

# MOTHER INDIA

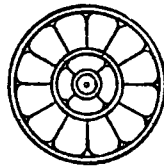
SPECIAL NUMBER

AUGUST 15, 1962: SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

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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

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*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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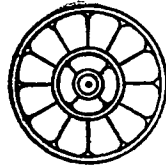
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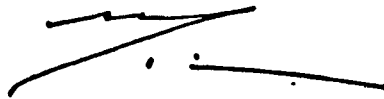
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## A Message from The Mother

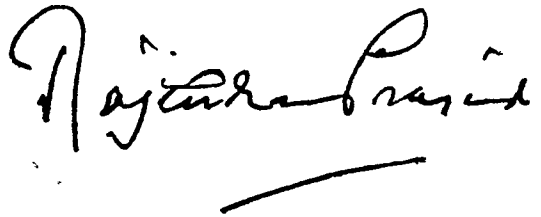
Pour le moment, ce qui est important c'est de cultiver cet élargissement et cet approfondissement de la conscience qui te permettront de sentir ma présence constante auprès de toi, le sentir d'une façon permanente et concrète qui t'apportera une paix immuable.

For the moment, what is important is to cultivate that widening and deepening of the consciousness which enables you to feel my constant presence with you, feel it in a permanent and concrete way that will bring you an immutable peace.



## AUGUST 15 : SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

SHRI Aurobindo's birthday, which happily synchronises with our Day of Independence, is a reminder to every lover of peace, happiness and integrated development of human personality of the great force of spiritualism. On this day we should bring ourselves closer to the teachings of this savant and appreciate his idealist approach to the manifold problems of the individual and the human society. Shri Aurobindo's ideas and ideals, though the world has yet to understand them in full, appear at times prophetic. His penetrating intellect saw things clearly and his idealism had a strong practical bias. Now that some of his ideals and promises have been fulfilled, it is time that at least the people of this country made a concerted effort to understand the teachings of this Mahayogi and seeking guidance from them propagate them for the good of humanity at large.



Rajendra Prasad

# THE UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

## THE OBJECT OF ONE'S LIFE AND THE WAY OF ATTAINMENT

I SHALL answer briefly the questions you put. (1) The way to set yourself right is to set your nature right and make yourself master of your vital being and its impulses. (2) Your position in human society is or can be that of many others who in their early life have committed excesses of various kinds and have afterwards achieved self-control and taken their due place in life. If you were not so ignorant of life, you would know that your case is not exceptional but on the contrary very common, and that many have done these things and afterwards become useful citizens and even leading men in various departments of human activity. (3) It is quite possible for you to recompense your parents and fulfil the past expectations you spoke of, if you make that your object. Only you must first recover from your illness and achieve the proper balance of your mind and will. (4) The object of your life depends upon your own choice and the way of attainment depends upon the nature of the object. Also your position will be whatever you make it. What you have to do is, first of all, to recover your health ; then, with a quiet mind to determine your aim in life according to your capacities and preference. It is not for me to make up your mind for you. I can only indicate to you what I myself think should be the proper aims and ideals.

Apart from external things there are two possible inner ideals which a man can follow. The first is the highest ideal of ordinary human life and the other the divine ideal of Yoga. (I must say in view of something you seem to have said to your father that it is not the object of the one to be a great man or the object of the other to be a great Yogin.) The ideal of human life is to establish over the whole being the control of a clear, strong and rational mind and a right and rational will, to master the emotional, vital and physical being, create a harmony of the whole and develop the capacities whatever they are and fulfil them in life. In the terms of Hindu thought, it is to enthrone the rule of the purified and sattwic *buddhi*, follow the *dharma*, fulfilling one's own *swadharma* and doing the work proper to one's capacities, and satisfy *kāma* and *artha* under the control of the *buddhi* and the *dharma*. The object of the divine life, on the other hand, is to realise one's highest self or to realise God and to put the whole being into harmony with the truth of the highest self or the law of the divine nature, to find one's own divine capacities great or small and fulfil them in life as a sacrifice to the highest or as a true instrument of the

divine Shakti. About the latter ideal I may write at some later time. At present, I shall only say something about the difficulty you feel in fulfilling the ordinary ideal.

This ideal involves the building of mind and character and it is always a slow and difficult process demanding patient labour of years, sometimes the better part of the life-time. The chief difficulty in the way with almost everybody is the difficulty of controlling the desires and impulses of the vital being. In many cases as in yours, certain strong impulses run persistently counter to the ideal and demand of the reason and the will. The cause is almost always a weakness of the vital being itself, for, when there is this weakness it finds itself unable to obey the dictates of the higher mind and obliged to act instead under waves of impulsions that come from certain forces in nature. These forces are really external to the person but find in this part of him a sort of mechanical readiness to satisfy and obey them. The difficulty is aggravated if the *seat* of the weakness is in the nervous system. There is then what is called by European science a neurasthenia tendency and under certain circumstances it leads to nervous breakdowns and collapses. This happens when there is too great a strain on the nerves or when there is excessive indulgence of the sexual or other propensities and sometimes also when there is too acute and prolonged a struggle between the restraining mental will and these propensities. This is the illness from which you are suffering and if you consider these facts you will see the real reason why you broke down at Pondicherry. The nervous system in you was weak ; it could not obey the will and resist the demand of the external, vital forces, and in the struggle there came an overstrain of the mind and the nerves and a collapse taking the form of an acute attack of neurasthenia. These difficulties do not mean that you cannot prevail and bring about a control of your nerves and vital being and build up a harmony of mind and character. Only you must understand the thing rightly, not indulging false and morbid ideas about it and you must use the right means. What is needed is a quiet mind and a quiet will, patient, persistent, refusing to yield either to excitement or discouragement, but always insisting tranquilly on the change needed in the being. A quiet will of this kind cannot fail in the end. Its effect is inevitable. It must first reject in the waking state, not only the acts habitual to the vital being, but the impulses behind them which it must understand to be external to the person even though manifested in him and also the suggestions which are behind the impulses. When thus rejected, the once habitual thoughts and movements may still manifest in the dream-state, because it is a well-known psychological law that what is suppressed or rejected in the waking state may still recur in sleep and dream because they are still there in the subconscious being. But if the waking state is thoroughly cleared, these dream-movements must gradually disappear because they lose their food and the impressions in the subconscious are gradually



effaced. This is the cause of the dreams of which you are so much afraid. You should see that they are only a subordinate symptom which need not alarm you if you can once get control of your waking condition.

But you must get rid of the ideas which have stood in the way of effecting the self-conquest.

(1) Realise that these things in you do not come from any true moral depravity, for that can exist only when the mind itself is corrupted and supports the perverse vital impulses. Where the mind and the will reject them, the moral being is sound and it is a case only of a weakness or malady of the vital parts or the nervous system.

(2) Do not brood on the past but turn your face with a patient hope and confidence towards the future. To brood on past failure will prevent you from recovering your health and will weaken your mind and will, hampering them in the work of self-conquest and rebuilding of the character.

(3) Do not yield to discouragement if success does not come at once, but continue patiently and steadfastly until the thing is done.

(4) Do not torture your mind by always dwelling on your weaknesses. Do not imagine that they unfit you for life or for the fulfilment of the human ideal. Once having recognised that they are there, seek for your sources of strength and dwell rather on them and the certainty of conquest.

Your first business is to recover your health of mind and body and that needs quietness of mind and for some time a quiet way of living. Do not rack your mind with questions which it is not yet ready to solve. Do not brood always on the one thing. Occupy your mind as much as you can with healthy and normal occupations and give it as much rest as possible. Afterwards when you have your right mental condition and balance, then you can with a clear judgment decide how you will shape your life and what you have to do in the future.

I have given you the best advice I can and told you what seems to me the most important for you at present. As for your coming to Pondicherry, it is better not to do so just now. I could say to you nothing more than what I have written. It is best for you so long as you are ill not to leave your father's care, and, above all, it is the safe rule in illnesses like yours not to return to the place and surroundings where you had the breakdown until you are perfectly recovered and the memories and associations connected with it have faded in intensity, lost their hold on the mind and can no longer produce upon it a violent or disturbing impression.

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*(These talks are from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were : Dr. Mamilal, Dr. Becherlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. As the Notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.*

*This is the nineteenth instalment in the new Series which, except for the present and the previous occasions, has followed a chronological order and begun at the very beginning. The four earliest talks, after Sri Aurobindo's accident, appeared in Mother India 1952.)*

January 27, 1939

THIS evening a letter written by Vivekananda on April 18, 1900, from Alameda, California, to Miss Josephine Macleod was read out to Sri Aurobindo. It was a very feeling letter containing the following passages :

“I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won. I have bundled my things and am waiting for the great deliverer.

“ ‘Siva, O Siva, carry my boat to the other shore.’

“After all, Joe, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions. Now I again hear his voice; the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking—love dying, work becoming tasteless—the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the master calling. ‘I come, Lord, I come.’—‘Let the dead bury the dead, follow thou Me.’ ‘I come, my beloved Lord, I come.’

“Yes, I come. Nirvana is before me. I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.

“I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter peace. I leave none bound, I take no bonds. Whether this body

will fall and release me or I enter into freedom in the body, the old man is gone, gone for ever, never to come back again !

“The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away; the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind.

“...Who am I to meddle with any, Joe ? I have long given up my place as a leader,—I have no right to raise my voice. Since the beginning of this year I have not dictated anything in India. You know that ..The sweetest memories of my life have been when I was drifting; I am drifting again—with the bright warm sun ahead and masses of vegetation around—and in the heat everything is so still, so calm—and I am drifting, languidly—in the warm heart of the river. I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet—for fear of breaking the wonderful stillness, stillness that makes you feel sure it [the world] is an illusion !

“Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst of power. Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come, Mother, I come in thy warm bosom, floating wheresoever Thou takest me, in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland, I come—a spectator, no more an actor.

“Oh, it is so calm ! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and peace is upon everything, sweet, sweet peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling into sleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows—without fear, without love, without emotion. —Peace that one feels alone, surrounded with statues and pictures...”

S : It must have been a passing mood in Vivekananda to see ambition, personality, fear and thirst for power in himself. Besides, since he died two years later, these things could not have been there always, for by that time he must have realised some higher consciousness setting him free from them.

N : It may not have been merely a passing mood. These things he must have noticed in himself, and he wrote about them because he perceived or saw them.

P : Simultaneously with a higher consciousness, one can see these things in one's nature.

N : He had a double strain in his being—the turn inward and the urge towards work. Moreover, he admitted that he was doing things blindly driven by some unseen Force.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after some time*) : It is not easy to get rid of these things. Even when the higher consciousness comes, they can go on in the lower nature. And if Vivekananda found himself driven blindly by some unseen Force, as you say, then it is quite possible for them to remain in the nature and get mixed up in the working out of that driving Power.

S : It is curious that he speaks of “freedom in the body” as something

in the future. How is it that he says this so late in life—only a short time before his death and long after he had had the experience of Nirvana? I thought he had become liberated much earlier.

SRI AUROBINDO : There are two kinds of liberation. The usual conception of liberation is that it comes after the death of the body. That is to say, you may have attained liberation in consciousness and yet something in the nature continues in the old bondage and this ignorance is usually supported by the body-consciousness. When the body drops off, the man becomes entirely free or liberated.

The other kind of liberation is Jivan Mukti : one realises liberation while remaining in the body and in life and action, and that is supposed to be more difficult.

S : But I suppose there is a distinction between Videha Mukti and Jivan-Mukti. Videha Mukti answers to your definition. Janaka is called a Videha Mukta and that is considered more difficult than being a Jivan Mukta.

SRI AUROBINDO : I thought it is the reverse.

S : Then there might be a confusion of terms. Souls like Vivekananda are said to come down from a higher plane for a specific work in the world. Is that possible?

N : Ramakrishna called him Ishwara Koti.

SRI AUROBINDO : There is a plane of liberation from which beings can come down and perhaps that is what Ramakrishna meant by souls that are Ishwara Koti or Nitya Mukta—those that are eternally liberated and can go up and down the ladder of the planes.

S : Is there any evolution in these planes—I mean evolution of the sort we have on earth?

SRI AUROBINDO : No; there are only types there. If the typical beings want to evolve they have to take birth here. Even the Gods are compelled to take human birth for the purpose of evolving.

N : But why should the Gods want evolution? They are quite happy in their own state.

SRI AUROBINDO : They may get tired of their own happiness and want another kind : for instance, Nirvana.

N : But then one may get tired of Nirvana too!

SRI AUROBINDO : There is no “one” in Nirvana. So who will get tired? That was the difficulty I had with Amal at one time. He could not get into his head that the personality does not exist in the experience of Nirvana. He would ask, “Who has the experience of Nirvana if there is no being in that state?” The answer is : “Nobody has it; something in you drops off and Nirvana takes its place.” In fact, there is no “getting” but a “dropping off”. Amal was probably thinking that he would be sitting with his mental personality somewhere, looking at Nirvana and saying, “Ah, this is Nirvana!” But so long as “you” are there,

you haven't got Nirvana. One has to get rid of all attachments and personalities before Nirvana can come and that is extremely difficult for one attached to a mental personality like Amal.

S : If Nirvana is such a negative state, what is the difference between one who has it and one who hasn't ?

P : From the point of view of Nirvana there is no difference.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. You find the difference because it is "you" who get blotted out in Nirvana and not somebody else.

(*After a pause*) In this letter of Vivekananda's, there is at least one thing precise about his spiritual experience : he speaks of the calm and stillness of Nirvana and before it everything seems an illusion.

P : The division of consciousness into two parts—one being fundamentally free and the other imperfect or impure—is a very common experience.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not only common, it is the inevitable experience unless one is able to take all action with equanimity. In order that one may be able to act without ambition, one should not be perturbed whether the action is done or not. There should be something like the Gita's "inaction in action"—and yet, as the Gita says, one must go on acting. The test is that even if the work is taken away or destroyed, it must make no difference to the condition of your consciousness.

S : Isn't Nirvana a fundamental spiritual experience ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Nirvana, as I know it, is an experience in which the separative personality is blotted out and one acts according to what is necessary to be done. It is only a passage for reaching a state in which the true individuality can be attained. That individuality is vast, infinite, and can contain the whole world within itself. It is not the small narrow limited individual self in Nature. When you attain that true individuality you can remain in the world and yet be above it. You can act and still be not bound by your action. For getting rid of the separative personality Nirvana is a powerful experience. After Nirvana you can go on to realise yourself as both the One in all and the One who is Many—and yet that One is also He.

S : What you have called "multiple unity" ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

S : The trouble is that we are so much attached to our body and bound up with our ego and passions that it seems hardly possible to get out of a life filled with them. Such a life alone appears real then.

SRI AUROBINDO : You have to give it its place in Reality. And to come out of it or get beyond it there are conditions laid down : for example, rejection and surrender. You have to get rid of the desires and passions to arrive at the higher consciousness.

S : And when in addition to our own burdens and difficulties and egoism we are asked to work for the Divine, for you and the Mother, the trouble increases !

SRI AUROBINDO : There again the same conditions are applicable. You have to work with the right attitude, without personal ambition, without ego. Necessarily, that can't be done in a day.

There are people here whose egos take a new turn—what may be called “egoism for the Divine” : thus, instead of saying “I” and “mine”, they say “our work”, “our Ashram” etc. But this form of ego too must go.

P : I think S was not talking of that.

S : I was referring to our difficulty.

SRI AUROBINDO : And I was referring to mine. (*Laughter*) Several people here make it their main business to get hold of people and make them do Yoga. Their enthusiasm is something enormous. However much you may check them, they can't help propagandising.

P : Shouldn't something be done to stop X doing that ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Do you think you can stop him? I have threatened him with expulsion and even that seems to make no difference ! (*Laughter*)

C : I hear he is holding classes in the town and giving lectures on Yoga.

P : He is explaining everything on a blackboard.

SRI AUROBINDO : What ? Explaining the Brahman on a blackboard ? As for his lecturing, he used to inflict letters on me of never less than 30 pages !

P : That means he had some consideration for you. To Reddy, the Minister of Madras, he wrote a letter of 80 pages just to tell him to release a prisoner !

SRI AUROBINDO : I wonder how the Minister found time to go through his letter.

P : The Minister wrote back regretting he had no time to read it. His secretary may have given him the gist.

SRI AUROBINDO : Poor secretary ! I sympathise with him.

P : One day Amrita told X that Mother had instructed all gate-keepers not to sit in the chair or read or write when on duty.

