilful enough, we might win the esteem of men, but God's work in us is made more difficult by our laborious vanity.

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The "vital" often feels itself to be omnipotent when it is merely irrepresible; the mind, possessed of a few facts, fancies itself omniscient. So it is that the rash spirit must be broken and humbled before it be made whole again.

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There is about the truly spiritual something that always perplexingly eludes us until at last we possess it in ourselves: the spirit of God.

GODFREY

ON THE ASHRAM'S MUSICAL CLOCKS

THERE was an elegiac sadness
'In 'time passing away'—
Autumnal premonitions
Woke melancholy.

The clocks' mechanical heartless
Ticks measured the day,
Made mordant prescriptions
For gaiety.

Yet here I notice gladness;
When clocks chime they say
How each quarter occasions
Peaceful melody.

For now time serves the timeless;
As our fourth aid it may
Lead in spring seasons.
Time is no enemy.¹

DICK BATSTONE

¹ "Yogaa-siddhi, the perfection that comes from the practice of Yoga, can be best attained by the combined working of four great instruments...Last comes the instrumentality of Time.."—Sri Aurobindo, "The Four Aids", *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

REVELATION

WHAT a boon that the flight had attained at last
New depths as it touched that golden height,
And woke in the rays of truth condensed
And the death of a dreary dreaming might !

When that smiling glance was richly showered
For the inmost search of the thirsty eye,
A spate was perceived and the sense had guessed
It would water those sands that for ages were dry.

The screeching stride had been counselled patience,
For a place was reserved in the path of Light;
And someone knew what Time was to mould,
He read long before what a pen would write.

The mind was set for exploits harmonious
That draw up a flower from the fury of a thorn;
And gradually the gloom its form was changing
And Bliss in a timeless moment was born.

My life with a violent struggle was endowed
To become from the danger of death immune,
And as it jumped in Thy orange flame
A flute was playing an immortal tune.

The last word the climbing play had uttered
Was woven in the first revelation of the sky,
And the widening regions of the being had the powers
The earth from its deep-laid sins to sanctify.

SHIV SHARAN DIKSHIT

SHE

STAY thou the same,
Met at the cross-roads of life's deviation,
Stay the same, I entreat.

Crossed have I the verdure lands,
The hills and dales of slumbering noon-tide spring
And "glimmer of the green glades"
Caressed my levitant wings.
Suffered have I with thirst unquenched
In "dreary desert sand of dead habit",
In its flaming horizon of brown aridity.
I paused not in my flight;
I looked not back with pious yearning.

Shot with delicate but sure hands
From Diana's silvery bow,
Or shooting as a spark from Apollo's flashing spirit,
That impetuous Sun-God of wild felicity,
I have known no defeat.

Immortal am I in body's mortality,
A formless form pressing through birth and death;
O Maiden! Thou fragile and pale vision of a waning moon,
Known have I thee since Eternity.

A Vow and a Spirit thou art,
And not a mere Body alone;
Thou art a Mission and an Idea,
An unrevealed Mystery clasped in Time's silent cavern,
I read the language of eternity on thy brooding brow,
And lose my pathways in thy deep dark eyes
Sad with sadness at life's crudity.
Incarnate Angel, thou entraptured Form inexplicable,

SHE

What "Word" or "Sound" awaits and flickers through centuries
On thy pale mysterious lips
Aspiring to utter the unutterable?
A moving vision in white with steps silent,
A figure and a symbol
Caught in the labyrinth of rhapsodies,
Whither dost thou hazard thy crimsoned feet
In my vibrant heart's virginity?
Stay, Oh Maid! Stay where thou art,
Stay the same and let me adore.

Under the glimmering edges of myriad clouds,
Thronged and crowded on the brink of space,
Beyond the blue horizon, not for man to compass,
We meet again with destiny, thou and I.
Supreme is this moment,
A point and a speck in Eternity.
I entreat thee, Oh fleeting Form,
Change not awhile and across the distance
Let me love.

ABUL KASEM

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(22)

VI. AGONY OF SEPARATION

4. IF THOU MUST KEEP THYSELF AWAY

IF Thou must keep Thyself away from me,
If farness be the means of Thy Compassion,
For long-drawn years if Thy Grace wimpled be,
If Thy so stern but wisdom-willed evasion
Be the condition of Thy love to act,
O Mother, to Thee I leave my destiny
Without one effort to complain, deflect
One inch, one moment from my will to see
Thee face to face when hour of Thy own sweet
Supreme Command draws near and make me free
To drink at the summits of Thy golden Feet
The nectar of Thy immortality.

5. O LEAVE ME NOT !

THOU, who first lit my heart to upward flame,
Who entered my night when masses lay asleep,
Brought me to cheer and bloom from waters deep,
Unscriptured glory be unto Thy Name!
Why chocest me to play Thy sombre game
If suddenly Thou must leave Thy child to creep
In somnolence and stumble on the steep
Away from Thy light-passioned Love, my aim ?
Let not Thy promise be but moment's dream;
Tunnel is dark, life short, keep me ever nigh.
Thy look, thy smile are manna to my soul,
Thy breath my being, touch solace, steps path-beam.
Eternity must be spanned before I die,
O leave me not till I attain Thy whole.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

RABINDRANATH: A RECENT COME-O

PERHAPS it was Sarojini Naidu who said on Rabindranath's death that he would live on as a legend. He had already become a legend to most of his junior contemporaries who had come to love him as a poet and were not a little struck by his remarkable appearance. Very few really knew anything definite about Rabindranath the man. Had he not himself declared in one of his early poems, "Do not imagine, my fond readers, that the poet is anything like what you are apt to guess from all that has appeared in his songs"?

This was partly because Tagore was a supreme humourist and he remained so all his life. He loved to mystify and have a good hearty laugh. We all know of the pranks he played in his callow days when he began "publishing" under the pseudonym of Bhanusingha—a medieval version of his ultra-modern name which carries the same sense—a number of "old" poems in the language and style of the Vaishnava poets of Bengal, and how after the scholars had got slightly excited over this new "discovery" he came out with the report that the poems were his. His readers know too how in his great masterpiece in prose which he called "The Last Poem", he makes the hero denounce in no uncertain language the "puerilities of your Rabindranath" who was impossibly old-fashioned. He loved to make a joke and was somewhat anxious that he should not be taken for a "Durvasa or the god of death" simply because he had cultivated a long beard.

This aspect of Tagore's life has recently been brought out with great charm and simplicity by a close companion of his latter days, one who stood in the relation of a daughter to the poet. Mrs. Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis, known to the poet's circle as "Rani", presents a beautiful cameo of Tagore in her recent book of travels with the poet in South India. The book is written in Bengali and is entitled *Kabir sange Dakshmatye*¹ (*With the Poet through South India*). Here is a cameo which is almost a living portrait. We do not yet have really a first class biography in our Indian languages, nor does this little book of reminiscences pretend to be a full-length picture of the poet. But it lets us into the inner apartments where the poet lived with his intimate friends, and it helps us make the acquaintance of a very charming man. The book is indeed almost Boswellian in its charm, although the author disclaims any right to be considered a "writer".

¹ Published by D M Library, Calcutta, B. S. 1363, (1956). Rs. 2.00.

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This is a treasury of anecdotes, and anecdotes lose their point when torn from their context or summarised in a review. But one or two of these stories about Tagore must be retold. Here is one. One of the poet's companions, C.F. Andrews, had somehow let it be known that the poet was travelling by a particular train from Madras to Coonoor. At every wayside station throughout the night there was a tremendous crowd who insisted on having a "darshan". They came with their flowers and their mangoes and were determined to garland the poet no matter what happened. Tagore finally decided that this was too much of a good thing and had his shutters let down, with the remark, "I have no intention of regaling these people with the edifying spectacle of Rabindranath Tagore eating bananas and toast, with a stoutish lady helping him with the dishes. Let Andrews take the garlands and the fruits since all this has been his own doing." And when Andrews dutifully appeared the next morning, loaded with all the garland tributes of the night, the poet immediately added with a twinkle in his eyes, "Did you make sure there were no girls among the crowd?" Andrews had been an old bachelor.