SRI AUROBINDO : That's true. Y and others used to reply to visitors, sitting in the easy chair. There were many complaints from outsiders about gate-keepers.

P : When Amrita asked X why he was not carrying out Mother's instructions, X replied, “That is just my difficulty.”

SRI AUROBINDO : I have heard that he has become a guru. If you tell these people to go somewhere else and start an Ashram of their own they won't do it. They must remain here and become gurus.

S : Some people try to impose their ideas on others.

N : Not only impose but beat if you don't accept them. I heard that A gave a good beating to B for not accepting you as an Avatar.

SRI AUROBINDO : And after the beating did B feel like accepting me ?

S : I don't understand how that sort of acceptance can help. If, without

experiencing anything, one says about anybody, "He is an Avatar," it hasn't much value.

SRI AUROBINDO : Experience is not always necessary in order to believe a thing. One may have faith. But the trouble comes when you force your faith on others. You can say, "I believe so and so is an Avatar". But you can't say, "If you don't believe, I will thrash you."

As I said, some people have the habit of forcing themselves on others and propagandising.

N : I am afraid Y is one of them.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. When R was here, he was going on quite well, having experiences and progressing in his own way, though he didn't know much about the nature of this Yoga. Y caught hold of him one day and gave a long lecture. R was extremely surprised and said, "What is all this now ?" And everything stopped.

N : This sort of thing comes in the way of your work, I fear.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, tremendously ! Instead of allowing a man to proceed on his own lines, if one forces him to accept one's viewpoints for which he is not prepared, it interferes with the work.

S : Most probably the man turns against you.

SRI AUROBINDO : Either he shuts himself up or he gets false ideas.

There are people who want to bring their whole families into Yoga. I don't see the logic of it. And there are husbands who get angry with their wives because they can't take to Yoga together with them. They want to make it a family affair.

S : They want to go to heaven with their families like Yudhishtira.

SRI AUROBINDO : That may be all right for going to heaven, but not for attaining salvation.

S : I suppose they have got the idea from the fact that a family follows one religion. If all follow it, the atmosphere becomes harmonious.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, but such harmony is suitable only for the religious life. As for the family, even if there are religious differences, they don't matter, as D. L. Roy shows in his song— বড়ো বড়ী দুজনাতো ("Buro, Buri doojanatè")<sup>1</sup>.

Then there are people like X who, when the Mother refuses admission to somebody, go on saying, "Stick on : stick on ! You see, I also was refused but I have got in."

P : Yes, it is a case of test of faith.

S : Or perhaps he has the old idea that Yogis generally test their disciples and so the rejected ones have to pass the test.

SRI AUROBINDO : In that way some people are wonderful. There are a few

<sup>1</sup> "The old man and his old woman, the two together .."

from outside who write and write even if we don't give any answer. If we ask them to go and seek another Guru, they won't.

S : Then why not accept them ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Theirs is not a real call. In some it is only a surface movement, and they are just obstinate. Others are sheer eccentrics or even lunatics.

After this, there was a pause in the talk. Some sadhaks left the room at 8.30 p.m.

P : That letter of Vivekananda is very sincere. One can't have freedom from ambition and other weaknesses unless one has the dynamic presence of the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, I find that most people have difficulty in understanding this. Those weaknesses are very hard to get rid of. They may not always manifest in the surface consciousness but that doesn't mean they are not there. They can be there even if you live in a higher consciousness : the dynamic presence of the Divine is needed. Or else, if without the dynamic realisation you can establish, as I have already said, equanimity and calm right down to your body-consciousness so that nothing stirs whatever happens, then also you can be free from them.

After I had the Nirvanic experience at Baroda and came to Calcutta for work, I thought I had no ambition—I mean personal ambition. But the Voice which I used to hear within would point out to me at every step how personal ambition was there in my movements. These things can hide for a long time without being detected.

It is like the contest for the Congress Presidentship. Everyone says, "It is not out of ambition but from sense of duty, call of the country, demand of principles !" (*Laughter*)



## REMINISCENCES

### VIII

*(The author gives here an interesting account of his fruitless attempts to take to the ascetic life and how he was baffled on all the three occasions through the direct or occult intervention of the Master and the Mother. Incidentally, we get a fine word picture of the rainy season in East Bengal which he had a chance to tour with Sri Aurobindo himself. We get a rare glimpse of Sri Aurobindo on this political tour.)*

NOT once, not twice, but thrice,—three times did I have the urge to take to the life of an ascetic, *sannyāsa*. But whether it was the bad luck of asceticism or out of my own good luck, I had to give up the idea on all the three occasions, though each time it happened in a different way

This was how it came about the first time. I had just come out of jail. What was I to do next ? Go back to the ordinary life, read as before in college, pass examinations, get a job ? But all that was now out of the question. I prayed that such things be erased from the tablet of my fate, *śrasī mā likha, mā likha, mā likha*. But before I could come to any final decision as to the future, I had to do something at least to while away the time. So I gave my parents and relatives to understand that I would be continuing my studies and so be on the look-out for a suitable college—for any and every college would not dare to admit me—a live bombmaker, just out of prison.

After going about a bit, I came to Calcutta and put up with a friend at his Mess. One day, I felt a sudden inspiration. It had to be on that very day : on that very day I must leave the world, make the Great Departure, there was to be no return. I decided to try the Belur Math first. If they took me in, so much the better. They had a good library too, I had heard. In case they refused, well, one would see. It was about four in the afternoon when I left the Mess. I had of course been to the Math before, and to Dakshineshwar as well, but always by river in a country boat. I had since been told there was a railway station at Belur. I thought the Math must be somewhere near the station, so I should go by train this time. With exactly two and a half annas in my pocket, I left for the Howrah station, bought a ticket for Belur and kept the change, a pice or two. On alighting at the station I was told the Math was quite a distance from there, a couple of miles at least. I had to set out on foot and finally arrived at the Math. A few inmates—Sannyasis—sat on a bench in the verandah. They asked me about the object of my visit. I blurted out straightaway, “I have come to stay here. I wish to take up the spiritual life, the life of *sannyāsa*.” “In that

case," they said, "you had better consult the authority in charge." This authority was Sarat Maharaj. He received me in his room and bade me sit by him. He listened to all I had to say. Then he spoke to me in a most unassuming and affectionate tone and explained a number of things.

He asked me, "What precisely do you want to come here for?"

I said, "This is a sacred spot dedicated to the memory of Swami Vivekananda. I have a deep attraction for Swamiji, and I want to follow his ideal."

"To have an attraction for Swamiji," he said, "is a very good thing. But it is not enough. It is easy enough, especially for Indian youths, to adore him and do him worship. What is more difficult is to know and understand his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. And he who does not know and understand Sri Ramakrishna cannot know and understand Swami Vivekananda well. In any case, you will agree that anyone cannot be admitted to the Math just like that. You pay us a few visits, let us get to know each other better, then perhaps we might decide something."

"But I have no intention of going back," I said. "On that I am determined."

Debabrata Basu and Sachin Sen had already joined the Ramakrishna Mission before I came. Both of them had been with me in Alipore Jail among the accused in the Bomb case. Let me here in parenthesis note a few things about Debabrata Basu. He had been a contemporary of Barin, Upen and Hrishikesh and was among the leaders of our group. He was one of the writers. Indeed, it was he and Upen who gave a characteristic stamp to *Yugantar* by their writings. His was the mind of a meditative thinker. His thought was wide in its range, rich in knowledge, he had insight and inner experience. And all this he could combine with a fine sense of humour which did not, however, as in the case of others always explode in laughter. Nor did his appearance belie his mental stature; he was *ākāra-sadrśa-prajña*, a tall figure of a man. One would often find him seated in a meditative pose, gathered silently within. When he came back to his waking self he would sometimes impart to those around him something of the knowledge he had gained in the world of thought or of his experiences in the inner worlds. He had a sister, Sudhira, who was also well-known to us, for in spite of her being a woman she too had shared in her brother's work as a revolutionary. On his joining the Ramakrishna Mission, Debabrata Basu was given the name of Prajnananda. He has written a book in Bengali, *Bharater Sadhana (The Spiritual Heritage of India)*, which is well-known to select circles.

I had to bring up the names of Debabrata and Sachin for I thought—I had also been told something to this effect—that the Math might feel a little nervous or perhaps even get into trouble with the police because of my connection with the Bomb case. But Sarat Maharaj gave me finally to understand that he could not accept me as an inmate. So I had to leave,

Now, what was I to do next ? I decided to start off straight along the Grand Trunk Road, the road of the Mughals which they say would take one as far as Agra and Delhi. So, on to the march now, never to return. I could very well repeat the words of the poet,

“Thou hast found a shelter for everyone,  
O Shankara, O Lord of the Worlds,  
But to me thou hast assigned the road alone.”

Or the words of Christ,

“The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head.”

So I trudged along. The township was passed, human habitations grew thin and the meadows stretched wider on both sides of the road. But what was this coming all on a sudden ? It started drizzling. I had no umbrella, there were no houses to offer me shelter, only the shades of wayside trees. I began to get drenched and the rain damped my body and the inner spirit too along with it. I now said to myself, “Hang it all, but what is the point in this useless suffering ? Is this spiritual discipline ? And is it essential to that discipline to get oneself drenched in the rain out in this wilderness ?” The answer came, “No, it is not at all essential. Can’t you recall Sri Krishna’s words, ‘he who afflicts his body afflicts me too who dwell in that body’ ? Now then ?” Well, I thought I should now turn back. If my resolution was not a sound resolution, there could be no harm in going back on it. So I turned back.

But turn back how ? There was not enough money to pay for the train fare. In any case, it would be easier to take a country boat, from the place where I had reached, so I gathered from enquiries. I came to the riverside. It was already getting on to eight and the last of the ferry boats was about to leave. I ran for it and jumped in. And we crossed over to Calcutta. As I prepared to get down, the boatman said, “Your fare, please ?” I rummaged my pockets and found there the two pice left. I offered them to the man. But he said, “Not two pice but four, the fare is one anna.” “But I have nothing more.” “That I don’t know, you have to pay the full fare.” “But I have told you I have nothing more, how can I pay ?” “I don’t know about that.” “All right, I can give you my pair of slippers.” “No, they won’t do. If you give me the *chuddar* you have on, I might consider.” It was a good shawl I had on, and I said, “No, my dear fellow, that I am not going to part with.” “But you will have to.”

Our exchanges were well on the way to a dispute, when a gentleman suddenly appeared up on the river bank—it was a steep bank and the water had receded far down at the ebb tide—and he asked me, “What is the matter ?” I told him all that had happened. “Oh, is that all ? Here, you fellow,” he said, “here is your fare.” He gave him an anna. I thanked him profusely, asked him for his address, but he went his way without another word.

I too started on my way home and finally came back to my rooms at the Mess. My friend was waiting for me to come before he sat down to dinner. I simply said, "Sorry, I have been late, going about here and there." I did not give him the faintest hint of the drama I had just been through, how from a near-tragedy I had landed into high comedy.

That was my first attempt at *sannyāsa*. Now about the next chance.

I have told you earlier that on our release from jail, so long as we were in Calcutta, Bejoy and I used to call on Sri Aurobindo regularly every afternoon at the residence of his uncle at *Sanjivani* office. After a long deliberation and discussion the two of us finally decided that we should now set out on a career of wandering ascetics. I did not tell Bejoy of my earlier experiment. But Upen had once told me while we had been in jail that in order to be able to love one's country, one must know it and see it with one's own eyes by journeying through it a little. Our sadhus and wandering ascetics too have a custom of going the round of India, and visiting the four corners of the land. Hence, on to the march again, *caraiveti*. Bejoy procured the necessary equipment : that is, the blanket and the *lotā* or water pot. The date of departure was fixed, only the itinerary remained. "But before we start," he said, "we must inform Sri Aurobindo and obtain his blessings. And then we leave."

So, one afternoon, in the course of one of our regular visits, we told him of our plan. He kept quiet for a while, then he said, "Well, you might wait for a few days." I was a little surprised, for I had thought that he would endorse our scheme without any hesitation. Anyhow, we had to wait for a few days. He said to us one day, "You wanted to go on a tour of the country, didn't you ? Well, you come with me, I shall take you on a tour." We were taken aback and were delighted at the same time. He was to leave for Assam on a political mission, first to a Provincial Conference to be held at a place called Jalmuko in the Sylhet area, and thence to the other areas of Assam on a tour of inspection.

This provided me with a fresh opportunity to see once again the beauty of old Bengal, the land of the rivers, from a new angle of vision this time. Water, water everywhere, so much water you do not see at any other place, an endless sheet of water spread out below, matching the vast expanse of the sky above. From Goalando we went by steamer to Narayangunge along the Padma and the Sitalaksha, thence to the Meghna; one who has not seen the Meghna cannot imagine what it is really like—it was, as it were, the living Goddess of the water, Jaleshwari—and next, the mighty Dhaleshwari and on to the Surma. We travelled by river steamer for days on end without a break and we moved about by country boat. The rains had come. The low-lying tracts—they call them Howr—which at other times are just dry lowlands were now all submerged under water. As far as the eyes could reach, there was a vast expanse of water clear and still. Only at places here and there one could see jutting out of its midst a few houses or a village. One day, in the twilight of the evening, land

and river took on a rosy hue in the crimson glow of the setting sun as we sailed along by a slow-moving boat. Sri Aurobindo was there and two or three other leaders. I was so powerfully moved by the scene that—the child that I was—I felt an irresistible desire to burst forth there and then into song :

“In front the clouds glow, over the setting sun.  
Row on thy boat, for now it is too late to cross.  
The golden land is half-seen through the gloam :  
Wouldst thou then take thy boat to the other shore ?”

Somehow with difficulty I contained myself and sat in quiet contemplation.

Out on tour, Sri Aurobindo used to address meetings, meet people when he was free and give them instructions and advice. Most of those who came to his meetings did not understand English, they were common village folk. But they came in crowds all the same, men, women and children, just to hear him speak and have his *darshan*. When he stood up to address a gathering, a pin-drop silence prevailed. His audience must surely have felt a vibration of something behind the spoken word. It is not that he confined himself to political matters alone. There were many who knew that he was a Yogi and spiritual guide and they sought his help in these matters too. I have myself seen as I spent whole nights with him in the same room, at Jalmuko, how he would sit up practically the whole night and go to bed only for a short while in the early hours of the morning.

We toured the country for about ten or twelve days and then we came back. On our return, Sri Aurobindo made us an offer : we were to have a home at the Shyampukur premises of *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*. I have already told you about that.

The story of my third and last attempt at *sannyāsa* can be briefly told. The scene was here in Pondicherry and the time immediately before the final arrival of the Mother. Five of us lived here as permanent inmates then, not counting Sri Aurobindo of course. We were indeed well on the way to *sannyāsa* in that life of Brahmacharya and single blessedness. The first time it had been myself, my own self or soul, who rejected *sannyāsa*. The second time the veto was pronounced by the Supreme Soul, the Lord—Sri Aurobindo himself. And the third time it was the Supreme Prakriti, the Universal Mother who it seems scented the danger and hastened as if personally to intervene and bar that way of escape for ever, by piling up against us the heaven-kissing thorny hedge of wedlock. Three of us got caught in this manner, although the other two did find a way of escape.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Sanat K. Banerji from the original Bengali)

## GLIMPSES OF SRI AUROBINDO

*(In a recent issue of 'Mother India', we promised to publish in translation some extracts from the late Suresh Chandra Chakravarti's Reminiscences in Bengal, having a bearing on Sri Aurobindo's life. Here is the first instalment, dealing with the 'Karmayogin' period.)*

IT was about two-thirty in the morning. The date was March 30, 1910. There came the sound of the engine's whistle. Then the train began to slow down; it became slower and slower and slower, until finally it came to a dead stop after giving a jolt backward and a slight push to the front. It was obvious that there was no such thing as a vacuum brake on this train. I opened the door of my compartment and got down on the platform. This was the railway station at Pondicherry. I feel sure that my readers will wonder with wide-open eyes at these lines. They will want to know why of all places the railway station of Pondicherry and at dead of night? They are familiar with the story of Bengalis going to Bombay or Burma, Madras or the Malay Archipelago. Sons of the soil of Bengal have also been visiting the island of Ceylon since the days of Vijayasingha. But what is this strange thing now?

To make that clear, I have to explain something of what had gone before. That is what I am trying to do.

It all began in the same year of grace, 1910, in the month of February. Perhaps it was in the middle of the month, or was it towards the end, that at about eight o'clock one evening, in house Number 4 on Shyampukur Lane in the Shyambazar area of Calcutta, in a room upstairs, there sat a mature young man surrounded by a certain number of younger people. The older person sat on a small wooden cot—that was the only piece of furniture in the room—and of the younger group one or two sat on the same cot and the rest sat on the floor. The older person had a pencil in his hand and a sheet of paper in front. He had been doing some automatic writing and reading it aloud. The youths listened intently as he spoke and were bothering with their endless questions the spirits who came presumably from the other worlds.

This mature young man was named Aurobindo Ghose. The names of the others present were Birendranath Ghosh, Saurindranath Basu, Bejoykumar Nag, Hem Sen, Nolinikanta Gupta and Sureshchandra Chakravarti. All of them with the exception of Saurin and Suresh had been among the accused in the Alipore Bomb case of 1908-09. I need not enter here into the details of that case. About the beginning of this century, a few of those who had been dreaming

of the freedom of their motherland were attracted by the idea of terrorism. As a result there came to birth in Bengal a secret society with Calcutta as its centre. In course of time the police came to know everything about this secret society and in May 1908 they arrested in Calcutta most of its members. They also came in possession of some weapons like live pistols. The trial lasted a whole year and in May 1909 some were discharged by the court and others were convicted. Three among those convicted were sentenced to death; these were Barindra, Hem Das and Ullaskar. Their death sentences were quashed on appeal and they were given transportation for life.

On his release from jail, Sri Aurobindo resumed with full force his work for the country and began publishing two weekly journals, *Karmayogin* in English and *Dharma* in Bengali. But now there seemed a change had come in his manner of writing. Formerly, what he used to write for the Daily English paper, *Bandemataram*, was primarily of a political nature. But in the *Karmayogin* and *Dharma* articles one felt a deeper note. It was as if he was now preparing to bring out the inner spirit of India, the eternal soul, by penetrating beyond the workaday veil of the shallow and superficial politics till then familiar to the anglicised mind. Politics now served only as a pretext. One seemed to get from these writings a hint of the path he was to traverse in his subsequent days. He seemed to be leaving behind the ranks of political leadership and moving towards the Ashram of the ancient Indian Rishis, seers of the Self and seers of Truth. This change in attitude was obviously necessary both for self-discovery and for a clearer understanding of one's country. Especially is this an essential need in India today, not for India alone but for the whole of humanity....

In this Shyampukur house was situated the *Karmayogin* and *Dharma* office... Those of us who lived there as permanent residents used to cook our own food. It was all vegetarian food, not because that was part of our ideal but because it was the easier to cook. Our breakfasts were very regular, since they came from the shops; they consisted of fried rice, coconuts and fritters,—we had not yet acquired a taste for tea. But about our lunch there reigned a complete anarchy. If we felt the urge, the cooking was done and the lunch was over before it was ten. And on the days when we did not feel the urge, we went on idling and coaxing each other to the task till it was about three in the afternoon before the whole business was done with. Some kind of order was introduced in this reign of irregularity only when Hem Sen happened to be present. Hem Sen was a Hathayogin. Perhaps it was his Hatha Yoga that had taught him how not to encourage this kind of physical lethargy. It is rather strange that I have no recollections about our evening meal. This much, however, is certain that we did not skip this meal, and I do remember about an occasional visit to a hotel and treating ourselves to dishes prepared in Western style....

At this time Sri Aurobindo lived in College Square, at the house of his

uncle, Sri Krishnakumar Mitra, editor and proprietor of *Sangraam*, a Bengali nationalist paper. I saw Sri Aurobindo in this house only once and that too for a few seconds. Once we were out of funds and I had been deputed to see him on that account. The impression I carry of that house and its approaches are those of a press and of things connected with a press. I came at about nine in the morning and was taken to a room upstairs. I had waited barely a couple of minutes when Sri Aurobindo entered by one of the inner doors. He was dressed in a twill shirt and a *dhoti* well tied and he had a *chappal* on. He put some money into my hands and left without saying a word. I do not remember how much it was, perhaps some twenty or twenty-five rupees. I came back to Shyampukur with the money.

From this College Square house, Sri Aurobindo used to come to Shyampukur Lane every day at about four or five in the afternoon. I have said that none of us took tea in those days. But we had the tea things ready and when Sri Aurobindo came he was served a cup of tea with some *luchi* and potatoes and *halwa* obtained from a corner shop in Grey Street. He would be busy for some time with his work connected with the papers. Then he would come and chat with us and there was automatic writing almost every day...

About this period Sri Aurobindo had been studying Tamil. A South Indian gentleman used to come to the Shyampukur house and give him his Tamil lessons in one of the office rooms. I remember how one day, after he had finished his lesson, he came back and said to us full of glee like a schoolboy of fourteen, "Do you know what is Pirentir Nat Tattakopta?" We were of course all left speechless in our ignorance. Then he explained, "That is Birendranath Dattagupta in Tamil." Tamil has only the first and the last letters in each of the first five groups of Sanskrit consonants and does not seem to recognise in its alphabet the existence of the other three, nor does it have the conjunct consonants. Hence in Tamil Birendra can be Pirentir, Nath becomes Nat, Datta develops into Tatta. But Gupta need not have become Kopta but for Sri Aurobindo's sense of fun.<sup>1</sup>

I have said earlier that Sri Aurobindo used to come to Shyampukur at about four or five in the afternoon. He returned from here to College Square by nine-thirty or ten in the evening. We used to see him off at the Grey Street corner where he caught the tram... Sometimes he got very late, so late that the trams were not available and a carriage had to be hired for him. The horse-drawn carriages had not yet disappeared from the Calcutta streets under the law of survival of the fittest...

<sup>1</sup> "Tatta" in Bengali stands for the Sanskrit *tattwa*, the "categories" or principles of philosophy, and "Kopta" is the delicious mincemeat better known as *kafra* to Indian gourmands.



Now to return to my story. One day, in the month of February, in the year 1910, in a room upstairs at No. 4 Shyampukur Lane, at about eight in the evening, Sri Aurobindo was doing some automatic writing and reading it aloud to some of us young people. If anyone were to suppose that, this being the writing of spirits, the thing was entirely serious from the beginning to the end, he would be making a mistake. All spirits are not serious people; there were some who loved humour and mirth. Hence those séances were sometimes grave with solemn voices and sometimes bubbling with laughter and fun. The spirit-writings were going on at full speed when there came into the room our old friend and associate Rambabu, Ramchandra Majumdar.

He too was a young man, still below thirty, a man with a fair complexion. He wore a beard, not carelessly sprouted but very well-trimmed. The care he took of his hair and the manner in which he dressed suggested always as if he was out for his wedding. I do not remember to have ever noticed anything untidy or dirty about his dress or hair. He had a scar on his forehead, perhaps a relic of his docile childhood. Rambabu was a man of Calcutta and belonged to that particular area where we lived. His house was in a lane off Grey Street. He was on the staff of *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*.

As he entered the room, he informed Sri Aurobindo in a rather anxious voice that they had again issued a fresh warrant against him. The information was from a reliable source, had been conveyed to him by a high police official. This was not something very unexpected : for some time past there had been a rumour that the Government would not rest until they had Sri Aurobindo in their grasp again. Nevertheless, the whole atmosphere of the room immediately changed as the news came. In place of the bubbling mirth there prevailed a deep silence, like sudden darkness after a strong illumination. All of us waited with anxious hearts. Sri Aurobindo seemed to think for a few seconds. Then he said, "I shall go to Chandernagore." Rambabu said, "Just now?" Sri Aurobindo replied, "Just now, this very moment."

Sri Aurobindo stood up and left the house accompanied by Rambabu. A little behind them followed Biren, and I came out next and followed the three. We thus formed a small procession, not a festive one but a silent procession, with Sri Aurobindo and Rambabu at the head, Biren following them a little behind and keeping them within view, and last of all myself a little farther behind Biren and keeping him in my view. This wordless procession of four, apparently disjointed but linked together by subtle bonds, went along a northerly route.

As long as Sri Aurobindo remained in that house it used to be watched by the men of the C. I. D. Just a few days earlier, simply in order to escape the attentions of the police officials, our séances of automatic writing had had to be removed from a room overlooking the lane to an inner apartment. But we found that on that particular evening, when Sri Aurobindo and Rambabu came out

of the house and the two of us followed in succession, there was not a trace of any policemen anywhere about.

In my childhood I had once seen a play entitled *Surath Uddhar* (*The Rescue of Surath*). Puranjaya Singha, the trusted commander of King Suratha, had been thrown into prison as the result of an intrigue. As he was about to be rescued from prison, the gods sent the goddess of sleep to close the eyes of the sentries. The sentries of course had to yawn half a dozen times and rub their eyes and then roll down the stage. Whether in like manner the gods had on this occasion sent the goddess of drink to seize the throats of the C. I. D. men, or whether the men had gone somewhere for some fresh air or anything more solid I do not know. Or perhaps the men had been used to temper their sense of duty by cleverness and skill all these days. Sri Aurobindo used to come to this place about four or five and leave only after nine in the evening. To cool one's heels in that narrow lane all this length of time was nothing but foolishness; the time could be better utilised elsewhere on some other distraction that might soothe the heart. So, perhaps they used to leave the place after seeing Sri Aurobindo enter the premises about four or five in the afternoon, fully assured that everything was all right and they would return to duty before nine o'clock after having had their fill of pleasure. However that might be, it was found that on this particular occasion the C. I. D. men were not present, whatever the reason. I am rather curious to learn what happened to them at Headquarters after that day.

In any case, I do not think that the police could have done much even if they had been present. I have said that Rambabu belonged to that area and it was evident that he knew every little nook and corner in the locality. With Sri Aurobindo he entered an area which to me looked something strange and unthinkable. I was a recent arrival in Calcutta and had not yet got over my "provincial" outlook. So far in that city I had come across rows of tall buildings proudly flanking the spacious streets. But I could not have even dreamed before I entered that area that a creature called man who is usually credited with an amount of intelligence could have formed his dwellings into such a maze. I felt certain that this could have had no other object in view than to forestall on that particular day a possible pursuit by the C. I. D. men. The houses stood huddled together in a compact line, the lanes appeared in quick succession, there came a turn at every step. Not a soul was about and not a sound could be heard at that early hour. The radio of course had not yet come, but the gramophones were there and in any case a certain amount of practice in singing had already become a *sine qua non* for securing a husband for the young maid. But no strains of music reached our ears from anywhere, either from a gramophone or from the do-re-mi-fa of the harmonium. On that solitary path in a locality criss-crossed by so many lanes and turns, in that dense silence, it was impossible for the police or for anyone doubly more competent than the police to give chase and keep the fugitive within sight till the end. That is why I say

that even if the C. I. D. men had been actually present on duty, I do not think they would have achieved much. The only thing they could have learnt would have been that on that particular evening Sri Aurobindo on coming out of the house did not return home to College Square but left for an unknown destination through the mazes of a particular locality. It may be that if the Calcutta C. I. D. had on its staff a man like the English Sherlock Holmes or the Belgian Hércule Poirot, he might have managed to trace him to Chandernagore with the help of that faint clue. And in that case perhaps this story would not have been written.

But as it happened, we walked on in silence for some fifteen or twenty minutes and ended up at one of the river *ghats*. As I have said, I was a newcomer to Calcutta—it had not yet been three months since I had arrived—and I was therefore not very well acquainted with the city. Hence I cannot say for certain which particular *ghat* it was; it might have been the Bagbazar *ghat* for all I know. On arriving at the *ghat*, Rambabu hailed one of the boatmen and said, “Hey, would you take a fare?” These words of Rambabu and his voice still ring in my ears. The conversation that took place next between the boatman and our Rambabu was in a low voice. Sri Aurobindo now got into the boat and Biren and I followed. Rambabu took his leave. The boat sailed off. As we sailed up the river and reached midstream, it was clear that it happened to be a moonlit night. The waves danced and sparkled all around in the bright light of the moon. I do not know what was the exact lunar phase. Perhaps it was, in the words of Tagore,

The eleventh day of the bright phase,  
When the sleepless moon went  
Sailing alone in her dream-boat.

All else looked so remote now—the police and the city with its spite and violence and strife; even the questions that preoccupied us of the country’s freedom and bondage became insignificant. We felt as if reborn into the calm wideness of Nature out of the cramping hold of our man-made civilisation ..

(To be continued)

SURESH CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTI

(Translated by Sanat K. Banerji from the original Bengali of “Smriti-Katha”)

## OLD LONG SINCE

### I

1905-1910

IN our village and all around, four names of four great personages were being continually talked of. It was the time when Independence, Foreign Rule, Slavery were the cries that used to fill the sky. And the four great names that reached our ears in this connection were Tilak, Bipinchandra Pal, Lajpatrai (Lal-Bal-Pal) and Aurobindo.

Of these only one name caught my heart and soul. Just to hear the name—Aurobindo—was enough.

All the four persons were pioneers in the service of the country, great leaders of the front rank. Why then did one name only out of the four touch me exclusively? For many days to come the mystery remained to me a mystery.

In 1905 I came to Pondicherry for study. In 1910 Sri Aurobindo also arrived here. What a coincidence! He came to the very town where I had come! I was full of joy, thrilled with delight.

A strong desire arose in me that I must see Sri Aurobindo. He had been there in our town for six months, very few knew of his arrival, but I knew of it on the third day itself. My uncle was engaged in politics and was in contact with the national workers and leaders. He came to know of the incident on the very day. In fact the number of those who knew could be counted on one's fingers. The idea gained on me that somehow I must see Aurobindo. Hearing must be translated into vision.

Day after day, night after night, this was my sole thought. Two years passed by.

Finally one day, at about six in the evening, my friend Krishnaswami Chettiar and I started from Muttiapet, a suburb of Pondicherry,—near about our present Sports Ground—and proceeded towards the beach where Sri Aurobindo's house stood. We walked the whole distance. I was a boy of about fourteen years. Chettiar had his cycle, but he was wheeling it by him as he walked along. As it had become somewhat dark, Chettiar proposed to leave the cycle in Sri Aurobindo's house before going to the beach. He thought it would be burdensome to carry a cycle with us and we would not be free to walk about as we liked. That was the only reason why we went to Sri Aurobindo's house.

A word about Krishnaswami—who is no longer in the land of the living—would not be out of place. He was a well-to-do man of Muthialpet and a great devotee of Bharati—the great poet and national worker. He used to give all possible help to Bharati and attend to his needs. He knew neither English nor French, his only medium of communication was his mother-tongue, Tamil. He had a kind of instinctive respect for Sri Aurobindo because of Bharati's association. He would now and then go and stand a little afar and have his Darshan, but naturally had no talk with him.

In the Mission Street (Rue des Missions Etrangères) close to the Duplex Street there was a house with its front facing west. It extended from the Mission Street backward down to the Rue de la Cantine on the East. It consisted of three courtyards. Each courtyard had four verandas around it; Sri Aurobindo's room was in the third block. The front block was occupied by Nolini, Sourin, Bejoy; Moni was in the second block. I heard it said that Sri Aurobindo would daily walk round and round the courtyard from about five in the afternoon till the other inmates returned from their playground at about eight or eight-thirty in the evening.

When Chettiar and I approached Sri Aurobindo's house, we found the door bolted. We both knocked at it with some hesitation. All on a sudden the door opened and was left ajar. Sri Aurobindo had come quietly and turned back immediately as the door opened—it looked as if he did not want to let us have a glimpse of his face.

In that fading twilight only his long hair hanging gracefully upon his back and his indescribably beautiful small feet caught my eyesight ! My heart throbbed within me as though I had been lifted up into the region of the gods ! It took me long to come back to normal composure.

I did not know what were the feelings and thoughts of Chettiar and I did not care to know !

## II

1910-1914

All these five years served the need of my preparation. It should be called a pilgrimage to Sri Aurobindo.

Each act of mine, each event of my life had become, as it were, offerings in the sacrifice done unknowingly by me. Prior to my surrender to Sri Aurobindo, Bharati helped me a great deal to attain wideness in the heart, to loosen the ties of old samskaras and the like, to impart purity and newness to my thoughts, by means of his words, his deeds and his way of living.

Because of Bharati's association with Sri Aurobindo and his immense respect and devotion for him, I felt in me a great inexplicable attraction to Bharati.