And here is another. Tagore had just composed one of his famous songs of which the first line ran thus : "*He Madhabi dvidha kano ?*" ("What makes you hesitate, O blossom of the spring ?) He was himself teaching the new song to some of his intimate companions when there appeared on the door-step the lank figure of his personal valet Banamali, nicely balancing in his hands a tray of ice-creams for his master but rather doubtful of the next move. Immediately the poet saw the man he sang out to him the words of his new song with a flourish of his hand : "Why do you hesitate, O you blossom of the spring." The man ran away as fast as he could and the poet's lessons were over for the day.

It is difficult indeed to refrain from quoting the anecdotes which lend the book its charm. An interesting point about the way the poet used to compose his stories must however be mentioned. We are told that many of his well-known stories, including even the wonderful "Last Poem", had not been thought out in advance. They were got up extempore for the benefit of after-dinner listeners, not all of them children, who wanted the poet to "tell them a story." The poet would spin out a tale, and later on, often at the instance of an enchanted hearer, it would be given a literary garb and appear in print in due course. There were many that did not find their way to print because the listeners had not been importunate enough and the poet had been too lazy to write. How many precious gems must have been lost in this manner !

But the thing that lends the book its supreme interest is the account it gives of the poet's visit to Pondicherry. Tagore had been on his way to Europe during the summer of 1928. As his boat touched at the French port, he decided that

he should call on the Master, who on his part extended him the rare privilege of a private interview. It will be recalled that this was in 1928 when Sri Aurobindo saw no one, except on the three Darshan days in the year. This is how the author of these reminiscences describes the poet's visit.

"The poet was very happy to go and we too came along...On reaching the Ashram, he walked straight up the stairs to Sri Aurobindo's rooms...It was nearly an hour before he came down after his conversations. The inmates of the Ashram greeted the poet and accompanied him to the gate. There were just a handful of them, perhaps not more than twenty-five or thirty in all...

"Back on board our ship, the poet remarked, 'I had the surprise of my life as I looked at Aurobindo. He was absolutely radiant. And there was something in his eyes which I am unable to describe. They looked so strange ! I felt he must have received something within himself. One could never appear so radiant otherwise...We met after a long time and it was a delight to see him.'

"This meeting had obviously left a deep mark on the poet's mind. He kept practically to himself the whole day. Throughout the day we found him absorbed in writing something, and whenever we entered the cabin we saw him bent over his desk. He finished writing just before tea. Then he read it out to us. As he concluded, he recited from his Ode of the Swadeshi days : 'Aurobindo, accept thou Rabindra's *namaskara*.' And then he added, 'Today we met after a long time, and once again I took my leave with salutations to him'..."

It might be fitting to close this short account with a few extracts from the poet's own report of the interview which he published in *The Modern Review* of Calcutta¹ soon afterwards :

"For a long time I had a strong desire to meet Aurobindo Ghosh. It has just been fulfilled...At the very first sight I could realise that he had been seeking for the soul and gained it, and through this long process of realisation had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light and his serene presence made it evident to me that his soul was not crippled and cramped to the measure of some tyrannical doctrine which takes delight in inflicting wounds upon life...I said to him, 'You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world, 'Hearken to me'..."

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ July, 1928, pp. 58-60.

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The Runaway and other Stories of Rabindranath Tagore : (Translated from the original Bengali). Published by Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1959. Rs. 5.00.

This is a collection of nine short stories from Tagore rendered for the first time into English and brought out by the publishers as the first volume of a series which will give us a complete set of Tagore's writings in English to mark his Centenary celebrations in 1961.

The translations included in the present volume have been done by various people at various dates and are now presented together in a single volume for the first time. As was inevitable in such a case, they do not always represent Tagore at his best and the translations have been rather uneven in their quality. The Glossary at the end is intended to help the reader over the difficulties of the Indian context.

The stories collected here cover a wide range both in point of time and subject matter. The earliest of them go back to 1892 when the poet had been sent as a young aristocratic dilettante to look after the family estates on the river Padma in East Bengal. The last in the series, a story written in 1933 when the poet had already passed his seventieth birthday, belongs to quite another style. With one other exception, all the stories in this volume were written in the nineties of the last century. This was a period during which the poet came in rather intimate contact with the lowly people who lived on his estates. This was also the time when the countryside of Bengal with its impetuous streams and clouds, its lush woodland and meadows, its mellow sunsets and bright autumnal moon left an indelible mark on the poet's mind and work. Seldom in literature has nature been so intimate with man as in Tagore's stories of this period.

Tagore is at his best when he tells of children. In this particular volume children do not occupy as much space as one might desire. They peep in only once or twice, as in the story of the Runaway and in "Trespass". But we meet here a number of adolescents and youths who make furtive love within the iron gratings of an outworn social edifice : here with Tagore we come across the social iconoclast who reappears often enough in his later drama and poetry.

The patriot in him breaks forth in "Cloud and Sun" and he makes his young revolutionary, born before his time, break the tilts in vain against the unfeeling bureaucrat. In "Hidden Treasure", on the other hand, written amidst

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the din of the hectic Swadeshi days, we find the poet seeking as it were a refuge in the realm of pure fancy; here is a story that reads like a page from Mark Twain. But in sheer beauty and romance and old-world atmosphere there is hardly a match for that old favourite, translated here admirably under the caption of "False Hopes", which talks of the by-gone days of the Mutiny and the Nawabzadi of Badraon who vanished among the mists of an Anglo-Indian Darjeeling...

Taken all in all, this little volume of Tagore's stories will please his admirers. We shall keenly await the subsequent volumes in the series.

SANAT K. BANERJI

SHUNASHEPA'S STORY IN THE "AITAREYA BRĀHMANA" AND ITS SYMBOLISM IN THE "RIGVEDA"

III

THE TYPE OF SPIRITUAL VICTORY ATTAINED BY SHUNASHEPA IN THE "RIGVEDA"

THE essential principles of the theory of Hinduism that govern the evolution and the growth of man through the cycle of the four ages of India's spiritual culture—Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali yugas—which is historical fact have been explained by Sri Aurobindo in his writings. Sri Aurobindo has not fixed the dates and the durations of these ages, but it may be said in general that the cycle began with the Rigvedic Rishis and ended with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the fine flower of Tantric worship : it is said by Hinduism that Tantra is the highest authority and the most powerful spiritual science for God-realisation in the Kaliyuga.

On account of the achievement of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a new cycle has begun with the descent to the earth of a new consciousness called Supramental Truth-consciousness, which is a higher grade of spiritual consciousness than any hitherto possessed by man. If the new cycle that has recently begun can be called the cycle of Supramental Truth, then the old cycle that began with the Rigvedic Rishis and that has just ended can be called the cycle of Intuitive Truth. In the new cycle Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have first achieved Supramental Truth in themselves and have thus paved the way for other aspirants to establish it in their own beings. Likewise at the beginning of the old cycle the Human Fathers, *pitaraḥ manuṣyāḥ*, who are also called the Supreme ancient Fathers, *pitaraḥ parāsaḥ pratnāsaḥ*, the Seven Angirasas along with three others, established through themselves in the earth consciousness the Intuitive Truth which was then a new spiritual consciousness. To practicalise the realisation of Intuitive Truth in mankind they, the Rishis, composed the Creative Word, the Veda Mantra and this was accompanied by a system of sacrifice, both inner and outer, which they themselves followed as a discipline and made others follow. Similarly, to practicalise the realisation of Supramental Truth, first in themselves and through them in others, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother adopted a system of discipline which may be called the method of Transformative Spirituality, *i.e.* the method of a five-fold process : (1) aspiration to the Truth-Consciousness which is

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higher than anything already possessed, (2) its descent into the being of the aspirant, (3) the working of the new descended Truth-Consciousness in the spirit of surrender to the Supreme, (4) the rejection of all ego in the working of it, and (5) the transformation of the whole being, physical, vital, mental in the light of the Truth that has descended. This process of aspiration, descent, surrender, rejection and transformation is followed till the triple transformation, the psychic, the spiritual and the supramental, is completed when alone the final goal of complete transformation is said to be achieved. Ever since they began their Supramental yoga this is how they themselves progressed in transforming their own mind, life and body, and ever since the descent of Supramental Truth into the earth consciousness this is how the individual and the collective man are progressing in the light of that Truth towards the fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo's five world ideals as proclaimed by him on August 15th of 1947. All the visible and invisible events of the world bear witness to this historical fact of the progress of humanity on earth.