Every evening, a little after dark, Bharati would go to Sri Aurobindo's house. He chose that time not with the purpose of avoiding people who would want to make a note of his visit. It was because Sri Aurobindo used to come out of his room and receive his friends only after seven in the evening. An exception, however, was made for close friends like Bharati and Srinivasachari, who, at a very urgent need, could see him at any time of the day. Their visits to Sri Aurobindo's house after seven had become a regular affair. Bharati would visit without fail; it was not so with Srinivasachari, however.

There was hardly any subject which they did not talk about in their meetings at night. They discussed literature, society, politics, the various arts; they exchanged stories, even cracked jokes, laughed and had a lot of fun. In the absence of Srinivasachari their talks would no doubt disregard all limits of sect or cult. In Bharati's absence, Sri Aurobindo's talks with the inmates of the house at dinner-time would reach the height of the humorous. That apart, I heard people say that Bharati and others would return home by eight-thirty or nine at night and carry in their hearts lovingly whatever share of the divine riches they had the capacity to receive. In consequence of their inner and outer change they would find the exterior world also changed the next morning.

A long time after, I too had a little of this mystic experience. But now as I cast a retrospective look, I perceive that the past was in a way a period of tapasya before reaching the Gurudeva.

As I said, not a single evening would pass without Bharati's calling on Sri Aurobindo. Bharati delighted in pouring out to Sri Aurobindo all that he had read in the dailies, all about local affairs and happenings in the suburbs. And if, however, Sri Aurobindo made comments on one or two of the points raised, his joy would know no bounds.

On his way to Sri Aurobindo's house, Bharati would first call at Srinivasachari's, go with him to the beach, stay there till 7 p.m., and then make for Sri Aurobindo's house. The three together would jocularly discuss a variety of subjects. Bharati, on his way back, would often halt for a while at Srinivasachari's and then go home. As soon as they reached home from Sri Aurobindo's, the people assembled there would put the identical question: "What did Sri Aurobindo say today?" It was as though the Jivatman waited to know the Will of the Paramatman.

Two years passed in this way. At home we had a strict observance of orthodox rites and rituals. But the moment Bharati arrived, these began to crumble away; in his presence all rules and ceremonies, habits and customs slipped off from me and disappeared in no time. Why so? Because it was Sri Aurobindo's wish that expressed itself through him.

My neighbour was no more a stranger to me, whether a shudra or a pariah; he was as I was, a man; little by little my heart got soaked in the feeling that he was my brother. This feeling began to translate itself into due practice.

Today it might appear as nothing uncommon. But even to imagine today what difficulties it might have created some fifty years ago can make one shudder with fear. The village life was orthodox in its ways; the town life was somewhat different to the same extent as green leaf and green fruit might appear to differ. Later on, Bharati did away with these customs and threw them off like chaff, as things without substance. It would be interesting to follow the whole development and examine it through all its stages. That was the time when the removal of the mere tuft of hair from the head would mean the loss of the very truth of Brahminhood. But now the white people are not only not looked upon as Mlechchas as before, but, in addition, they as well as the Chinese and the Negroes and other races are all felt as pertaining to humankind. Afterwards I realised that the disappearance of the sense of division from within me had been the effect of a continuous shedding of light upon my heart imperceptibly by Sri Aurobindo.

Whether in Bharati's house or by the tanks or beside the big lake, at the time of collective dining the so-called Pariahs, Shudras, Brahmins would all sit together comfortably without any distinction of caste or creed and take their meals. Today it may appear quite common. But in those days many of us would not dare to disclose such a conduct at home. We would be alarmed if some family member chanced to see us taking part in a collective dinner. Along with Bharati we would make fun of caste distinction. The feeling that all were men had taken deep root in the heart of each of us. Now as we look back upon the past we come to realise how far we have progressed in our endless pilgrimage to Sri Aurobindo. Looked at from another standpoint it would appear clearly as but one step in the path leading to Sri Aurobindo's ideal.

The truth must manifest itself in the heart; the manifested truth must grow up step by step. An unending, ever-growing aspiration hailing from afar in the boundless space of my being fell upon me like a golden light.

In the matter of ritual observance a change within me was going on without my knowledge during two or three years; the truth had dawned upon me that the outer was nothing else than the inner. Old habits and customs had lost all meaning and looked like worm-eaten things to me.

I had to pass through a period when my inner being would say one thing and my outer life would express something else. Gurudeva, whom I had not yet seen with naked eyes, caught hold of my heart and brought about its radical change. Bharati was very helpful in effectuating my inner nearness to Sri Aurobindo. Often it would occur to me: "Why did I not have, like Bharati, courage enough to act according to the inner voice?" As I grew more and more familiar with Bharati, the rites and ceremonies, rules and regulations dropped off from me as withered leaves from a tree. During that time my old orthodox friends and relatives took upon themselves the task of explaining to me what amount of truth lay in religious rules and regulations, in what way they were

true. But they failed to strike my mind as true. Was it because of an attraction for the new ? Or was it that I could find no relation ever existing between the eternal and the old ?

At times Bharati made us hear what Sri Aurobindo had told him on the Shakti cult. But I put no question on its details.

I made repeated requests to Bharati to take me to Sri Aurobindo. He, however, kept silent each time I made this request. Several times I requested my late uncle also. But no definite reply from him either. I used to hear that a very limited number of persons had permission to see Sri Aurobindo ; that only Bharati and Srinivasachari could see him daily ; that my uncle had his Darshan only once a month.

It had been made evident to me after those numerous attempts that Sri Aurobindo's Darshan was a rarity and to obtain it with the help of Bharati or Srinivasachari or my uncle was well-nigh impossible. Then how was I to have Sri Aurobindo's darshan ? In the core of my heart burnt a living faith incessant and unwavering, that somehow some day I would have his darshan.

During that period, one day at about five-thirty or six in the evening, I happened to meet on the beach Ramaswami Iyengar, who a few years later became well renowned as Va Ra. He had been living then in Sri Aurobindo's house. As intimacy with him grew, I felt a singular attraction for conversation with him. His remarks were always trenchant and scintillating. Never would he speak of anyone with respect. His face had charm. His eyes beamed. While returning home from the beach I would always feel sad to break off conversation with him. And the hope to meet Sri Aurobindo through him drew me all the more to his company.

*(To be continued)*

AMRITA



## INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS

(8)

THERE are four Vedas and each Veda consists of several parts. The principal parts of each Veda are known as the Samhitas and the Brahmanas. The Samhitas are the collection of the mantras, the Veda proper. The Brahmanas are the commentaries, interpretations or new suggestions. Again the Brahmanas are divided into the Brahmanas proper, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. The Samhitas comprise the general Vedic experiences and the mantras necessary for the propitiation and manifestation of the gods. And the Brahmanas provide all the details connected with the ceremonies, sacrificial rites, etc. The Upanishads are the repository of the knowledge of the supreme Being divested of ceremonies and allegories. The Samhitas have laid stress on the forms of religious culture, while the Upanishads on the spirit of it. In a way, the Aranyakas combined in themselves both the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. To sum up, the first and foremost part of the Vedas are the Samhitas which are immediately followed by the Brahmanas culminating in the Aranyakas which in their turn terminate in the Upanishads. But there are exceptions. For example, the Aitareya Aranyaka introduces the Rigveda Samhita, while the Brihadaranyaka itself is an Upanishad.

These four divisions of the Veda correspond to the four stages of human life. In the first stage, the foremost duty of a Brahmachari (a student practising celibacy) is to recite the mantras of the Samhitas which contain the quintessence of the ideal of life. In the next stage, on entering upon household life one has to practise ceremonies and sacrificial rites and thus the stress is laid on the Brahmanas. In the third stage of life, when one renounces the household life and retires into the forest one has to practise all those sacrificial rites and ceremonies symbolically as a part of one's spiritual discipline following the teachings of the Aranyakas. In the fourth and final stage, one gives up all one's earlier practices and in conformity with the guidance of the Upanishads one takes to the contemplation of the supreme Truth which cannot be attained by reasonings and discussions (*Naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā*).

Now we may say that the Samhitas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads indicate changes in the practice of the Vedic truth undergone with the march of time. The spiritual discipline of the Samhitas has for its aim the attainment of Godhood which is the cosmic manifestation of the transcendental triune principle, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. The discipline of the Brahmanas

tries to manifest the spirit of the former through external practice. And the spiritual discipline of the Upanishads does not concern itself so much with the manifestation of the gods as it does with getting absorbed in the ultimate Source from where the gods originated. In other words, the aim of the Upanishadic truth is to indicate how the light of consciousness dwelling in the heart of everyone like a steady flame to the size of the thumb can be merged into the boundless ocean of the transcendental consciousness.

Strictly speaking, the stages of the Samhitas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads cannot be regarded as successive stages. For there are many Upanishads which appeared earlier than many Brahmanas and some portions of the Samhitas. As we understand it, at first there were the earlier mantras of the Samhitas from which there arose the two branches, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. The Brahmanas laid stress on the exoteric portions of the Samhitas, and the Upanishads on the esoteric side related to the knowledge of the ultimate Truth.

In the subsequent ages people were attracted more to the exoteric side dealing with ceremonies and sacrificial rites as a means of temporal happiness, and it is the Brahmanas that professed to explain the Vedas. On the other hand, the Upanishads tried to maintain the spirit of the ultimate realisation suggested in the Vedas. That is why the Upanishads have been looked upon as the system of knowledge, while the Brahmanas as that of work.

The R̥gveda is the oldest of all the parts of the Vedas, and its Samhita part marks the hoariest antiquity. The tenth chapter may be, as the European scholars have concluded, of a later origin. Besides, many of the mantras of the R̥gveda with slight alterations are to be found in other parts of the Vedas. In this respect the Samaveda owes the greatest debt to the R̥gveda. It will be no exaggeration to hold that the Samaveda is only a novel brand of the R̥gveda. On that strength, curiously enough, attempts have been made to prove the Samaveda to be the oldest of all the Vedas.

The R̥gveda Samhita also has been suitably divided and arranged in different chapters. Two different methods have been adopted in this arrangement. Firstly, the whole of the Samhitas has been divided into ten books, and each book is called a *maṇḍal* and each maṇḍal is composed of different series of mantras, each series is called a *sukta*, each mantra or sukta is called a *ṛk*. Each maṇḍal or book is generally attributed to a Rishi. For instance, the second maṇḍal has been the contribution of the Rishi Gritsamada and his descendants. The authorship of the third maṇḍal goes to the Rishi Viśvamitra. The fourth maṇḍal is attributed to Vamadeva, while the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth are respectively attributed to Atri, Bharadwaja, Vasishtha and Pragatha. The whole of the ninth maṇḍal has been exclusively devoted to the god Soma. The first and the tenth have been the contributions of many Rishis. Each sukta of these two books contains mantras offered to

a particular god or several gods related to that very god. Besides, there is another method by which the whole of the Samhitas has been divided into eight parts and each part is called an *aṣṭaka* (a group of eight). Again each *aṣṭaka* is divided into *adhyaayas* (chapters), sub-chapters and a series of cognate mantras. But the principle followed in this kind of division is hard to determine.

Be that as it may, we are not so much concerned with the external forms of the Veda as with its inner significance. So long the Veda has been solely the subject of archaeological researches. To be sure, the Veda has a living spirit. The true significance of the Veda lies in the fact that it points out to man the true goal and the means to the attainment of a higher and nobler life. In spite of his ignorance, lack of power and want of bliss, the dream that man has dreamt, the ideal that he has pursued through all the vicissitudes of his life has been : "What shall I do with that which cannot bring me Immortality ?" This quest for Immortality of the human soul finds its absolute fulfilment in the Veda which is truly a vast ocean of boundless delight. The true purpose of one's studying the Veda is served only when its mantras arouse in oneself the aspiration for the divine Delight.

*(Concluded)*

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

*(Translated by Chimmoy from the original Bengali)*

## FRENCH INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

It is well-known that nations can borrow from each other in the realm of ideas without fear of tariff bars or quotas. Books know no frontiers. They are the best agents of international understanding, they travel without hindrance among the free peoples of the world and help to convey the knowledge and ways of life of one country to another.

It is proposed here to give some glimpses of the major aspects of this kind of "intellectual interpenetration" between France and England in the literary field. The overall evolution of English and French literatures, however different they may be, offers in many respects links of connection and zones of contact with instances of mutual correction. An attempt to trace these links and zones is a revealing and fascinating research. In this article, the stress will be laid on some aspects of French influence on the language and literature of England.

The currents of thought and literary influences that flowed from France to England or in the opposite direction have been the concern of the researches made by the pioneers of Modern Comparative Literature, such as Paul Hasard, Joseph Texte, etc., and also Jean Marie Carré, Head of the Comparative Literature Department at Sorbonne, Paris, under whom I had the honour of studying. We shall tread in their footsteps and are greatly indebted to their works.

### I

The best known fairy stories which British children have been enjoying for generations have come from abroad, from France and Denmark. Charles Perrault, the courtly French writer of the XVIIth Century, gave to them, as well as to young French boys, Cinderella, Red Riding Hood, Puss-in-Boots, etc., which remain the most popular of nursery tales on both sides of the Channel.

It is worth noting, however, that unlike the fairies called up by French writers, those depicted by English poets like to flutter about and go in a merry round on the lawn and hate logic; these creatures form a sort of community that whirls around King Oberon and his spouse Titania, in the graceful and poetical atmosphere of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." They do not resemble their sisters on the other side of the Channel, for in the aerial land of fairies the English poets symbolised the transient emotions of their hearts and all the "entanglement of human desires and fantasies".

It is natural that geographical proximity, in spite of the different racial and cultural make-up, should have given France a great and continuous influence.

What is true of fairy stories is even more true of the more mature forms of literature.

Mediaeval English romances, like the word romance itself, were French in origin. Englishmen are so accustomed to regard Arthur as a national hero that they forget readily that it was in the form of French Romance that the Arthurian Legend was introduced to England round the XIIth and XIIIth Centuries (*cf.* The Version of Tristan of Thomas, an Anglo-Norman poet, and the *lais* of Marie de France, both of whom lived in England).

So the great legends which have become a European heritage were built up in literature by French writers. As stated by E. Renan, the poetry of the Celtic races radiated and attained universality thanks to French romance writers of this period.

This "matter of Britain", rich in romantic poetry and human resonance, that will be recurring many a time in English letters derives from French writings. Sir Thomas Malory's "Morte d'Arthur", the main embodiment of the stories, was compiled in the late XVth Century from the long French romance of the XIIIth century, and in its turn became the source of such poets as Spenser, Tennyson and Swinburne. It is also well-known that for years Milton meditated the Round Table before finally discarding it in favour of the Biblical theme of "Paradise Lost".

Towards the end of the XIXth Century, that accomplished novelist, George Meredith, derived his conception of Comedy largely from the Theatre of Molière for which he expressed so much admiration. It is also known that Meredith greatly admired Rousseau and considered Stendhal a subtle and talented observer, though blaming him for dissecting love, for Meredith says that "analysis kills this feeling" (*Letters*, Vols I).

In all the centuries in between these two dates (XIIth to XIXth Centuries) French influence flowed no doubt with ups and downs. Strong waves from France stimulated or hindered the psychological evolution of English literary life. We shall here deal with some of the most marked moments of this slow and effective cultural penetration.

## 2

It may be pointed out, to start with, that even before the Norman Conquest, scholarship formed for England many links with the Continent, with France in particular.

There was already an exchange of students between the Universities of Oxford and of Paris, Oxford (Oxenford) being then in its infancy.

This intercourse received a powerful impetus with Lanfranc, as Archbishop of Canterbury.

French and Flemish ecclesiastics came to England and in those early days

Englishmen finished their training in French and Flemish monasteries which were centres of the intellectual life of the nation.

King Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), a Saxon, whose mother was a Norman lady, had already ordered French to be spoken at court and put his Norman friends in the most important positions in the Government and the Church.

The episode of the Norman Invasion in 1066 with the battle of Hastings remains more than a simple episode of history : it had far-reaching and deep repercussions in linguistic as well as other directions.

It is almost a new era that was being ushered in : that of Middle English.

The Normans imported into Britain the French literary ideal, together with their laws and system of administration.

Before the language of the new conquerors, which was adopted by the aristocracy in its haste to imitate them, the native language, Anglo-Saxon, receded and was kept alive only by the poorer people as they went about their humble jobs. French was thus the language of the upper and ruling classes and of those educated Englishmen who wished "to speke Frensch, for to be more y-told of".

Anglo-Saxon was not quite dead, could not die. The subject population lived on and so did their language, now discarded for literary purposes, a language shorn of cultural pretensions but a powerfully throbbing language, nevertheless.

The English language, shaken to its foundations by the *choc* of the Conquest, applied itself to a long work of local readaptation and an efflorescence of dialects was witnessed : the one from the South-East Centre was finally to prevail during the XVth Century as the literary language of the nation, owing both to the political attraction of London and to other factors.

In the course of the XIIIth and XIVth Centuries, a more and more dense mass of Anglo-Norman and French words penetrated into this language, either by the incessant relations of the conqueror and the conquered or by the conscious striving of a literature that set itself at the French literary school.

England was brought into the full stream of the wider European thought and culture.

To start with, since most military affairs were in the hands of the new lords, it is not surprising that a host of new French military terms were introduced, e.g. : *arms* and *armour*, *battle* and *siege*, *standard* and *trumpet*, *soldier*, *sergeant*, *officer*, *heutenant* and *constable* (from French *conétable*).

Educated Normans prided themselves on their love of chivalry. They liked to think they were superior to the rough Saxons. Noble phrases and words usually associated with knighthood and gallantry crept into the language. "To this period of time date the English words *glory* and *honour*, *fine* and *noble*—all of them of French origin" (G. A. Sambrook, "The English Language"). Normans were also reputed to be great builders, and castles sprang up all over

the country. It was in their lovely stone-built churches and cathedrals that they showed their greatest skill.

After the Conquest, rather small Saxon churches, with their tiny windows and unattractive exteriors, gave place to the noble Norman buildings, with rounded archways, heavy pillars and walls. This splendid architecture needed many new French terms to explain it. *Arch, pillar, tower, castle* and *palace* are some of them.

As regards social manners and the household, the social graces imported from France gave the English such words as : *fashion, dress, gown, robe, garter, fur, jewel*.

In the household where the basic words were Anglo-Saxon, French imports include *curtain, chair, screen, towel, parlour, pantry* as well as *chamber, ceiling, chimney, porch*. *Stable* and *kennel* are French; *forest* and *park* are also French, but *woods* is Saxon.

The influence of the Church, where the Saxon hierarchy of Bede gave way to Norman clerics, was bound to be an important one, for it came into touch with all classes and naturally a considerable number of foreign religious words crept into English speech. From Norman-French come the words *clergy* (meaning literally the learned), *religion, Bible, friar, altar, miracle, prayer, sermon, penance, preach, chaplain, clerk, dean, pastor, convert, grace, mercy, passion*. But let us note the survival of the earlier *rood* or *cross, church (kirk), God* and *Gospel*. The words imported show the influence of the Norman devotion to the Church.

Next in importance to religious terms are terms of government and law.

As the government of the country was carried on in a new language, a flood of new words came into general use.

We find in the first line of government terms imported from French : *crown, state, reign, court, council, parliament, assembly, office, mayor*, etc. It is in this XIIIth Century that the great English word *Parliament* made its first appearance. The terms of feudalism are also derived from French : *prince, duke, count, marquis, squire, page, sir, manor, vassal, peasant* replaced to some extent the *lord, lady, thane, earl, yeomen, churl* of the old Saxon rule.

Words like *oppress, rebel, treason* and *exile* recall the dark days that immediately followed the Conquest.

It was also in the XIIIth Century that English law and English legal institutions began to take the form that they were destined to keep for the future. In the legal field, French *equity* replaced the native *geriht* (right), *judgement* replaced *doom* (but only as a legal term, *doom* lives in Doomsday Book); *crime* took the place of *sin* and *gylt*, both of which however survive.

*Judge* and *justice*, to *accuse* and to *defend*, to *arrest* and to *acquit, bar*,

*summons, bail, plea, pleader, heir*, are only a few of the many French terms that crowd English law-courts today.

A sad side of the picture is that the Normans never allowed the English to forget who were the rulers. They took for themselves nearly everything that was beautiful or comfort-giving and consequently they introduced into English their own words to express it. *Enjoyment, amusement, pleasure, leisure, dancing, chase, ease, comfort, painting, sculpture, beauty, colour*, all come from French and of course *sport* and *pastime*. So do *poetry, prose, study, volume, paper, pen, copy, noun*, etc.

The English were never allowed to forget that they were servants and little more than slaves. *Servant* is a Norman word, so too are *obey* and *command*.

A short reference to an interesting passage from Sir Walter Scott's novel "Ivanhoe" will show the position of the Norman lord and the Saxon slave and also serve to indicate how new words were brought into Saxon English. Wamba is speaking to Gurth, who has to tend the pigs.

"Why, how call you these grunting animals running about on four legs?" demanded Wamba.

"Swine, fool, swine, every fool knows that."

"And swine is good Saxon...When the creature lives and is in charge of a Saxon she goes by her Saxon name, but becomes a Norman and is called pork when she is carried to the castle hall to feast among the nobles...Ox continues to hold his Saxon name while he is under the charge of a slave such as you, but becomes beef when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are to eat him. Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau (Veal) in the like manner...he is Saxon when he needs looking after and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter for enjoyment."

So it is that animals take the old English name when alive, but have a French name when killed and prepared for the table. *Cow* or *ox* becomes *beef* (*boeuf*), *sheep* becomes *mutton* (*mouton*), and *deer* turns into *venison*. The French have always prided themselves on their excellent cooking, and so the names for what were the chief meals of the day—*dinner* and *supper*—are both French. So, too, are many cooking terms, e.g., *roast, boil, fry, soup, entrée, omelette* and *sauce*.

Those trades which brought the workman into close contact with his Norman master are all of French origin: *butcher, barber, carpenter, grocer, painter* and *tailor*—while the more humble jobs have kept their old English names, e.g., *baker, blacksmith, fisherman, shepherd*. Even to this day, a hotel advertises its high-class *cuisine*. French people have set the fashion in dress ever since the days of the Normans; and dress-making terms and nearly all garments have French names, e.g., *dress, costume, design* and *mode*.

We have now a glimpse of the far-reaching linguistic consequence of the Conquest. For nearly two hundred years the two languages existed side by



side, but once the Normans were well established in Britain, the spread of French gathered pace and it has been "calculated that nearly half the borrowed words were adopted between 1250 and 1400" (G. A. Sambrook).

French, next to Anglo-Saxon, is the "greatest purveyor to English of words in common use".

Mario Pei has pointed out that English is structurally Germanic, but "when it comes to vocabulary, English, thanks to its disguised and naturalised French words, may be said to be half-Romance". Gradually, getting rid of its burden of Teutonic declensions and inflections, the English language marched on by an underground route to a new freedom and vitality, symbolic, as Trevelyan remarks, "of the fate of the English race itself after Hastings, fallen to rise nobler, trodden under foot only to be trodden into shape".

Thus, for nearly two centuries, the English tongue struggled against French and during that time absorbed a good deal of its vocabulary. As a result it became a new and lively language, capable of greater power and fuller expression.

The Englishman's life was wider and fuller as a result of the Norman-French influence. A flourishing literary production in French sprang up at the Anglo-Norman court, so much so that curiously enough the finest of old French literature was produced in England (*cf.* The Oxford manuscript of the "Song of Roland", the *lais* of Marie de France already referred to).

The English had their own exciting stories of Beowulf and many other heroes, but they might never have known the delightful tales of chivalry and romance, of love and war and fair women, if "Harold had succeeded in beating back the Normans".

New literary themes, especially the romantic tale based on chivalrous ideas, had stirred the Englishman's imagination and he was ready to produce a great literature of his own. But the fact remains that the "canso d'amor" or love song belongs to early French Troubadour tradition.

Its greatest significance was that it reflected a sexual attitude which was to remain in European lyric poetry for centuries. Geoffrey Brereton has noted that Dante's love for Beatrice, Petrarch's for Laura, and the vast body of medieval and Renaissance poetry which stems from Petrarch, later the Romantic idealization with its Pre-Raphaelite offshoot in England, all this, with or without mystical associations, can be traced back to the Troubadour's conception of courtly love.

An eminent modern English critic, C. S. Lewis, confirms this viewpoint and remarks: "French poets, in the eleventh century, discovered or invented or were the first to express that romantic species of passion which English poets were still writing about in the nineteenth. They effected a change which has left no corner of our ethics, our imagination, or our daily life untouched..."

Compared with this revolution the Renaissance is a mere ripple on the surface of literature."

The first literary result of this enthusiasm came in the XIVth century from Chaucer, the earliest national English poet, who was nurtured on French literature and felt the attraction of the French "Roman de la Rose", then considered the Bible of allegoric poetry. He has often been called "the great translator". His early poems, among which is a translation of the "Roman de la Rose", are of French inspiration.

Chaucer who spent a few years in France noted the difference between the French of Paris and that of Stratford-at-Bow, spoken by his worthy Prioress:

And French she spake ful fair and fetisly  
After the scole of Stratforde-atte-Bowe  
For French of Parys was to her unknowe.

It was the Anglo-Norman French, taught by the Sisters at the St. Leonard at Bow's Convent—an old Benedictine foundation.

And that wife of Bath, towards whom the poet directs the fire of his satire against women, the lady who has thrice gone on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and has come to her fifth husband—

Husbands at the church door had she five...  
And thrice had she been at Jerusalem—

was likely to speak French.

If the Canterbury Tales came to Chaucer from every corner of medieval literature, the language spoken by his pilgrims who made their way together is full of a vast stock of words of French origin.

Even when the French language ceased to be the official language in England, it nevertheless continued to be used and learnt. To know this language was considered a traditional elegance with a section of the population.

### 3

A new wave of French influence reached England with the first English Revolution, that of 1642, which drove to France for a long period the court of the king and brought him under French influence.

When the time came to recross the Channel (1660) during the Restoration, the French impact remained strong with Charles II and his court. The king had been attracted towards the literature of France and did his best to enforce on English literature the ideals he saw there. The new spirit, however, is above all critical and analytic; it brings into play the intellect rather than the poetic imagination. The influence of the numerous French refugees in London and of travellers of mark should also be taken into account.

The change over to Classicism in England, fostered by the political needs of the age, might have been less decisive but for the presence of a brilliant set of writers with Boileau as their leader, who had arisen in France, actuated by Classical methods.

They exerted a profound influence upon the literature of England.

The wars of the end of the century did not break the intellectual links between the two nations. Marlborough knew French well and "his soldiers learned it while defeating those of the most Christian king". The result of these "meetings" was that the English military vocabulary got loaded with the adversaries' terms.

The nobly balanced music of the French line finds in England a remarkable echo in the rhymed distichs, the heroic couplets of Dryden, the man who dominated this period. Gallicisms and Latinisms flowed a-plenty into the language under Dryden's influence.

The "good sense" ideal, an essential feature of French Classicism, as formulated by Boileau in 1673, was a boon for English prose which had suffered from the romantic extravagances of the Elizabethans but which now acquired its definite structure and was noted for its lucidity and ease.

English prose-writers of the day had as their main objects to be simple in style and natural in manner. English acquired thereby qualities for which French was well-known: a sense of order, logic and taste. These qualities placed it on a par with the great Continental language which the author of the "Essay on Dramatic Poesy" envied: French.

The impact of French literature became even more marked in the age of Dryden's successor, Pope. The tendency was just as in French towards increasing attention to expression and elegance of form.

Freshness of utterance was of less importance than perfection of manner: or as Pope himself stated:

True wit is Nature to advantage dressed,  
What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.

His "Essay on Criticism" is not without some similarity to Boileau's "Art Poétique". In this connection, it is worth quoting here a few lines from Pope:

Late, very late, correctness grew our care.  
When the tir'd nation breath'd from civil war  
Exact Racine, and Corneille's noble fire  
Show'd us that France had something to admire.

As for the linguistic picture, the XVIIIth and XIXth Centuries are periods of continuation of the movement initiated earlier and referred to above. The flood-gates opened by Dryden remain open and words continue to pour into the

language from all quarters, domestic as well as foreign, particularly from France.

A strong reaction is apparent in the early years of the XVIIIth Century against this mania of Gallicisms.

The French language had ceased to rule but it was still being studied.

Though its supremacy was not admitted, it was recognised that "it has become so to say the language of Europe".

Most English writers knew it : Gray, Thomson, Hume, Sterne, Smollett, Goldsmith, Young, Johnson, Chesterfield, Gibbon, etc.

English writers who knew French literature well have assimilated their models without imitating them.

The "Sentimental Journey" of Lawrence Sterne who follows his master, the philosopher Locke, is a voyage to France. Sterne liked to refine his emotions by contact with foreign landscapes. However his language did not come under French influence.

Would Locke, the initiator of Modern Empiricism, have been the clear-thinking philosopher that he is, had he not drawn from Descartes the taste for "clear and distinct ideas" ? It can be said with some justification in his case that he dared to "fight him (Descartes) only with the arms he received from him".

In spite of contrary reactions, towards the end of the XVIIIth Century, the outbreak of the French Revolution was bound to exert an influence, mostly political and philosophical. French writers and leaders who fathered revolutionary ideas created all over Europe an invigorating climate of democratic opinion and a body of profound, brilliantly expressed thought that still stands as a guide to freedom.

Romanticism both in the poetry and in the prose of the time was noted for its instinct for the elemental simplicity of life. Rousseau, the exponent of popular sovereignty and Romanticism, is the pioneer here. His influence was a deep and central one. He it was who revolutionized ideas, art and traditional ways of thinking.

Far more than Voltaire and Montesquieu, he embodied the new aspirations in literature, education and politics.

In the history of education, most of the reforms attempted in pedagogy in various European countries can be traced back to Locke and Rousseau. Emile's education has haunted many an Anglo-Saxon mind. Rousseau's system of pedagogy which was found to be Romantic has its place in the history of the English novel.

His Naturalism has a large place in the history of philosophy. The whole of German thought of the day is full of Jean Jacques, from Schiller down to Kant.

"Come, Rousseau, be our guide !" cried out Herder, the interpreter of an entire generation. Rousseau's action has not been less deep in the country of

Hume. From the date of the publication of "Emile" and the "Contrat Social" French philosophy spread over Europe.

Rousseau eloquently emphasized the dignity of man as man and dwelt upon the transcendent power of love. The reaction against the hyper-civilized society found in the ever-growing life of teeming cities, that is so marked to-day in the writings of socialistic idealists like Edward Carpenter, William Morris, D.H. Lawrence and others, started with Rousseau.

The new attitude towards Nature was only part of a larger Naturalism. Rousseau is the foremost who sought "to bring us back to the bosom of nature and reclaim us from the superfluous conventions with which we had choked the elemental verticies of life". It was almost the birth of a new type of man. His great voice threw pressing appeals in favour of the individual and the inner life, that were to find a deep echo among the English Romanticists. The Rousseau of the "Rêveries" is as fascinating as the one of the "Contrat Social".

Quite naturally, he became the master of Cowper, Shelley, Byron and the Lakists : they, like Rousseau, thought that a return to Nature could alone liberate man from the shackles of civilization.

Shelley, in particular, who attributes to Nature an absolute power, was in many respects, the spiritual son of Rousseau. "The compelling value of love shown in the 'New Héloïse, is what Shelley reiterated with so much ecstatic eloquence" (A. Compton-Rickett).

Byron, who was scarcely touched by the intellectual side of the French Revolution, yet considered Rousseau as his spiritual master and found in the "New Héloïse" his own vision of life. It is by admiration for Rousseau that Byron made his pilgrimage to the sites of Switzerland, associated with the former's journeys. His sad and nostalgic soul needed Rousseau.

It is well-known that in the first flush of the struggle, the French Revolution stirred to the depths the imagination of writers like Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, who caught the contagious enthusiasm.

It accelerated the emergence of English Romanticism. Wordsworth and Coleridge who had published their "Lyrical Ballads" (1798) passed through intense years, plunged in a moral crisis made up of enthusiasm and repulsion for the Revolution and its ideals. But the question may be asked whether they would have attained the plenitude of their imagination if they had not been deeply stirred by the violent passion they had felt for the Revolutionary ideals—whatever might have been their later changes of opinion.

Let us hear Wordsworth's confession :

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven,

It has been attempted here to trace the important moments of French literary "presence" in English life and letters. But then it must be stressed that France as well opened herself, to her benefit, to foreign influences. It is admitted that whenever France entered into communion with the major foreign civilizations—Italy in the XVIth Century, Spain in the XVIIth, England in the XVIIIth, Germany and the Orient in the XIXth—her mind "came out wider, enriched and livelier as well as more French and her power of literary and artistic production was revived and increased".