The descent of a new principle of consciousness in one or a few individuals is the promise of its descending in more persons and of its manifesting itself through spiritual works on earth. According to the width and height of other aspirants, it may then descend into some in the form of integral perfection of that Truth-principle and in some others it may descend in the form of limited perfection of the same Truth-principle. If greater Rishis like Vasishtha, Atri, Bharadwaja, Visvamitra and others achieved wider and higher perfection of Intuitive Truth, Shunashopa and most other Rishis achieved lesser perfection of the same Truth. The political, social, economic and cultural life and growth of man through the cycle depends more on the integral and limited perfection which these Rishis achieved in themselves in the first stage of the cycle ; it is their achievement that paved the way for its manifestation through the subsequent ages. If a true history of India or even of the whole humanity is to be written we have to know more about the spiritual achievements of the different Rishis in Satya yuga ; it is from these spiritual achievements that all manifestation of works has proceeded in the later ages. The Mandukya Upanishad says : *Kavayah yāni karmāṇi mantrēsu apaśyan tāni tretāyām bahudhā santatāni*, i.e. "works which the sages beheld in the Mantras were in the Treta manifoldly extended" (Sri Aurobindo, *Eight Upanishads*, page, 99). The Rishi in that Upanishad exhorts men "to perform works religiously with one passion for the Truth" and tells them : "this is your road to the heaven of Good deeds" (*Ibid*). What was declared by this Upanishad with regard to the Vedic origin of works in Satya yuga and its manifold extension in the Treta yuga is equally true in essential principle, though with a change of form, in the two other ages that followed.

The Aitareya Brahmana says that on account of the Creative Word that Shunashepa threw out in the form of his seven Suktas, certain new works were made possible for man on earth. It says that if a king who has waged a war and has committed all sorts of sins in the course of the war does not perform any other sacrifice to cancel all his sins but makes priests recite these seven Suktas of Shunashepa he yet gets immune from all those sins. Then again it says that if a person who has no children gets these Suktas recited by priests he begets children. It further says that on account of the recital of the four Mantras, 1-28-5 to 1-28-8, a new method of direct preparation of Soma juice without intermediate fermentation after it is squeezed out was invented. We do not know whether it was only these utilities (viniyogas, as they are called) or more that these Suktas had possessed in the Rigvedic days ; at any rate, these were the utilities of these Suktas in the days of the Aitareya Brahmana itself. That the practice of obtaining these utilities is lost to us now may be due to several reasons. One may be the heaviness of payment to be made to the priests for their recital ; the second may be that the method of accent and the tone of recital are lost and so the Word has lost its physical effectivity, though not its psychological and spiritual effectivity. For these we shall have to examine the original text of the Rigveda itself.

Below is given the translation of these Suktas in terms of psychological and spiritual symbolism with explanations wherever needed.

1-24-1 :—On which of the many immortals, on which god's beautiful name have we to meditate ? Who will deliver us to the great Infinite Mother ? I would like to see Father and Mother.

1-24-2 :—We meditate upon the beautiful name of Fire (God-Will), the first amongst Immortals ; he will deliver us to the great Infinite Mother ; I would like to see Father and Mother.

Notes :—These two Mantras show that Shunashepa is already initiated into the Vedic doctrine, its symbolism and its discipline. Fire is God-Will ; Aditi is the Mother of all the gods and the cosmos ; Father and Mother are either Heaven and Earth, or Soul and Nature.

1-24-3 :—O God, ever-protecting Creator ! We approach and desire thee, Master of all desirable wealth and enjoyment.

1-24-4 :—Even so, he who is god Bhaga, the enjoyer, who is praiseworthy and formerly unhating, has placed me thus in the hands of the binder.

1-24-5 :—We who are thine with thy help, we would like to attain the happiness that is enjoyable of Bhaga for grasping the utmost riches.

Notes :—These three Mantras are addressed to Savitri and his aspect, Bhaga. Wealth and enjoyment need not be physical ; they can be psychological and spiritual too.

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1-24-6 :—Thy force and might and passion, neither these birds in their flight attain, nor the waters ranging sleeplessly ; nor they who hedge in the hugeness of the wind.

Notes :—This Mantra and the following Mantras of this Sukta are addressed to Varuna ; this Mantra is in praise of Varuna, uttered not because of mere mental thinking but because of a deeper experience of Varuna on the Life and Mind planes.

1-24-7 :—In the unawakened existence, the king Varuna, with his purified intelligence has arranged the up-piled masses of delight ; their rays are directed downwards, their foundation is above ; the perceptions of knowledge are set in us within.

Notes :—This Mantra clearly shows that Shunashopa has the experience of the higher spiritual worlds and also the lower sub-conscious and inconscient worlds, and has actually felt the part that Varuna plays in these worlds.

1-24-8 :—The king Varuna has made a wide path for the sun to follow ; where there is no footing he has made places to set his feet ; he shall make manifest too those that pierce the heart.

Notes :—Here the sun is not the physical sun ; it is the all-seer and the light of Truth ; it is the vision of Mitra and Varuna and the king Varuna makes a path for him to follow ; where there is no footing for the Truth, the Vast and the Right, Varuna makes a place and for this purpose he will manifest those that pierce the heart of the wrong-doer.

1-24-9—O King ! thy physicians are a hundred and a thousand ; thy right-mindedness is wide and deep ; drive away the sinners that have been made to turn back ; release us from the sin.

1-24-10 :—These stars which are fixed high are seen in the night ; where do they go by day ? The divine acts of Varuna are unassailable ; the moon shining appears at night.

1-24-11 :—O Varuna, who art praiseworthy, praising by the word of the soul, I go to thee ; that sacrificer (there) directs (the sacrifice) with his offerings ; without wrath awaken us, do not steal our life.

Notes :—It is evident from this Mantra that at the time that this Mantra is being composed there is a sacrificer to whom the words, *tat yajmāna*, i.e. "that sacrificer", refer. If the story is true, it must be Harischandra ; or else it may be a comrade of the Rishi who may be getting initiated into the act of the sacrifice.

1-24-12 :—Of That (the Supreme) during the night and during the day, they, the Rishis, speak ; That the knowledge-vision of the heart sees ; may king Varuna, to whom calls the seized Shunashopa, release us.

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Notes :—This Mantra clearly indicates that Shunashepa has come face to face with the Supreme and, seated in that state, he still prays for the release of all, even as it is said of Buddha and Christ.

1-24-13 :—Shunashepa who is seized and bound thrice to the sacrificial post has called the son of Aditi, the wise and unassailable King Varuna, may he unloosen him and liberate him from the bonds.

1-24-14—O Varuna, we bring down thy wrath by obeisances, sacrifices and offerings ; O wise and mighty king, for our sake slacken the sinful acts.

1-24-15 :—O Varuna, take up from us the higher (mental) bonds ; take down the lower (physical) bonds ; and remove the middle (vital) bonds ; then, O Son of Aditi, may we remain sinless in thy works before the Infinite Mother.

Notes :—Here ends the first Sukta of Shunashepa. Whether the physical bondage of Shunashepa as given by the Brahmana is real or not, the psychological bondage of Shunashepa is admitted and while he comes face to face with the Supreme Divine he prays to Varuna, a personification of one aspect of the Supreme, who guides men through right acts to the highest goal of God-knowledge. We see from Mantra to Mantra a coherency in the meaning of words and a continuity in thought. For one who understands the psychological and spiritual meaning of this Sukta and enters into its spirit, it matters little whether the sins of a warring king are removed or not, and whether a childless person begets a child by reciting these Suktas. But for one who cannot make a psychological and spiritual approach to these Suktas and is capable of making only an approach for physical gain, even for him, if by these physical gains he is helped to make a psychological approach, all the more is the credit to the Rishi who composed his Suktas for all these gains that suit each person according to his approach.

NARAYANA C. REDDY

Students' Section

TALKS ON POETRY

(These Talks were given to a group of students starting their University life. They have been prepared for publication from notes and memory, except in the few places where they have been expanded a little. Here and there the material is slightly rearranged in the interests of unity of theme. As far as possible the actual turns of phrase used in the Class have been recovered and, at the request of the students, even the digressions have been preserved. The Talks make, in this form, somewhat unconventional pieces, but the aim has been to retain not only their touch of literature and serious thought but also their touch of life and laughter.)

TALK TWELVE

WE gave—before a bit of digression—some instances of markedly musical lines of poetry.

Now I want to recall you to the fact which my quotations prior to the musical lines may have served to spotlight—namely, that lines with no particular music can be great in poetic effect. Let me cite some more to render that fact vivid. I shall take instances picked out by a critic whose name I forget and I shall add one or two the critic seems to have forgotten. On several occasions we have drawn on King Lear's speeches. Here are three lines at almost the beginning of his speech in the midst of the storm on the heath. He is contrasting, in relation to himself, the unruly elements to his ungrateful daughters. After challenging Nature's forces to do their worst he cries :

Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters :
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness,
I never gave you kingdoms, called you children...

There is not much melody here, but the emotion very forcefully comes through and its especial means is the feminine ending of each line, the unstressed extra syllable falling over : the very movement of the speech gets charged with an

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emotion that breaks down with the completion of every significant phrase, and the breaking down occurs strikingly at a word—"daughters", "unkindness", "children"—reminding Lear of his own tragedy.

Wordsworth packs a world of pathos in the plain line about the old farmer Michael who, after a life of labour and loving hope, was heart-broken because of his wastrel son. No complaint did he utter, but often to the unfinished sheep-fold, which he and his son had started building together, he went

And never lifted up a single stone.

The deep dejection of the brave man is piercingly imaged with masterly restraint through the fact that not even a tiny piece of matter could be raised from its dead passivity. And the pathos is intensified by the collocation of "never", with its background of long time, and "a single stone" which brings our mind to a pin-point of space : even though hours and hours may elapse, all their duration cannot help the doom by which an infinitesimal object will remain unmoved. A play of antithetical imagination involving the fundamental framework of physical existence cuts to our hearts.

Sri Aurobindo, in *Baji Prabhau*, grips us with many lines that have no special music yet are of notable poetic quality. I give a few from a speech of Baji himself :

God within
Rules us, who in the Brahmin and the dog
Can, if He will, show equal godhead...

A dog-lover, I feel a little hurt by the contrast which the dog will be understood by all readers to be making to the Brahmin. But one is at liberty to read the contrast as one likes : Sri Aurobindo provides no direct hint as to whether the Brahmin is the higher pole or the lower. At least in South India at present the Brahmin will certainly be regarded as lower than the dog. I for one would adapt Shakespeare's Brutus and say : "Not that I love the Brahmin less, but that I love the dog more." So I would choose to take the two as contrasts in kind rather than contrasts in quality.

Finally, the opening line of a sonnet by Drayton :

Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part...

We have a mixture of the homely and the intense, a mixture of hopelessness and tenderness, and it is all the more effective because of the line's total run

in monosyllables. There seems to be no fuss in the statement, yet a catch in the heart again and again. This double play is brought about by, on the one hand, the simplicity derived from the homeliness of the language as well as from its monosyllabicism and, on the other hand, the stopping not only at four significant points—"Since there's no help,/come,/let us kiss/and part"—but also a little with each syllable since each syllable is a word by itself.

To throw into relief the poetic nature of all these lines, however unmarked they may be in musical rhythm, let me throw at you two lines by two famous poets. One is by Meredith : Arthur Symons thinks it the ugliest in English, poetry :

Or is't the widowed's dream for her new mate ?

The rhythm here is harsh and halting without serving any purpose, and the expressions "is't" and "widowed's" are acmes of awkwardness. The substance is itself not unpoetic, but the language is hardly appealing. If the dream were conveyed like this to the new mate dreamt of, he might run away. At least I would : I may be the widow's dream but the widow will appear to me like a nightmare through such a line. I have no prejudices against widows, unless my wife wants to become one—though I am not as fond of them as is a Bengali poet who is everywhere dragging in the word *bidhaba*. If the day comes to an end, the earth is widowed of the sun. If a flower is plucked from a plant, the plant becomes a widow. I suppose if a banana were picked off a plate, the plate would be a widow too.

This topic reminds me of an incident in a law-court. The accused, who had a pretty flimsy case, protested to the judge : "My Lord, I have not said a single false word. Everything I have said is true. I have always been wedded to truth." The Judge dryly remarked: "Very likely. But the point is : how long is it since you have been a widower ?"

The second line I wish to quote to show forth by comparison the truly poetic though apparently proselike is Wordsworth's notorious :

A Mr. Willkerson, a clergyman...

Its rhythm is pleasant enough — a foreigner may even delight in its *m*'s and *r*'s and *n*'s, but the sheer prosaicality of its meaning makes the technical chime and the metrical swing go waste on anybody with a rudimentary knowledge of English. It proves how humourless Wordsworth could sometimes be, obsessed as he was with the momentousness of his own message.

Here I may touch on a point once raised by the critic Middleton Murry.

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He said that what offends us as bad poetry is not really lines like the one on Mr. Wilkerson, which is quite evidently empty of poetic quality. What offends us, in Murry's view, is falsetto. Falsetto means literally a forced shrill voice above one's natural range and we may in our context understand it as a use of poetic-sounding language to cover up mere fancifulness. One of the worst lines of poetry, to Murry's mind, is this from Stephen Phillips's *Marpessa* :

The mystic yearning of the garden wet...

Let us reflect on the verse. Is Phillips indeed pretentious ? The feeling that he records seems to have nothing false in it. When a garden is wet with either dew or rain, a fine aroma wafts out and if one believes that plants and trees are alive and can have blind longings one can regard that exquisite freshness of scent as the yearning of a soul-element in them towards some unknown Power—and especially if it is night-time the darkness itself may serve to represent the Power that is unknown. Yes, the feeling behind Phillips's line is not illegitimate. What about his expression of it ?

I remember a passage in the French writer Proust expressing very well a slightly different form of this feeling. It runs : "The ecstasy of breathing, through the sound of falling rain, the perfume of invisible and everlasting lilies." Here also there is a wet garden in a darkness—the rain-washed lilies are "invisible"; but the ecstasy is of the man and not of the flowers. Where the flowers are concerned, the adjective "everlasting" transfers the man's mystical feeling to them, yet the flowers become not exactly practitioners of mysticism but themselves objects towards which the man's practice is directed : their natural aspect is shown under the shadow of the supernatural. And this transformation is begun by the presence of the rain which permeates them with a sky-quality and it is more intensely prepared by the epithet "invisible" which has not only the immediate suggestion of being hidden in darkness, in night, but also the remote suggestion of belonging to another order than the visible universe. There is also the piquant felicity of matching a sound with a scent.