In the modern world, there can be no nation whose thought can be confined within its frontiers.

The humanism of a Goethe, a Renan or a Tagore has brought home the lesson that any education truly superior should widen and stretch farther our horizons to the limits of our knowledge of man. And for that a knowledge of foreign languages and souls will be of great help.

One only knows a language when a long-standing practice has made one familiar, not only with the music of its vocables and the equilibrium of its syntax, but also with the specific harmony of the human community that it expresses.

Words are not fictive coins for exchange, abstract signs to be accumulated and negotiated on the pages of a lexicon.

Words live and die, their vowels and consonants are born to throb on the lips of living beings.

Learning a language is not to learn its vocabulary and rules alone. It is to live consciously the life of another being, individual or collective.

The sign of a true culture is not only to affirm the grandeur and beauty of the civilization that fostered us, but to be able to recognize the values of another civilization as well as the shortcomings of our own.

MALIGAIVITIL AMBAMY NARAYANAN  
Professor, French College, Pondicherry

## THE EARLY MORNING HOUR

THE early-morning hour, *brahmi-muhurta*, they say, is the best for meditation. All Nature is at rest and everything is conducive to a silent self-collection. Masters of the spiritual Path advise getting up from bed still earlier because it is during this later period of the night that the uprush of subconscious movements is the strongest and the aspirant would do well to remain awake at this time.

I have been following this principle for years. Now, after this meditation there is a strong tendency to go to sleep for however short a while. I have been advised to resist this temptation as it provides a splendid opportunity for the forces of the nether world to rush forth and swallow up as much as possible the gain made in the consciousness during meditation. I have not yet been able completely to act up to this, though each time I have so slept there have been chaotic dream-movements and a dull ache in the limbs. This morning I was shown the truth of the matter in a very vivid manner.

After meditation I stretched myself 'for a few minutes' which passed into sleep. There in a room I found myself with two visitors who had come uninvited and were busy helping themselves to food. There was something very unpleasant about them. Both were short, reddish in hue, naked. They looked like small boys but their heads were big, old and lined with age. I asked them to go away. They would not look up but went on with their eating. I spoke to them louder but they would not budge. Then it occurred to me that they were "hostiles" and only the Mother's Name could have effect. So I called out repeatedly Her Name. They got up. Encouraged I went on repeating the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Names ; they slowly moved out and with the sacred Names on my lips I followed them to the door and saw them leave.

Who were they ? I presume unwanted guests from the subconscious, come to rob and feast themselves with the Bounty received earlier during meditation.

14-7-1962

"SADHAKA"

## AN ADORATION

AT THE SAMADHI OF SRI AUROBINDO

EACH morn I bow to thee, O sovereign Soul !  
I adore thee with the flowers of my heart,  
Offer my love, my vision of life's goal  
To thy living grave, whence I can scarce depart  
To common joys. My heart grows young with bliss  
The moment it lies bare to thy pure might,  
And seeks the ever-green creative peace  
That is thy natural home in deathless light.

Whenever I scan this mystiered universe,  
Like a full-blown lotus that looks at the realm of day,  
I see thee God-like, seated luminous,  
Scattering the seed of Truth on life's dark way.  
Thy living presence dazzles our desolate earth  
Like a Spirit Sun from an horizon infinite !  
Thou changest transient speech to immortal mirth,  
And vanquishest all the terror of death's night.

When I dream of Eternity I see thy love  
As the eternal Consciousness of this world;  
Ever thy cosmic soul glitters above  
The sky of mortal life. Omniscient, be unfurled  
In my glimmering heart, give me thy intimate fire !  
I would think the unthinkable; break not my faith,  
O thou World-destiny, to reach thy golden spire  
Where my saved soul may master life and death.

SRIJIT  
(with K.D.S.)



## THE LORD

THIS earth is a seat of the Divine's embrace ;  
From darkness comes the light, because the Lord  
Is seated deep within; His silent word  
Unrolls the grandeur of the Mother-Grace.

From lifelessness comes Life; from Life emerges  
Mind with its tranquil silent witness self  
That bears the thousand shocks of god and elf,  
Or can be drowned in life's great passion-surges.

But God's last step beyond the Ignorance  
Transcends the Mind; from heart's deep cave the soul  
Comes out and lifts the burden of the whole  
For a vaster play in a Supernature's dance.

God's all-delight upholds this puppet play  
Till Spirit brings His everlasting day.

PRITHWI SINGH

## WINTER MORNING

WE wake to a world of snow  
Utterly still, silent, remote,  
Where no birds are.  
For in this trance of whiteness  
Life must hold its breath  
Dreaming of resurrection.

Then, in a burst of joy, suddenly  
A peal of children's laughter  
Comes through the waiting trees,  
Challenging buds to birth,  
Birds from their gloom  
And me from forgetfulness  
Of that Immortal One  
Who forms and transforms  
All that we see and are.

Younger than childhood,  
Voice of delight of Being,  
Sing in us now and bring  
Out of the whiteness, gold !

MARGARET FORBES

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## WHITE CANDALABRAS

WHITE candalabras of pain  
Revolving through iced air, clamped and clamouring,  
The call of the geese from the tundras of mind  
Betrayed by the night.

Two red gloves,  
Dance-denuded,  
Caper through veils of snow-laced hair,  
Leap back before a plunging heart  
Caged in garnet,  
And then return  
Into a womb of amber velvet  
Tenderly.

Pale, blue eyes, cut and clipped and linked with pearl  
And a long neck of throbbing crystal.

ANURAKTA (TONY SCOTT)

## THUS SANG MY SOUL

(48)

### VIII. THE HOUR OF GRACE AND FULFILMENT

#### 80. AS I LOOK BACK

As I look back to the trail of my days spent,  
I see irreparable my seasons' loss,  
And how the now-dimmed rolling hours have meant  
The gathering of but a phantom dross !

Able no more to hold erect, my head  
Supportless stoops all bent in guilt and shame,  
My toils and tears to gain advance have led  
Me but a few steps in my infinite aim.

As I look on to the yet handful days  
That Time has kept in unsafe reserve for me,  
They seem to hang a transitory haze  
Before my mind's vision of eternity.

And yet I keep a faith unruffled and chaste :  
In God's economy nothing can be waste.

*(Concluded)*

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

## THOUGHTS

OUR ancient ancestors were steeped in God. Our recent ancestors were devoted to God. But our claim to be spiritual rings altogether false. As yet our faces are turned away from God.

The western people endeavour to see the Spirit explained but in terms of Matter. But they at least do want to see something; for, they are striving hard for it.

We relish the utterance of the sweet name of God, but, just as nothing sticks on the tongue, similarly the mere uttering of His name does not join us to Him.

We do not seek for anything; nor do we strive for anything. We are not even the votaries of Matter. We style ourselves the devotees of God, yet we are sunk waist-deep in material thoughts. We the self-styled spiritualists are far more engrossed in Matter than the so-called materialists.

“Our ancestors were so great” is an empty vaunt. “We are made of this metal, you can test us” : In order to affirm this we shall have to undergo a seachange.

\*

\*

If you shudder before taking the plunge into the dark; if your heart winces at a mere pinprick, then wash your hands off ever tasting the Divine Beatitude.

If you can venture forth into the densest darkness of night free of all dread, if you can forge ahead in spite of your body being but honeycombed with smarting wounds, then alone should you dare to tread this path.

Why ?

Because you will have to dredge out masses of darkness from within yourself before the deathless Light of the Sun can manifest itself in the Spirit's skies. With Death stalking at your heels the hostile powers will inflict heavy wounds on you with the most lethal weapons at their command and all this you will have to weather with an unruffled brow. Just as Lord Krishna trampled underfoot the dragon that hissed out from the river Yamuna, in the same way you who have undertaken the steep, narrow and rugged path will have to conquer all your passions.

The plenitude of spiritual life is reserved only for the heroic souls who are firmly stationed in the Spiritual Truth and press forward unflinchingly in the face of all dangers. The spiritual aspirant has to be a Hercules slaying not one but many hydras and cleansing stables more filthy than those of Augeus.

GIRDHARLAL

*(Translated from the author's Gujarati book "Uparāma")*

## MANNA : THE HEAVENLY FOOD

AT Varna in Bulgaria, on May 7, 1962, the Soviet Prime Minister Mr. N. Khrushchev said, "Manna from heaven is only a fairy tale and no one has eaten it." In the context in which he spoke, the statement carries a great truth. He took to task those communists who believe that communism means eating more and working less. He compared them to "babies who start crying for food as soon as they are born without knowing what life is about". Communist parties demand food for the people when they are out of power; they demand work from the same people when they are a State. With allowance made for the strategic aspect of the question, Mr. Khrushchev's statement, however, does give a well-deserved rebuke to that outlook of life which demands something for nothing.

But this is not all that Mr. Khrushchev means when he denies "manna" altogether. On the contrary, he is expressing a definite philosophy of life. He is denying the reality of everything that goes beyond man's senses and sense-bound consciousness. This is a philosophy which he shares with many of his opponents in the West, whether in socialist Europe or in capitalist America. Materialism is the name by which this philosophy is designated. It has several variants, but through all the variations runs one common outlook : Reality is identified with the visible, the sensuous and at the most with the logical; mind is co-equal with sensations, passions, desires, pains, pleasures and in certain cases even with prudent actions. Beyond these is Zero. This outlook dominates most of the capitals and most of the seats of learning in the West. This may not be the whole of their outlook, but this is a major note in it.

However, there is also another experience and another philosophy affirmed by all religious systems in general and by Hinduism in particular. According to this philosophy, there is a Reality beyond the senses and the intellect and, we keep strictly to Mr. Khrushchev's wording, "manna" is a fact, an overwhelming fact of spiritual experience, and not merely a theory or a fairy tale, not even a figure of speech. It is a very, very solid food, very delicious and very filling. In fact, when one is privileged to partake of it, his heart's hunger and thirst are assuaged for all time, and he becomes strengthened beyond decay. In the language of the Upanishads, one becomes hungerless and thirstless (*Vijghatsopipāsah*),<sup>1</sup> undecaying, undying, immortal (*ajaro, amaromṛto*).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chhandogya Upanishad, 8.7.3  
Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.4.25

Manna is soul's food and soul's drink. Man does not live by bread alone. There is another meat, and another wine, which man needs and partakes of as a member of a higher reality. Man is not merely a creature of the earth, a sarcophagous animal, eating and feeding on dead and decaying and foul plants and animals. He also belongs to a different and higher order of reality, and in that station he is sustained by a different kind of food.

According to the Upanishads, there are at least three kinds of food. Man in the raw, the physical man in his ordinary unawakened status is *sthūl-bhuk*,<sup>1</sup> an eater of gross food. Here he feeds on desires, ambitions, cravings, cunning, violence, on killing of animals and exploitation of fellow-men, on the wages of shame and the bread of untruth. But as he grows in being, he becomes *praviviktabhuk*,<sup>2</sup> an eater of subtle food. He is now sustained by beauty, order, dreams and imaginations, by some sense of propriety and fair play and by participation in some creative work. At a still further remove, when he is fully awakened to his soul-life, even this kind of sustenance falls away from him. At this stage, he becomes *ānand-bhuk*,<sup>3</sup> an eater of bliss. Here he feeds on faith and austerity, truth and service, on worship, love, adoration and self-giving. Here, in this station, man is called a "drinker of Soma". In the *Kathopanishad*, the two, God and Soul—they are aspects of the same reality—have been called "drinkers of truth and law, in the kingdom of the most high, in the world of virtuous deeds—(*ṛtaṁ pibantau sukṛtasya loke parame parārdhe*). According to Plato, there is an order of truth, a station of consciousness, a heaven which he calls soul's "pasturage". The soul merely gazes at it and, as he says, "is replenished and made glad".

While manna is self-existent, has a transcendent reality of its own, it also exists immanently in the ordinary food we daily take. In fact, without the element of manna, the tastiest food that the culinary art can devise and science can provide would turn into a veritable poison. With manna missing, the food will turn into a mere feed, something which keeps man's metabolism going but which does not help him to grow in being and consciousness. Eating becomes purely a physical act, and not a spiritual sacrament.

Food that is earned with honest labour, food that is shared with the needy and with fellow-men, food that is taken in moderation—that food has manna in it. The Gita calls it the food left after the sacrifice (*yajñasiṣṭa*) and declares that "those who eat of this food are released from sin." In the Mahabharata, such people have been praised as *vighsasini*.

On the other hand, the food that is taken in gluttony, that is taken for one's own self only, that is based on the labour of others—from that food

<sup>1</sup> Mandukya Upanishad, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

manna is mising. Those who eat this food are eating sin and death. The Gita says that "evil are those who cook for themselves and they eat evil". The Rigveda says that "he who neither feeds a friend nor a comrade, his prosperity is in vain (*mogham-annam*); and it is as good as his death (*vadha itsa tasya*)". It further declares that the lonely eater (*kevalādi*) is only perpetuating a sin (*kevalāgah*). At another place in the same scripture, there is a prayer : "Let a man strive to win his wealth by the path of law and worship."<sup>1</sup>

What is this path of law and worship ? It is the path of work and service and self-giving. In the language of the Gita, it is the path of sacrifice (*yajña*) of offering up the fruits of our labour to the gods. And though, arithmetically speaking, it may not be tenable, yet in point of fact this offering does not impoverish the giver. He receives in proportion to what he gives. He is richer by what he bestows.

The Gita's Yajna is an interchange between the gods and humanity. "Fostered by sacrifice the gods shall give desired objects." But those who enjoy unilaterally, "those who enjoy these enjoyments bestowed on them without returning them are thieves". In the Rigveda God declares in clear terms : "If you give me, I shall give you. If you want to receive from me, then bestow on me too."

So "By the sweat of thy brow, shalt thou eat bread" is not altogether a curse. In fact, in a certain sense, it is the very door that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the law of self-discovery through love and labour, participating and sharing. Labour in its true sense is self-giving, and self-giving is self-finding. Labour is the true meaning of life and sweat is the most ennobling part of labour. A purely economic view of life is evil. But a still greater evil is the sheer consumption-theory of economics which prevails in the world today. This theory arises out of an outlook on life, which wants to have everything and give nothing, which lusts for everything and loves nothing.

Let us work and serve and labour in love ; let us nourish our soil and our cows ; let us honour our workers and "give the labourer his wages before his perspiration is dry"—to put it in the words of Prophet Mohammad : let us knock at the doors of Nature and patiently and perseveringly cultivate science—in short, let us labour and serve and wait and offer our hearts' worship, and our labours will be rewarded and will become fruitful, and our lives will be blessed, and we shall be eating of manna.

But if our work is egoistic, if it is only for ourselves, if it is based on the exploitation of our fellowmen and our Mother Earth and God's other creatures, if our work and its fruits are not offered up to God, and the rewards are not shared with the needy, then, though our tables may be plentiful we shall be

<sup>1</sup> Rig., 10.31.2.

eating that which is only refuse and garbage. What we eat will only add useless fat and enervating corpulence to our beings.

It is in this sense that the Biblical statement, "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread", is a curse. When people live for themselves, they get a bread which gives very little of life, and eventually they undertake a labour which gives very little of bread and a good deal of sweat. They eat and eat till they become tombs of themselves, till they become hollow men, stuffed men, living sepulchres of themselves.

So manna is not everybody's meat and it is not given to all to taste it. Only those who are pure of sin (*pūtapāpa*)<sup>1</sup>, and those who worship by sacrifice (*yajñairiṣṭvā*)<sup>2</sup> are partakers of the soma-wine of immortality (*somapā*)<sup>3</sup> and "enjoy in heaven the feasts of the gods (*divyāndivī devabhogān*)"<sup>4</sup>. Only the pure go to this golden hall of the Lord (*prabhuvimtarī hiraṇmayam*)<sup>5</sup> or to the heavenly lake affording Refreshment of Ecstasy (*arammadiyam saraḥ*)<sup>6</sup>.

Those who labour without service and serve without worship, they do it in vain. Their labour and service are not accepted. Similarly, those who worship without service, their worship too is incomplete. Those who labour without love, their labour is mere physical or mental exertion. Similarly, those who live without service, their love is a mere warm-hearted emotion. Love fulfils itself in service. If we work and serve and worship God in Humanity as well as the God who is above Humanity and into whom Humanity has to grow, that is true labour and true service no less than true worship and aspiration.