Phillips, if his line is taken by itself, has no preparatory finesse : he just blurts out that the wet garden is mystically yearning. Proust's account is more delicately, more skilfully tuned : Phillips's is more matter-of-fact in its mysticism, taking miraculous things for granted. This mode of expression is not necessarily faulty : to put before us straight away an occult or spiritual phenomenon without any opening ceremony, as it were, can be deeply effective provided the vision has been deep enough to catch the very

pulse and posture of the phenomenon presented, and provided the expression is sensitive and precise enough to convey the concreteness of the depth-vision. But Phillips thrusts into the phrase "garden wet" something more than it can hold. Merely by being called wet a garden does not come home to us as capable of mystic yearning. Hence the adjective "mystic" seems too facilely introduced : it does not get the support it needs in what follows : it remains a tantalising decoration instead of being a satisfying disclosure. Phillips's phrase, though beautiful at first glance, is found to be too much a thing of light-and-shadow surface when the promise it holds out is of a glimmering profundity. Perhaps Murry is over-critical, but there is sufficient truth in his remark to keep us aware of the obligations of poetic speech. Phillips stands convicted, even though we may not condemn him very harshly.

However, while finding Phillips guilty under the conditions imposed by Murry, we must not fall into the mistake of passing final judgment on his line until we see it in its own context. Taken in isolation I may say that the somewhat vaguely pretentious epithet "mystic" should be replaced by the more general yet not intrinsically less suggestive "nameless"—the only substitute which keeps to the idea of an attribute transcending the concerns of the natural world. Still, before we accept the version—

The nameless yearning of the garden wet —

let us look at the original line in the company of those preceding and succeeding it :

Wounded with beauty in the summer night
 Young Idas tossed upon his couch and cried,
 "Marpessa, O Marpessa !" From the dark
 The floating smell of flowers invisible,
 The mystic yearning of the garden wet,
 The moonless-passing night—into his brain
 Wandered, until he rose and outward leaned
 In the dim summer; 'twas the moment deep
 When we are conscious of the secret dawn
 Amid the darkness that we feel is green.

This is how *Marpessa* opens. Idas is a youth who has fallen in love with the wonderful beauty of the girl Marpessa. She is wooed also by the God Apollo and has to choose between a mortal lover and an immortal. Idas has been restless through the night of summer with his own yearning for the perfection of Marpessa, a perfection worthy of even a god's love. But he has kept to his

couch. Now in the darkness before dawn, a darkness of surrounding greenery, a poignant sweetness floats to him from the garden that is hidden from sight. Mark that, interestingly enough, Phillips too speaks of "flowers invisible", rich yet innocent entities kin to Proust's invisible lilies. Phillips, like Proust, prepares for turning his flowers into mystical presences : the only difference is that he pictures them as mystically yearning instead of being mystically yearned after. But this difference does not invalidate his introduction of mysticism. Besides, the word "mystic" is rather general, though intense, and if the intensity gets justified by the context, it can pass all the more easily and claim the excuse of generality. After the lines before this word, it seems a natural intensification of what is suggested by "invisible" as much as "everlasting" appears such in Proust. And in the lines which follow it we have the "moment deep" no less than the "secret dawn" to lend it sustenance by a throw-back affinity. Further, all that is without is attuned to all that is within : Idas and the garden, sharing the same summer night, are permeated with the same delightful ache for a distant flawlessness, an unattained beauty haunting them. And it is the strengthening of his own longing by the corresponding sweetness and poignancy around him that draws him from his couch : they enter his brain and grow one with him and call him forth. What is outward goes inward into him and what is inward in him leans outward. And all that is both inward and outward not only supports the term "mystic" but demands it for its own revelation : the term lights it up and gives it completion.

Perhaps "nameless" may be still recommended as doing the needful without committing the poet so much. But note the metrical place where it stands. One syllable of it concludes the first foot, the other initiates the second. Now, in the next line, "moonless" stands exactly in the same metrical place. "Nameless", therefore, may be thought on a back-look to be a small defect disturbing the balance of the rhythm by imparting a sense of monotony to "moonless" without sufficient justification. Moreover, "nameless" in the full context of Phillips's passage is a little colourless, missing the focal point the vision requires. Perhaps Phillips, for all the beauty of his passage, is on the whole less poetic in substance than Proust, even less bold in his mystical evocation, but he does manage to ring true in that line.

We may dismiss Murry's charge. Ladies and gentlemen, Phillips is acquitted. The case is closed.

I have brought in this discussion to train your critical faculty. When judging poetry you must look at it from various sides and seek for parallel expressions which may throw light on a particular phrase. This discussion is one of the many ways in which I have been trying to make you face poetic speech. Unless you learn to turn a thing this way and that, you cannot be

TALKS ON POETRY

said to have acquired the familiarity which, unlike the proverbial kind which breeds contempt, breeds deeper love, for our aim is to come to grips with poetry in its single intuitive act which has a myriad manifestation not only dealing with a diversity of objects and of states but also displaying a many-sidedness of approach and manner, quality and source of inspiration. Shelley has spoken of

understanding that grows bright,
Gazing at many truths.

I want your understanding, which I may take as bright already, to grow yet brighter by coming into contact with more truths than it has done so far.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

SRI AUROBINDO'S *VASAVADUTTA*

A COMMENTARY

III

VUTHSA is fortunate indeed in the wise guidance and sympathetic understanding and guardianship of the statesman with pure mind, Yougundharayan. Not so Avunthie's golden princess though a child famed for gifts and beauty. She is a flower by magic fate on a fierce iron stock. She is the daughter of iron-willed and impulsive Mahasegu who has made a gospel of the practical externalising thinking mind exclusive of all the madness of the dangerous feeling heart. To rule as vast an empire as possible and go on increasing his dominions and making vassals of neighbouring kings and to do this by any means and all means, even with conscious perception of their ignoble nature, are his aims in life. He has taught his daughter statecraft, his gospel of statesmanship and has very successfully built in her personality a strong surface formation of a proud mind prone to rule and disposed to obedience of his will and self-immolation for his glorification. She tells him :

Father, thy will is mine, even as 'tis fate's.
Thou givest me to whom thou wilt; what share
In this have I but only to obey ?
I choose, my father, since it is thy will.

That thou shouldst rule the world is all my wish,
My nation's greatness is my dearest good.
My duty to my country and my sire
Shall rule me.

Father, this is my pride,
That thou ennoblest me to be an engine
Of thy great fortunes; that alone I am.
Let him desire, but I will nothing yield.
I am thy daughter; greatest kings should sue
And take my grace as an unhoped-for joy.

This faithful repetition of the lessons learnt at the feet of the Master makes him go into a mood of self-satisfaction and boast in the intoxication of success :

Thou art my pupil; statecraft was not wasted
Upon thy listening brain. Thou seest, my queen ?

His pride is in her uncommonness, and unwomanliness !

Fortunately she has in her mother Ungarica a woman who has realised in her life the glory of love and whose care it is "to give her heart a voice/And bind it to its nobler loving self." The mother's power of occult vision and power of reading men's thoughts and feelings and prophetic gaze into the shape of things to come and above all her calm and joyous conduct in life are a clear contrast to the sense-bound and therefore blind and impulsive though iron-willed father. And Vasavadutta receives her education in love from her mother :

Rest here, my child, to whom another bosom
Will soon be refuge. Thou hast heard the King,
Hear now thy mother. Thou wilt know, my bliss,
The fiercest sweet ordeal that can seize
A woman's heart and body. O my child,
Thou wilt house fire, thou wilt see living gods;
And all thou hast thought and known will melt away
Into a flame and be reborn. What now
I speak, thou dost not understand, but wilt
Before many nights have kept thy sleepless eyes.
My child, the flower blooms for its flowerhood only
And not to make its parent bed more high.
Not for thy sire thy mother brought thee forth,
But thy dear nature's growth and heart's delight
And for a husband and for children born.
My child, let him who clasps thee be thy god
That thou mayst be his goddess; let your wedded arms
Be heaven; let his will be thine and thine
Be his, his happiness thy regal pomp.
O Vasavadutta, when thy heart awakes
Thou shalt obey thy sovereign heart, nor yield
Allegiance to the clear-eyed selfish gods.
Do now thy father's will; the god awake
Shall do his own. Yes, tremble and yet fear
Nothing. Thy mother watches over thee, child.

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We see the potential loving deeper heart first manifesting itself as a fluttering in the surface heart of Vasavadatta, the initial intimation of the celestial light within.

Vuthsa ! Vuthsa Udayan ! I have heard
Only a far-flung name. What is the man ?
A flame ? A flower? High like Gopalaca
Or else some golden fair and soft-eyed youth ?
I have a fluttering in my heart to know.

This grows into an eager curiosity which takes her attendant Munjoolica to task for her perverse silence and feels an evident satisfaction at her reply—"I have seen the god of love/ Wearing a golden human body"—and even compels her to put her own chain round Munjoolica's neck.

Once in Vuthsa's presence her surface mind conditioned by her father regards him as a golden marvellous boy (cf. Mahasegu's 'one luxurious boy') with whom she can play and have no difficulty at all because she is older and superior ! Of course she says smiling that she did not hear his language of the heart. She is trying to obey her father's wish that she must not yield to the heart's desire. But Vuthsa's psychic language of self-giving makes her bewildered and she does not know what she says nor what he means :

The deepest things are those that thought seizes not;
Our spirits live their hidden meaning out.

Her psyche has been drawn out and the deepest chord of her being has been touched and she finds these words are troubling to the mind and heart. But she tries to retain the surface pose and commands the boy to be taken away from her and warns her maids of the danger of being bribed by him. But alone she feels the witchery of beauty and the power of love; the maintaining of the pose of the surface mind will no longer be easy : "I fear it will be difficult after all."

And here begins the struggle between her increasingly insistent and prevailing deeper heart and the outer mind. She tries to satisfy both by taking a pleasure in calling him in order indeed to chide him and put him down and chide him harshly and decides upon extracting a promise which would make her obey her father's will which *was* hers. But this meeting has exactly the opposite effect and she is compelled to admit that to be queen of him and earth she must grow a rebel to her father's house.

The deeper heart has won and only a last lingering trace of the pride is left.

When she approaches her mother for consolation and guidance, she is Love's learner and Ungarica teaches the supreme secret of utter self-giving and allowing the pride to merge itself in the glory of the lover, not indeed insisting upon retaining a separate personality or individuality which takes delight in ruling him at all. Though the daughter replies,

But, mother, it is very sweet to rule
And if I rule him for his good, not mine ?

we see it is a feeble voice, the last remnant of a long-formed habit of utterance without any active support in her true consciousness. Even this is completely dissolved by the intimate communion in love; her modesty gradually loses itself and gains itself in her love and self-surrender, when the bounty of herself she lavishes on her lover. This makes her realise their immortal and eternal love for each other and it is by the power of this deeper love that the outer meeting has taken place :

I have loved thee always
Even when I knew it not. Was't not the love
Secret between us, drew thee here by force,
Vuthsa?

The fire within her and the cry make all her longings break into flood so that she feels :

My mother's heart when over me she bowed
Wakeful at midnight ! He has never had
Since his strange birth a mother's, sister's love.
O sleeping soul of my beloved, hear
My vow that while thy Vasavadutta lives,
Thou shalt not lack again one heart's desire,
One tender bodily want. All things at once,
Wife, mother, sister, lover, playmate, friend,
Queen, comrade, counsellor I will be to thee.
Self shall not chill my heart with wedded strife,
Nor age nor custom pale my fire of love.
I have that strength in me, the strength to love of gods.

Henceforward all the elements in her personality show a remarkable concentration of purpose because of psychic love. She lives in and loves her lord.

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She is anxious about his safety and is only too willing to supplicate, with kneeling, her attendant Munjoolica to help her to help him from her father's wrath. She would not stain his fame in arms by commanding her father's forces to withdraw. When Yougundharayan welcomes her as the Queen of Cowsambie, she smiles happily on Vuthsa and says with pride in her lord's victory :

My crown was won by desperate alarms—

and she is her loving self when she receives Umba.

Beauty and Grace she had always ; but her relationship with Vuthsa has brought about an integration and purification of her personality in the fire of love. And the Fire and the Rose are one. She is "earth's gold Luxmie."

(To be continued)

M.V. SEETARAMAN

PLATO

THE history of thought may, in a sense, be regarded as an account of the cyclical movement of the modes of knowledge : sensation, perception, reason, intuition and still higher modes of cognition. At different periods one or another of these predominates and asserts its own truth and standards of truth. Thus we have the age of Intuition such as that of the Veda and the Upanishad, the age of mixed intuition and reason such as that of the Darshanas in the East and that of Socrates and Plato in the West, the age of Pure Reason as that of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz and Kant, and the age of the senses as that of Locke and Hume and the present Logical Positivism.

In this cyclical movement, the age to which Plato belongs was the period when intuitive knowledge was receding into the background and making way for the free play of reason and its allied instruments. The early age of Greece was the age of the Mysteries where there was the supreme reign of occult and intuitive knowledge. When we come to Pythagoras, this supremacy is lost, but still intuition predominates. In Socrates we find a child of the Mystics capable of intuitive knowledge and contacting and following an inner voice, the 'Daemon' ; but his methods of inquiry have already become rational and dialectical and in effect he initiates the rational movement in Western philosophy. Yet in his most important doctrines such as that of "Virtue is Knowledge" he identifies knowledge with the knowledge belonging to spiritual consciousness. And in his life we find him being moved and motivated by the high ethical and spiritual sense. But when we come to Plato, we find that the mystic tendency is on the wane, although the setting sun of mysticism casts its gold on the horizon and we find in Plato a most captivating combination of mysticism and reason.

Plato inherits the mysticism of the past but moulds it in his rational receptacle. He himself was deeply influenced by Socrates and in his highest heights he understands, touches, nay, communicates with the supreme and most mysterious spiritual reality. But it is through mind that he reaches the summit to capture that reality. Indeed, Plato is essentially the Mind or Thought reflecting and drawing upon the treasures of Intuition. In consequence, he stands out as a thinker presiding over the new dawn of Reason but having at his back the splendour and glory of the waning age of Intuition.

Although he is a disciple of mystics, his life is not moved by any religious motive or fervour. But the lack of this motivation is amply compensated by his large and wide and rich mind, high artistic genius commanding creative expression, and an intense dynamic nature expressing itself in concentrated efforts at the realisation of a sublime and ideal order of existence on the earth. In his early youth we find him planning for a political career. It was only

because he found that the then political conditions would not permit him to be useful to the state that he changed his mind. The death of Socrates put a seal on this change and made him decide finally for the life of a professional philosopher. But even then he did not remain merely an armchair philosopher. He established in Athens an Academy for training and imparting to students a comprehensive education ; and in due course this Academy became a great centre of learning where came students from many parts of the civilised world. It supplied to the Greek states many scholars, statesmen and individuals of high culture. He laid the foundations of this Academy so deep that it lived for hundreds of years until Justinian disestablished it.

He was so deeply concerned with the future of humanity that he speculated on the problem of an ideal order of existence and came to the conclusion which he sets forth in his *Republic* :

“Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from these evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe—and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.”

This conviction was not merely intellectual : he made a few attempts to realise the ideal of his vision. He undertook two journeys to Sicily and employed himself in the task of training Dionysius II. In the first journey he had to undergo such humiliation—he was sold in the market as a slave and escaped death by being ransomed by someone—that if he had not at his heart the great consideration for the future of human progress, he would have declined the second invitation of Dionysius. Of course, he failed in his attempts but his vision of the ideal state has remained up to this day an inspiration to many thinkers, visionaries, statesmen and servants of mankind.

However, Plato is preeminently a philosopher. He was a mathematician and gave a high place to mathematics in his system of education ; he was an educationist, a great literary artist, a social and political thinker, a law-giver, a utopian, and, in a sense, even a theologian ; but all these were his subordinate and supporting aspects, none supreme or equal to his philosophical personality. Philosophy is the very soul and breath of Plato. His mind is constantly fixed on the supreme Idea of the Good, he is constantly engaged in reconciling and harmonising the universal Ideas, his constant task is to reflect and meditate upon the Real and differentiate it from the phenomenon and the appearance.

(To be continued)

MOHINI M. DADLANI .