RAM SWARUP

<sup>1</sup> Gita, 9.20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>5</sup> Chha Up 8 5 3

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



## BHARATI, AWAKENER OF TAMIL NAD

POET, patriot, savant, awakener of Tamil Nad—Bharati is all these. There is a magic spell of intimacy and national feeling woven around the very name of Bharati. For it is true, as it was yesterday and will for ever be, that his songs have an astonishing power to quicken the tempo of the patriotic fervour of his countrymen.

When his political life fell under the shadow of danger he fled in 1908 to Pondicherry, then a French settlement, to save his neck. For some time he was lost to the public eye. In those days his life was poverty-stricken.

1910 What a stroke of Providence ! Aurobindo Ghosh of Bengal was no more in the vortex of politics. The presiding Deity of Pondicherry housed the fiery apostle of Indian Nationalism not only peacefully but cheerfully.

An opportunity too good to be missed. For years together, when the sun would go down, Bharati would go to Sri Aurobindo's place to bask in the sunshine of his affection. Under that great influence, his head began to teem with national songs which brought him in after years transcendental praise. Sri Aurobindo taught him how to vision the country as the Mother personified. Bharati saw that, while mankind was engrossed in the immediate, Sri Aurobindo was devoted to the Ultimate. It was Sri Aurobindo who so very kindly helped him to launch into the Vedic mysteries, and made him at home in ancient literatures. Let us listen here to Prema Nandakumar, who is an authority on Bharati and a student of Sri Aurobindo, describing the relation between the two :

“...a spell-binder, an inspiration, a veritable Krishna to the neophyte Arjuna.”

Soon Bharati became a man of great comprehension and was able to animate his mass of fresh knowledge by an active and lucid imagination. Now gradually Sri Aurobindo began to dive within to unveil all the mysteries of life. Bharati somehow found the time ripe for him to cross the frontier of Pondicherry. In 1918 he left Pondicherry only to be arrested at a place hard by Cuddalore. But only for a fleeting month did he have to undergo imprisonment.

On his return to Madras he found Mahatma Gandhi in the vanguard of the fight for freedom. He soon became one of his ardent admirers. And by this time his own admirers too were more than sufficient. A unique thrill they felt while he would break into his national songs. He was highly inspired by Bankim's *Bande Mataram*. He in his own way composed national

songs to arouse the slumbering people of Tamil Nad. His songs were not only slogans of liberty but also slogans for social emancipation.

Poet Sarojini Naidu's appreciation of and admiration for Bharati are at once inspiring and significant :

"People like Bharati cannot be counted as the treasure of any province. He is entitled, by his genius and his work, to rank among those who have transcended all limitation of race, language and continent, and have become the universal possession of mankind."

It was from Sister Nivedita that he came to learn that women are not to be looked down upon. They deserve to walk shoulder to shoulder with men. That he was profoundly inspired by Nivedita's lofty teachings can easily be observed from these lines of his :

Gone are they who said to woman : 'Thou shalt  
not open the Book of Knowledge'...

\*

\*

Nor shall it be said that woman lags behind man in the  
knowledge that he attains.

Also Nivedita inspired him to be above the caste-system. In accordance with her momentous advice the poet in Bharati sings :

We are of the same caste and race,  
We are children of Bharat all ;  
We are equal in law and stature,

And everyone is Bharat's King !  
Long live the Republic.

Nivedita's prophetic utterance as regards Bharati's future came perfectly true : "Some day, I am sure, you will become famous. God bless you."

As Lokamanya Tilak made bold to say that 'Home rule is my birthright', even so Bharati's fearless heart voiced forth :

Freedom is our universal speech,  
Equality is the experienced fact.

Bharati's cosmopolitan heart cried out to see a lucid interrelation among his Indian brothers.

What is life without unity ?  
Division can only spell ruin.  
Could we hold fast to this truth,  
What more should we need ?  
We'll bow to thee, Mother."

What an irony of Fate ! Bharati could hardly reach the age of 39 when Death snatched him away. But he has left an imperishable imprint on Pondicherry and Tamil Nad.

Finally, Bharati cannot better be described than in the words of Rajagopalachari : "Agastya incarnate who has given us Tamil afresh."

CHINMOY

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

(SRI AUROBINDO LITERATURE—IN HINDI AND ENGLISH—AT LOW PRICE)

1. **Sri Aravind Ka Sadhana-path** (The Yoga-Sadhana of Sri Aurobindo)
2. **The Integral Yoga**
3. **Sri Mata Ji Ki Vartayen** (Talks of the Mother)
4. **Sri Aravind** (A Life-Sketch of Sri Aurobindo)
5. **Sri Mata Ji Ke Sphut Vachan** (Selected Words of the Mother)
6. **Prarthana Aur Dhyān** (Prayers and Meditations)

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Yoga-Mandir, Jwalapur (Hardwar). Price : 30 nP each.

The attempt of the Sri Aurobindo Yoga-Mandir at Jwalapur to make extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother available to the ordinary public in small booklets at low price seems to be in the right direction. These booklets can serve as useful windows into the width and depth and height of the originals.

We have before us six 'flowers' (Nos 2 to 7) of this 'garland', which, it is hoped, will lengthen on gloriously. The first two booklets, Hindi and English versions presenting Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga in a nut-shell, give an all-round view on the subject, under such headings as : The Aim and the Method ; Essential Conditions of the Pursuit ; Difficulties of the Pursuit ; Food, Sleep, Sex, Illness and Speech ; Meditation, Concentration, Silence and Prayer ; Divine Grace and Guru's Help ; Love, Devotion and Human Relationships ; Work ; Sri Aurobindo Ashram, etc. A few quotations might be refreshing.

"To find the Divine is indeed the first reason for seeking the spiritual Truth and the spiritual life ; it is the one thing indispensable and all the rest is nothing without it..."

"Surrender is the main power of the Yoga.."

"It is a lesson of life that always in this world everything fails a man—only the Divine does not fail him, if he turns entirely to the Divine. It is not because there is something bad in you that blows fall on you—blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or, even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life."

"There can be no doubt about the Divine Grace. It is perfectly true also that if a man is sincere, he will reach the Divine. But it does not follow that

he will reach immediately, easily and without delay. Your error is there, to fix for God a term, five years, six years, and doubt because the effect is not yet there..."

*The Life Glimpse of Sri Aurobindo*, the fourth booklet, gives in brief his birth, childhood and his life in England, Baroda, Calcutta and then in Pondicherry.

The third, fifth and sixth booklets are the *Selected Sayings, Talks and Prayers & Meditations* of the Mother. The Talks comprise the Prayer and Aspiration; Psychological Perfection; The Methods of Meditation ; The Mystery of the Universe ; How to get freedom from bad thoughts ; The Market of the Mind ; To Keep Silent ; To the Children of the Ashram ; The True Adventure.

We give a sample of the Selected Sayings :

"In sincerity is the certitude of victory Sincerity ! Sincerity ! How sweet is the purity of thy presence !"

"Sincerity is the key of divine doors."

"However long the journey may be and however great the traveller, at the end is always found exclusive reliance on the Divine Grace."

"The Supreme has sent His Grace into this world to save it."

"Fear is always a bad adviser."

"Fear is slavery, work is liberty, courage is victory."

"Peace and stillness are the great remedy for diseases."

"When we can bring peace in our cells we are cured."

"One grows into the likeness of what one loves."

"Never forget that you are not alone. The Divine is with you helping and guiding you. He is the companion who never fails, the friend whose love comforts and strengthens. Have faith and He will do everything for you."

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

# *Students' Section*

## SRI AUROBINDO'S WORK FOR INDIA'S POLITICAL LIBERATION

AT the end of the 19th century the state of things that India faced was that of abject decline or decadence. It was a grave question whether India would regain her freedom and be the spiritual leader of humanity or whether it would stumble on in the wake of European thought and forget herself in its materialism.

All over the country there prevailed an attitude of serfdom. The British had taken in hand the education of the people, and their universities were turning out anglicised youths blinded by the brilliant ideas of the West, youths that had forgotten their glorious past and missed India's guiding motive force, her very basis and foundation—spirituality.

It was then that Sri Aurobindo appeared on the political scene, grasped Indian politics with a giant's hands and shook the country to its very foundation so that a new birth might take place and a new India arise, infused with a spiritual fervour of patriotism :

The active political period of Sri Aurobindo was very short. It lasted from 1906, when he became the Principal of Bengal National College, to 1910 when he withdrew to Pondicherry. And if from it we leave out the one year he passed in jail we are left with only three years. And yet these three years were the most momentous and creative in the history of Indian Nationalism. They symbolised the first national upsurge, and the change of an era. In three years Indian politics transformed itself completely, left behind the age of timidity, prayer, protest and petition, and entered a new age of self-respect, self-confidence, and consciousness of India's greatness and her nationhood. The fires of patriotism were lit, the cry of "Bandemataram" rang on all sides, and men felt inspired to die smiling for their country. Sri Aurobindo changed in three years the complete outlook of Indian politics.

Yet Sri Aurobindo was not new to the political field. For these years of action he had studied and prepared himself for many years in Baroda.

When he came to Baroda in 1893 he found the Indian National Congress made up of arm-chair politicians, with all talk and no action, men with no ideal in front of them, who prayed and protested and followed a path of "glorified mendicancy".

Sri Aurobindo's first work was to make Indians conscious of the Congress' shortcomings, to remould this fumbling, moribund, aimless leadership into something clear-eyed, purposeful, dynamic and vigorous. He wrote articles in the *Indu Prakash* under the heading "New Lamps for Old", articles filled

with fiery yet deep criticisms which stunned the leaders of the Congress. These were soon stopped by the frightened Editor, but the voice had been heard. They were the first steps, the first stones that were laid in the formation of the national edifice. They "formed the first ripple on the placid waters of Indian nationalism, the ripple that was later to become a mighty tidal wave" and carry everything before it.

After the articles were stopped, Sri Aurobindo worked in Baroda for seven or eight years, preparing the nation secretly and waiting for the moment of action. He toured Bengal once or twice to see the condition of the country and also sent Jatin Banerjee and his own brother Barin to join hands and prepare small groups for an armed revolt. He contacted the secret nationalist parties of the West, formed his plans, and waited.

The ripe moment was not long in coming. It came with the partition of Bengal. The whole country rose as one against the move, angry, indignant. Sri Aurobindo found that the time had come to kindle the flames of patriotism and plunged himself into the whirlpool of politics.

In 1905, he wrote a tiny book called *Bhawani Mandir* and in a trice placed the whole of the national political movement on a religious foundation. He said that India was not merely a land of rivers and lakes and mountains. She was the Mother, living in the hearts of men and it was out of these hearts that she had to be resurrected. He charged patriotism with a spiritual fervour and used into one the love for the country and the love for God. He said that all awakenings of the past in India had had as their fountainhead the force of spirituality, and now was the need for Brahmacharins and Sannyasins to come forward and sacrifice themselves for their country and God. He made politics spiritual, and filled the youth with a new courage, fire and hope.

In 1906 he took up the editorship of the *Bandemataram*, which proved to be for India a heaven-sent boon. There for the first time he declared that independence, unqualified unconditional Swaraj, was the one and only aim of India. Without it all reforms, all aids were useless. He even said in veiled hints that for a subject nation all means, even revolt, were justified if it was seeking its independence. The days of *Bandemataram* were new inspiring days, when men lived and died with that phrase on their lips, and freedom, complete freedom, was the watchword. Through the *Bandemataram* Sri Aurobindo created in the minds of the people the will to be free, and made them realise the necessity for sacrifice in achieving this end. He created the ideal of nationhood and kindled the sparks that roused the whole country to a fire of patriotism and a consuming thirst for Swaraj.

Together with this ideal he gave a plan of action which consisted in non-operation, boycott, Swadeshi, passive resistance, national education and national courts. He conceived the idea of a State within the State, which would control the lives of the people and finally bring the British government

climbing down. He prepared and sent small groups for propaganda work, men who would organise the people for a complete non-cooperation movement and passive resistance. But his passive resistance was not idle or weak. It included the breaking of oppressive and wrong laws, encouraged the people to start their own schools and industries, and to oppose undesirable British laws and British trade in each and every manner. He gave a mode of action to the people.

But, on the other hand, he secretly continued giving some form to his plan of direct insurrection, and encouraged people to take up physical activities and be ready for an armed revolt. He even encouraged the making of bombs and the distribution of rifles. Thus we see that these were the four main lines of his action. He created the desire and will for independence in the minds of the people, revealed to them the country as the Mother, organised the masses for passive resistance, and small groups for an armed fight.

But always he worked in the background, pushing and guiding people from behind.

However, the *Bandemataram* case, the Surat Congress and its capture by the Nationalists and finally the Manicktalla bomb case brought him into the limelight. He stood revealed to the masses as the symbol and leader of Indian Nationalism. Millions flocked to see him and hear him, and the fight for Independence was in full swing and finally the will to freedom got ingrained in the people.

Then Sri Aurobindo was imprisoned for a year. During that time he developed his yoga. He had already had at Baroda the experience of Nirvana. Now he saw Vasudeva or Narayana in all. He had chosen his path and henceforth he was guided only by the Divine Voice. And when he came out of the prison he found Indian politics dead, defeated, full of despair. Lost were the enthusiasm and the religious fervour of sacrifice. Sri Aurobindo again organised meetings and laid down for the country and the Congress a definite plan of action through the *Karmayogin*. Then when the British were contemplating to arrest him he got a clear Adesh (Command) from above and went to Chandernagore and subsequently came to Pondicherry.

Thus ended the political life of Sri Aurobindo, but his work continued. The movements he had started gained momentum and finally conquered. India regained her political freedom on the 15th August 1947, and even from Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo continued to guide spiritually the destiny of India. Well may we say that he was the founder, the creator and the leader of India's independence as the first step towards her ultimate spiritual leadership in a new world of Freedom, Peace and Unity that are for ever.

VIJAY PODDAR

*First Year, Higher Course, 2nd Quarterly  
Test Answer.*



## 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 re-covered and, at the request of the students, even 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 THIRTY-NINE

TODAY we may round off our discussion of Pure Poetry—with a remark of Sri Aurobindo's. Speaking of the poets of the early nineteenth century and comparing as well as contrasting these voices of the New Romanticism shot with a spiritual aspiration, particularly in alliance with a Nature-mysticism, Sri Aurobindo pairs Wordsworth and Byron on one hand and, on the other, Shelley and Keats. Then he remarks about the two latter : "They are perhaps the two most purely poetic minds that have used the English tongue ; but one sings from the skies earthwards, the other looks from earth towards Olympus."<sup>1</sup>

In this matter of pure poetry, we may cite a couple of other observations by Sri Aurobindo. About Shelley he says : "Shelley uses language throughout as a poet ; he was incapable of falling into the too hard and outward manner of Byron or yielding to the turn towards mere intellectuality which always beset Wordsworth. The grain of his mind was too saturated with the hues of poetic vision, he had too splendid and opulent an imagination, too great a gift of flowing and yet uplifted and inspired speech for such descents .."<sup>2</sup> Apropos of Keats he declares : "Keats is the first entire artist in word and rhythm in English poetry,—not grandiose, classical and derived like Milton, but direct and original in his artistry, he begins a new era."<sup>3</sup>

To get all this into proper focus we may note further that, although Shelley and Keats are called the most purely poetic minds, Sri Aurobindo does not rank them on the whole as high as Milton, much less Shakespeare. Even

<sup>1</sup> *The Future Poetry*, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 180-81.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

Spenser he puts above them in a total view. Thus, relating them to the Elizabethan Age, he tells us : "They have a greater thing to reveal than the Elizabethan poets, but they do not express it with that constant fullness of native utterance or that more perfect correspondence between substance and form which is the greatness of Shakespeare and Spenser."<sup>1</sup> After marking the frequent poetic perfection not only of the great Elizabethans but also of Indian poets of a similar inspiration of the Life-spirit, like Kalidasa, Sri Aurobindo puts his finger on the weak spot in the new manifestation : "A poetry of spiritual vision and the sense of things behind life and above the intellect must similarly develop from its essence a characteristic voice, cry, mould of speech, natural way of development, habits of structure."<sup>2</sup> Shelley and Keats, like Wordsworth Coleridge and Blake, "were embarrassed by the same difficulty of a time which was not ready for work of this kind, not prepared for it by any past development, not fitted for it by anything in the common atmosphere of the age....Each besides had an immense development of that force of separative personality which is in art at least the characteristic of our later humanity. There is nothing of that common aim and manner which brings into one category the Elizabethan dramatists or the contemporaries of Pope and Dryden."<sup>3</sup>

This means that, in spite of their supreme poetic gifts, Shelley and Keats fell short of complete fulfilment because they erupted, as it were, into an age which was not organically ready for spiritual self-expression, and because there was no pervasive awareness of the sort of revelatory work they had to do. But this also means that, if their age had been ready and they themselves had possessed more insight into their general destiny, Shelley and Keats, on account of their supreme gifts, could have stood higher than Shakespeare, Milton and Spenser so far as "fullness of native utterance" and "perfect correspondence between substance and form" are concerned. Neither of them had the capacity to create living characters : so they could not have competed with Shakespeare in what may specifically be termed creative genius and perhaps even Milton's solitary creation, Satan, would have breathed more life than anything in Shelley and Keats. But they would have equalled and excelled Spenser all-round. Spenser has "more of a descriptive vision than of the larger creative power or narrative force"<sup>4</sup> and so his human figures through whom he works out his scheme of a romantico-ethical story stand as the "allegorical body" of the powers of Good and Evil rather than as these Powers' "expressive opportunity of life".<sup>5</sup>

What made Shelley and Keats hold the promise of surpassing all English poets in the matter of expression is picked out by Sri Aurobindo under a different aspect in either of them. As we saw, Shelley he distinguished for the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-58

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

freedom his language had from a hard and outward manner as well as from a manner merely intellectual : this freedom made him use language always as a poet and, on the positive side, it lay in his mind being deeply hued with poetic vision, splendidly charged with imagination and greatly gifted with a high and intense fluency of speech. A radiant spontaneity of rhythmic utterance is the essence of Shelley.