A LETTER FROM THE HIMALAYAS

Dehra Dun, U.P.

Respected X :

Please excuse the delay in writing to you ; I have been overburdened with the College work. These days the mountains are so peaceful, calm and quiet. They appear to me like Yogis who are sitting in meditation or who have plunged into a semi-trance mood. I am deeply affected by their serenity and by an atmosphere of dead silence that prevails these days around the hills. When I go for a daily walk in the morning, I enjoy it very much. Gardens and forests are full of a peaceful presence ; brooks and waterfalls are flowing so harmoniously that they produce a kind of melodious symphony.

Yesterday I went to the Sulphur Springs which are at a distance of seven miles from the city. I arrived there in the afternoon, but visitors were already returning to the city. One by one everyone left the place and I was alone. I sat down near a current of water which was flowing just in the lap of the mountains. There was a big stone lying near it. I folded my legs upon it and sat in an unmoving posture. On all sides I was surrounded by the elevated Himalayan mountains. I looked up into the sky. How high these mountains are in the evening time ! They appear as if they are merged in the infinite sky ; they are no longer separated from the vast heavens. To look at the finite mountains, to see them lose their limitations in the limitless sky, thereby gaining the infinite, is pure joy.

These huge Himalayan mountains extending from the north-west to the north-east give us the message of strength, peace and, above all, of sympathy and benevolence towards all. They are so compassionate and shelter-giving and open to all. Ants there make their mole-hills, birds make their nests, wild creatures live in their caves. The primitive people make their thatched cottages and cultivate the land, while a large number of sages live in the dense forests of the foothills and meditate upon Divinity, at one with the tranquillity and beauty of Nature. They recite the Vedic mantras and breathe forth the spiritual joy. Sitting there in these higher regions of consciousness, they transmit waves of peace and bliss and make fresh the atmosphere which is polluted by our impure thoughts.

Not only do these beasts and human beings dwell among the Himalayas,

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but plants grow, murmuring waterfalls roll down, torrents make their way and rivers flow. Every year strong storms blow and yet these snow-peaked mountains remain calm and unmoved through all. Every insignificant creature makes its little home in the mountains, every being has an idea of possessing a little of the extensive Himalayas and yet the mighty mountains are beyond possession.

Such a detachment is possible for us too, when we live in the higher regions of soul-consciousness. It is then that we know the art of living. We possess nothing; we are possessed by nothing. Then the hustle-bustle of the city does not disturb us, for we feel a peaceful presence even in a restless environment. We are most dynamic in the moments of meditation and we meditate in day-to-day activities.

I opened my eyes and looked around. A long row of flying birds were returning back to their nests. The whole sky was turned pink while here and there were patches of white clouds. The birds looked like the Raja-Hansas (Royal Swans) returning back to Mansarovar. I looked at the surface of the water reflecting the whole beautiful scene. There were no ripples on the surface of the water and yet it was flowing so steadily. What a calm, untouched and beautiful mirroring of the heavens, so symbolic of what our lives should be. I was so moved by the magnificence of it that I forgot my independent existence and felt myself a part and yet the whole of it.

What a joy it is to lose one's own identity in Nature to gain her all! Really the revelation of the Absolute, the Greater Self, requires the sacrifice of the little self. Don't you think so?

(To be continued)

SOORYA PRAKASH

AFTER PROOF-READING SOME OF NIROD'S
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

DID you know that a fellow named Nirod,
Once argued (in writing) with God ?
And 'pooh-poohed' that the intellect
Was a fussy old insect,—
Prolonging each step that he trod.

He just moped around in his room,
Enveloped in Stygian gloom;
While his poor Soul within,
Grew daily more thin,
Slowly losing that ecstatic bloom.

Then the Master, one day, said :—"Enough,
Of all this Styxonian stuff !
If you do not take care
Of the Grace which is there,
It will just disappear in a puff."

LEENA

SAROJ NALINI

(An essay by a student of standard 8B in a short class-test asking for a spontaneous comment on a recently read biography)

BENGAL was proud to have a daughter like Saroj Nalini. It was Saroj Nalini who stood out for women's freedom in Bengal. She was born on the 9th of October, 1887 at Bandal in Bengal. This loving daughter of Mr. Brojendra Nath De and Mrs. Nagendra Nandini showed her capacity in all aspects of her life. She was a perfect helper to her mother at home as well as being studious in her school tasks. She was champion in all outdoor games which is quite unusual for a Bengali girl of that time who always had to be surrounded on all sides by the house-walls. At the age of nineteen she was married to a well-known magistrate in the Birbhum district of Bengal. And Saroj Nalini's life is written by her husband who says "I am proud to have a wife like Saroj Nalini."

Our heart bows down in wonder and admiration before the great character of this Bengali woman. The devotion of her heart to the women's movement was so deep that it had become with her an all-absorbing passion. But in her life home was not sacrificed to the society, nor society to the home. In this perfect balance between the two lies the glory of her character. She looked upon marriage as a sacred tie and like all Indian women she had a great desire about which she often said to her husband, "I want my head to lie upon your feet when I pass away. This is my one prayer to God. And if I am a faithful wife, God will not deny me this happiness."

Saroj Nalini's life was a harmony with the understanding of both East and West. She mixed freely with the non-Indians and conquered their love, but she never neglected the Indian way of living and its main characteristics. She took a particular pride in building up her life in accordance with the ideals of ancient Hindu womanhood. She loved and respected with her full heart the Hindu customs which she said were beautiful and based on truth. She loved to follow each and every detail regarding Bengali society. As for example, every day after taking her bath she put vermilion in the parting of her hair, which was the sign of a married woman. When her educated friends mocked her, claiming these practices to be superstitious, she laughed and said, "A Bengali woman does it for the welfare of her husband. This is a beautiful old custom of our country and I love it. How can one with modern education understand the

SAROJ NALINI

meaning of a Hindu wife's ideals !” Thus is shown the great love of a real Hindu heart.

While appreciating the necessity of the change which had to be made in women's life in Bengal, she understood at the same time the old social life of the past which had a beauty of its own. She gave the utmost value and importance to the absolute purity of women's character. She often said, “Women's character is their brightest jewel. We belong to the land of Sita and Savitri, and we should be examples to our sisters elsewhere.” She possessed the simple naturalness and humility of an Indian woman. She hated superficialities and said that imitation cannot make a man good. She herself was an example of leading a pure Indian life which had a great effect on the people of that time who started imitating others' customs, neglecting their own.

Saroj Nalini died at the age of thirty-seven. She embraced with her charming character all who came in contact with her. Such a woman cannot be lost even in death. As her name means ‘Lotus’, so did she bloom in the pond of Bengal, and even after she has died, the fragrance still remains. As each lotus blooms, it will remind us of the purity of this daughter of Bengal. So the heart of Bengal still cries out :

“She lives, she wakes,
'Tis death is dead—not she !”

MANJUSRI

STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

STUDY NO. 5 : *The Merchant of Venice*—THE CRISIS OF THE RIALTO

*Ours is a trophy which will not decay
With the Rialto, Shylock and the Moor
And Pierre, cannot be swept or worn away—
The keystones of the arch! though all were o'er
For us re-peopled were the solitary shore.*

BYRON : *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*)

ATMOSPHERE

From the fantasies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice* passes to the City of the Doges, "throned upon her hundred Isles", where the gondola heaves upon the silver swell of her waterways, charmed by Italian sunsets upon rippleless lagoons, the busy hive of commercial interests on the glittering waves of the Adriatic, port of a thousand sails, hub of trade-routes, mart of the world where throng in jostling crowds the cold-lipped, lynx-eyed, traffickers of the Rialto. Here are risks of bills of lading, storms upon the high seas, land-rats and water-rats, revenge of the Usurer, catch of the parchment, custom, precedent, proof, judgement and doom on the Rialto, a trip of the text and the peril of Law ! Here in murk is the matchless mirth of Portia and Nerissa with rings for fees and moonlight in Belmont for repayment.

THE PLAY OF GLAMOUR

The Merchant of Venice is a play of the glamour of Gold and Love. To Antonio possessed of a fleet of sails bound for many lands, wealth is an encumbrance and a risk. Bassanio in perilous penury and borrowed plumes seeks the hands of a fair heiress by the hazardous choice of the Caskets. Shylock accumulating but not enjoying his riches tragically releases his ducats and his daughter. Under the starlight upon the steps of Belmont, the penniless Lorenzo and the bejewelled Jessica, decked with the secret treasures of the Jew, inherit his coffers, but forfeit his love. Portia alone holds in just and even scales the glamour of Gold and Love. She chooses by Fate what her eyes demand; she scatters

STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

her largesses when Love requires. Portia is balance and rest. In her is fulfilment; in the rest aspiration and desire.

FUSION OF TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

In *The Merchant of Venice* Tragic and Comic Principles are delicately blended. Comedy is pushed to the extreme limits of Tragedy, involving in the character of Shylock the true tragic intensity of Pity and Fear. Tragedy is reduced, in the opposite direction, to a Farce by the harmonising hand of Portia. Tragic climax is saved suddenly and sharply by a comic conclusion.

THE BOND : THE ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY

The story of the Bond carries the full momentum of Tragedy. The unwisdom of Antonio, the rashness of Bassanio, the attachments of Shylock, produce the Complication of the Bond, the Reversal of the Trial Scene, the Pathos of Pity and Fear, Tragic Release and Tragic Discovery, Katharsis and Anagnorisis, of the Jew.

THE CASSETS : THE ELEMENTS OF COMEDY

From the Comic situation of Portia, the selection of a suitor by the choice of the Caskets, spring the Complications of the marriage with Bassanio, the Reversal of Shylock, the Pathos of Laughter and Harmonisation and Discovery, a Comic Katharsis and Comic Anagnorisis, of Bassanio and Antonio. In the story of the Caskets are found the essential elements of Comedy, Comic Harmatia, Praxis, Peripeteia, Pathos, Katharsis and Anagnorisis.

THE TRIAL SCENE : THE TRAGICAL COMICAL FUSION

The story of the Bond and the Caskets—the dual movement of Tragedy and Comedy—meet in the Trial Scene. Portia is the harmonising finger of the Drama; by the reversal of Shylock she cuts the tragic cord. The tragic and comic moods, as the Jew retires from the stage, are fused into the Romantic Comedy of the union of lovers in moonlight in the groves of Belmont.

DUAL FOCI : DUAL TENSION : DUAL CLIMAX

Owing to the intermingling of tragic and comic action, there are the dual Foci, Tension, Climax, and Discovery of Tragedy and Comedy.

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The sombre and glad light of Tragedy and Comedy is shed upon all the leading figures of *The Merchant of Venice*. No character is purely tragical or purely comical. The tragic character excites laughter; the comic character rouses pity. Shylock in the flight of his ducats, his daughter and his jewels, in the sureness of his judgement in the Trial scene, is comical; in his departure from court he is tragical. Portia pronouncing the verdict of the Court is tragical; at Belmont in moonlight and music she is comical. Bassanio upon his marriage secured by indebtedness is comical; in the Court scene he is tragical.

The Tension, Climax and Discovery arising from the choice of the Caskets are comical; the Complication, Crisis and Revelation arising from the Trial Scene are tragical.

The Dual Tension, Climax and Discovery, tragic or comic, conclude in the pure Romantic Comedy in Belmont.

EFFECT OF THE FUSION OF TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

The effect of the fusion of Tragedy and Comedy is to heighten Comic action. Pure Comedy cannot reach the spiralling ascents of Tragedy. Pity and Horror which raise to the sublime Lear, Macbeth, and Hamlet is wanting in Comedy. The disasters of the Jew elevate *The Merchant of Venice* into the windless heights of the Tragedies.

The blend of Tragic and Comic action broadens and enriches the range of Comedy, quickening the tempo with surprises, expectations, delays, complications, crises and climaxes.

DRAMATIC SITUATIONS

The Casket-Scene of Portia and her suitors, the Trial Scene of Shylock and Antonio, and the moonlight-Scene of Lorenzo and Jessica form the kernel of the dramatic situations of *The Merchant of Venice*.

THE CASSET-SCENES (COMIC COMPLICATION)

The three Casket-Scenes contain in miniature the progression of Tension, Climax and Discovery of Comedy.

The comic situation is the marriage of Portia, free, rich, wise, bound by the destiny of the Caskets, encompassed by a host of suitors from France, Germany, Spain, Morocco, Scotland and England and pledged to secrecy and silence. The first tension is of the Prince of Morocco who, after a preliminary retreat from the hazard, returns to choose the golden Casket and retires with

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broken pride. The curtain drops upon the glamour of gold. The second tension is of the Prince of Aragon, grandee of Spain, puffed with idealism and swollen with morality, who chooses the silver Casket and withdraws duped by the glamour of Silver. The third tension is the climax of Bassanio where in a critical pause music breathes, souls stir, eyes inspire, and Destiny decides. There lies the revelation of the dice in the Casket of Lead :

Bassanio :What find I here ?
Fair Portia's counterfeit ! What demi-god
Hath come so near creation ? Move these eyes ?
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
Seem they in motion ? Here are sever'd lips,
Parted with sugar breath.

Ere Bassanio can take the kiss from the lips of Portia, Complication involves her in the tragic tension of the Trial-Scene of Shylock and Antonio.

THE TRIAL SCENE (TRAGIC REVERSAL)

The Trial-Scene has a tragical Progression, Reversal and Discovery.

Antonio, the defendant at the Bar, self-possessed, eager for judgement and cognisant of his adversary is the object of Pity and Horror. Twice the Court pleads with the Jew for mercy. The growing hardness of Shylock creates the terror of Tragedy. He refuses the first tender of twice the sum of the principal. Portia's plea for clemency increases his obduracy. His acute apprehension of the trend of legal judgement raises the tempo of revenge. He assails the verdict of the Court, impeaches the practice and precedents of Venice and flouts the character of her liberties. Judgement is delivered; execution is ripe; the bosom of Antonio bared. At this crisis Portia intervenes with the technical construction of the clauses of the contract. The Bond does not provide for the shedding of blood. The Reversal is tragical. Portia presses for the forfeiture of the Bond; Shylock withdraws. Her insistence is his desistance. She adds a further terror of the Law forbidding the shedding of blood on the pain of forfeiture of his property. The threat leads to a quick regression. There is a climax and anticlimax. The defeat of Antonio becomes the crisis of Shylock; the crisis of Shylock the triumph of Antonio. The Jew retraces his steps warily; he accepts thrice the tender of the principal. Portia replies with further menaces of the Law; the Jew is satisfied with the principal. The wheels are reversed. Portia demands execution, the Jew the dropping of judgement and decree ! Finally charged by Venetian Law of the attempted murder of a citizen,

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his goods sequestrated, his daughter lost, his bond forfeited, his faith abandoned, he leaves the stage as the spectacle of Pity and Fear.

Portia : Art thou contented ? What dost thou say ?

Shy : I am content.

Portia : Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

Shy : I pray you, give me leave to go from hence ;
I am not well : send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.

THE MOONLIGHT SCENE (HARMONISATION)

Moonlight and Music in Belmont, the prattle of Lorenzo and Jessica on the dew-lit grass, Troilus who sighs for the lips of Cressid in Grecian tents, Dido wafting from the sea-banks of Carthage her love to the sails of Aeneas, and finally the host of stars in ordered marches upon the heavenly plain, mark the harmony of the closing scene of *The Merchant of Venice*:

Lor : How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank !
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patins of bright gold :
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls.

(*To be continued*)

SYED MEHDI IMAM

Published by

P. Counouma, Pondicherry

Yearly Inland Subscription: Rs. 10/- Single Copy Re. 1/-

Foreign- £0-16-0; \$ 2.50

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press,

Pondicherry 897/12/59/900