Keats brings a power of extreme originality in choice of poetic words. An acute sense of beauty is ever at work in his compositions : beauty sensuous, beauty imaginative, beauty intellectual, beauty mystical is the very soul of him and he is in possession of an expressive instrument alive to the demands of the inner ear which is the true maker of poetic rhythm. Sri Aurobindo has well said in general how the inner ear's action takes place. "Technically, we may say that this comes in when the poet becomes, in Keats' phrase, a miser of sound and syllable, economical of his means, not in the sense of a niggardly sparing, but of making the most of all its possibilities of sound."<sup>1</sup> He further explains : "... every sound is made the most of, whether in its suppression or in its swelling expansion, its narrowness or its open wideness, in order to get in the combined effect something which the ordinary flow of poetry cannot give us."<sup>2</sup> Here we may touch on another side of the perfecting of the poet's means. Keats, adapting Spenser, used in a letter of his the phrase : "fill every rift with ore." This implies a richening of every step of the poetic expression—richening not in the sense of a glaring ornamentation but of picking and choosing one's words with a view to bring out the finest suggestion of a thing, the finest shade of an idea, the finest stir of an experience and not allow anything commonplace, anything already used, anything easily found : it is not enough that the conception should be subtle or great in a broad manner, it must be expressed in the most artistically original mode. A radiant artistry of rhythmic utterance is the essence of Keats.

Poetry is an art, and so every poet is an artist. But the poet is he who sings, the artist is he who makes the song. In Shelley it is the singing impulse that is predominant, in Keats the impulse by which the song is made. Shelley is busy primarily with the soul that is to be embodied, Keats with the body that is to be ensouled. But both of them at their best have equally the soul and the body. The difference of stress brings, of course, a difference in the texture of their work. Shelley's work is not so attention-drawing in details as is Keats's : it has more a general sweep of lustrous language, while Keats's has a specific, a distinct, an individualised sparkle in almost each step of the movement. There is no essential loss by him of wholeness, just as with Shelley there is no essential loss of particularity; yet the eye and ear of the one are more in love with the parts while those of the other are more enamoured of the ensemble. It is rather a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29

question of temperamental variation than of variation in poetic quality. In Shelley the poet as such is more audible, in Keats the artist as such is more visible; but, in both of them, the poet and the artist function with a sheerness and purity that are unique in English.

What we have called temperamental variation in the midst of their equal uniqueness as pure poets is formulated by Sri Aurobindo in more significant and comprehensive terms when he tells us that Shelley sings from the skies earthwards, Keats looks from earth towards Olympus. Shelley is fundamentally aware of the spiritual, though it is never the exclusively spiritual: his three godheads—celestial Light, celestial Love, celestial Liberty—he always tries passionately to bring down to earth without losing their intrinsic shape and colour. People often picture Shelley as a being who is entirely absorbed in the ethereal and who, when he touches the earthly, does so with a lesser poetry. Going by this idea, I once set out to purge his famous *Ode to the Skylark* of what struck me as comparatively grosser and hence unShelleyan ingredients so that the whole might be of one shimmering iridescent piece. Sri Aurobindo pulled me up short and in a masterly letter showed me that earth is not intrinsically less divine than the ether and that to forget Shelley's constant endeavour to marry the two because he saw the same divinity within them is to cut out from him a most meaningful and characteristic element. However, it must be granted that the spiritual and not the physical held his gaze first and foremost: from there he looked downwards with the eyes of the rapturous reformer.

Keats is aware, first and foremost, of the physical, the sights and sounds and scents and touches of earth, the shapes and energies that achieve a concrete beauty, a beauty living to the senses. Yet he is not confined to sensuous wonders. His heart aches for the divine originals of them and he moves intensely through his imagination and his thought to see and feel within terrestrial shapes and energies the Gods and the Goddesses breathing and moving. No doubt, he frequently lingers overmuch with the delights of the earth, but never with them in their crude forms, and his deepest endeavour is, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "the discovery of the divine Idea, Power and living norm of Beauty which by its breath of delight has created the universe, supports it and moves towards a greater perfection, inspires the harmonies of inward sight and outward form, yearns and strives towards the fullness of its own self-discovery by love and delight." <sup>1</sup>

Shelley and Keats stand side by side with an apparent antinomy but with an essential identity. Not that they realised this identity at all when they came into contact with each other: Keats was a less out-raying personality than Shelley and he found Shelley's work not sufficiently alert to the needs of craftsmanship

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

as he understood them, and he felt that he would best develop if he did not get too much into Shelley's floating aura of magnanimity with its streamers of a world-message. Shelley saw in Keats a soul exquisitely struggling for expression within an entanglement of hypersensitive art-conscience, and he was eager to impart to him all the *élan* and speed through the ether that were his own speciality. When, however, Keats died, Shelley wrote the superb *Adonais*, in which he recognises and proclaims his own essential oneness with all that Keats stood for and strove after. It was in the fitness of things that one out of the two most purely poetic minds in English literature should write the greatest of all elegies on the other, affirming with him his unity in death when the unity in life remained unrealised and seeing in a final vision his own death soon following that of *Adonais* as if in answer to a call and joining them both together in the Vastness and Light that were the inner essence of either one's poetry. Do you remember the closing stanza of Shelley's poem?—

The breath whose might I have invoked in song  
 Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,  
 Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
 Whose sails were never to the tempest given;  
 The massy earth and spherèd sky are riven !  
 I am borne darkly, fearfully afar;  
 Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
 The soul of *Adonais*, like a star,  
 Beacons from the Abode where the Eternals are.

Now that we have started quoting we may continue with some characteristic passages and appreciate the pure poetry which habitually ascends from "massy earth" and that which mostly descends from "spherèd sky." Here is Shelley apostrophising Emilia Viviani, the Italian girl whom he found immured in a convent by a tyrannical father and who seemed to the young English poet the embodiment of everything celestial :

Seraph of Heaven ! too gentle to be human,  
 Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman  
 All that is insupportable in thee  
 Of light and love and immortality !  
 ...the brightness  
 Of her divinest presence trembles through  
 Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew  
 Embodied in the windless heaven of June,  
 Amid the splendour-wingèd stars, the Moon  
 Burns inextinguishably beautiful.

Here again is Shelley describing, in the song of the Fourth Spirit in the First Act of his *Prometheus Unbound*, the poet .

Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,  
But feeds on the aerial kisses  
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.

He will watch from dawn to gloom  
The lake-reflected sun illumine  
The yellow bees in the ivy bloom,  
Nor heed nor see what things they be,  
But from these create he can  
Forms more real than living man,  
Nurselings of immortality !

Here finally is Shelley in a moment of unsurpassable aspiration—simple, direct, penetrating to the core of the mystical sense :

I loved—oh, no, I mean not one of ye,  
Or any earthly soul, though ye are dear  
As human heart to human heart may be,  
I loved I know not what ; but this lone sphere  
And all that it contains contains not thee,  
Thou whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.

Now look at Keats. When we think of him we think of phrases like : “the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings” or “beaded bubbles winking at the brim” or “From silken Samarkand to cedar'd Lebanon” or, at a deeper level, “The journey homeward to habitual self”—phrases in which every word counts in its individuality and every sound fills out the sense with what words themselves cannot hold. Keats comes to us with packed yet subtle pictures—

But here there is no light  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

Words carry in such lines the very texture of things, but their function is also to suggest and not merely express : how perfectly the phrase about the light being blown from heaven with the breezes conjures up the sense of glimmers falling upon the forest-depths by the soft swaying of the thick foliage hung above. Keats is a master too of objective fidelity touched with subjective significance :

A little noiseless noise among the leaves  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves.

Or else we have the poignantly human leading on to the enchantingly visionary, as in the great passage where the Nightingale's song becomes the music of an Immortal Bird binding together the perishing ages and the severed bounds of existence :

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn.

I do not know whether criticism has noted the subtle artistry of this passage which has striking felicities enough. The sad heart of Ruth admits of a path, while the fairy lands forlorn are rendered difficult of access by perilous seas—Ruth is sick for her own home, while those magic casements are in dream-distances—she stands in tears that are the common lot of humanity, while they look out on waters that human labour can hardly cross—everywhere we have a lovely contrast and yet the intimate and touching human picture prepares the remote and exquisite snatch out of grammaree, for Ruth is away from her home, a great gulf divides her from her heart's vision, and those tears of hers are salt and shining as the seas and the corn may be waving in the wind before her wistful gaze like the heave and fall of the foam-flecked surf and the bending swaying ears of the harvest are alien, a grievous strangeness secretly sister to the bewitching unknown that pierces the heart with the beauty caught through those windows that are the eyes of eternal reverie.

From the Nightingale's Song let us turn to an even deeper spell that Keats can cast with a merging of sight and sound, sound and silence. Recollect those lines on the carvings upon the sides of the Grecian Urn :

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on,  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.

We verge on the mystical in such visions that carry us into a world-effacing trance, as it were. And a remarkable mixture of the mystical and the morbid, a picture of divine distress we come across in a passage that Graham Hough has called "verse of a serene, burnt-out splendour that exceeds anything else in Keats" :

Then saw I a wan face,  
 Not pin'd by human sorrows, but bright-blanch'd  
 By an immortal sickness which kills not,  
 It works a constant change, which happy death  
 Can put no end to ; deathwards progressing  
 To no death was that visage ; it had past  
 The lily and the snow...

We may now sum up from Sri Aurobindo's view of Shelley and Keats what pure poetry amounts to. It is poetry in which the outward manner does not predominate. It is poetry which is not mere intellectuality decked up and metricised. It is poetry which is a-thrill with something inward and has concrete vision and marked rhythm. It is poetry lifted far beyond prose by a perfection of form, either with details prominent yet harmonised or with details hurried and washed into oneness. It is poetry where the substance is steeped in the depths of one's being and the form is touched by the sense of some nameless perfection. It is poetry in which this kind of substance and this kind of form are so fast a unity that any attempt to separate them changes the very life of the joint creation.

Mind you, though Shelley and Keats were both haunted by a mystic hunger, they are not pure poets because the mystic element is explicit in their best work. If mystic explicitness were the *sine qua non*, Shakespeare who has little of it would not be so supreme. But a mystic implicitness is indispensable. For, without it ordinary things and themes and emotions and ideas of the human situation could not have reached the acme of expressive form that Shakespeare shows again and again and again. This acme is impossible unless one lives aware of what I have called a nameless perfection whose presence is in the depths of one's being. Poets achieve pure poetry of various types by a kind of aesthetic spirituality which need not even believe openly in Soul or God. But the fact that spirituality, even if under an aesthetic aspect, is necessary is important and significant. And it is also important and significant that the two most purely poetic minds who have used the English language were openly lit up with a sense of the spiritual, however mentalised and not directly Yogic that sense might be. Perhaps here we have a pointer that supreme work on a supreme scale is possible more to those who have such a sense not only implicit but explicit. Let me repeat that Shelley and Keats are not greater than Shakespeare, or even than Lucretius who was an avowed atheist and materialist. But they could have been greater in poetic expression if they had found the right milieu and consciousness and manner for the spiritual bent of their true selves and thus fulfilled the gift they had of extreme and all-pervading poetic utterance—the most abundant gift of pure poetry.

AMAL KIRAN (K.D. SETHNA)



## THE DESCENT OF THE BLUE

*(Some time back we published the opening parts of this imaginative dramatisation of the life of Sri Aurobindo. We are now following up with the rest.)*

### ACT 2

#### Scene 1

*(London. K.D.Ghosh, along with his wife, sons and daughter, comes to the residence of Mr. Drewett. Benoy, Mano and Auro will stay there.)*

MR. DREWETT : Good morning, Mr. Ghosh. Come, come, my young friends ! *(Looking at Mrs. Drewett)* You were praying for a child. Now God brings you three in a row.

MRS. DREWETT : Thank God. Mr. Ghosh, I shall love them as if they were my own children. *(While caressing Auro)* I shall teach you English myself. I will not let you go to school at this tender age.

MR. DREWETT : I shall teach you Latin. I shall help you in every way. My young friend, I can brook no delay. Come let us start our Latin lesson. Just repeat what I say.

Father—Pater  
Mother—Mater  
Brother—Frater  
Sister—Soror  
Son—Filius  
Daughter—Filia

And now I ask you : will you please repeat all the words by yourself ?

*(Auro's answers are perfect)*

Wonderful, your memory is wonderful.

AURO : Sir, what is the Latin for "God" and "Goddess" ?

MR. DREWETT : Well, "Deus" and "Dea". What made you ask this, my boy ?

## Scene 2

(*Saint Paul's School.*)

HEADMASTER : A brilliant lad, this Indian ! He is by far and away the best student in almost every subject. He is at home in English, Latin, Greek and French.

THE ENGLISH TEACHER : Our boys are hopelessly beaten by Aurobindo, an Indian. I have never come across such a student.

HEADMASTER : I am proud of him, for he belongs to our school. And he is so loving, so polite.

## Scene 3

(*Benoy, Mano, and Auro in strait circumstances.*)

BENOY : At last I have secured a job in a club.

MANO . Fortune dawns on us. But what is wrong with father ? Why has he stopped sending money ?

BENOY : To my understanding, father is not keeping in sound health. Alas, the moment I think of Auro my heart aches. He is only just out of his childhood.

MANO : Poor Auro, he has to learn the meaning of poverty at the very start of his life.

BENOY : For the last three months we have been unable to have a full meal. God knows how many days more we are to go on thus.

MANO : My poems bring in cheers, praises, appreciations, but not a single penny. Such is my fate !

(*Enter Auro*)

AURO : Here, a hundred shillings !

(*Benoy and Mano jump up with astonishment*)

BENOY AND MANO . From where ? From where ?

AURO . An article of mine has been published, and they have given me this. Now, I would like to tell you something. You two always think of my suffering and poverty. But why do you forget the truth that there are millions on the earth whose condition is infinitely worse than ours ? Our present condition makes us better able to fathom their sorrow. With a cheerful face let us brave the future.

## Scene 4

(*Home Mano reads out to Benoy, his eldest brother, a poem composed by himself.*)

MANO : Augustest ! dearest ! whom no thought can trace,  
Name murmuring out of birth's infinity,  
Mother ! like heaven's great face is thy sweet face,  
Stupendous with the mystery of me.

(Enter Auro)

AURO : There is a letter from father. He gives a brief account of the atrocities of British rule in India. He has also sent a few cuttings from the *Bengalee*.

(Mano snatches away the letter and begins to read it aloud)

AURO : We must pay the British back in their own coin.

MANO : Yes, by all means.

BENOY : What are you up to ?

AURO : Freedom, freedom of India by hook or by crook. We needs must dedicate ourselves to set India at large. Almost all the civilised nations on the earth are free. Utterly meaningless will be our lives if we fail to make our Motherland free.

#### Scene 5

*At Cambridge. The Principal had sent for Aurobindo. Aurobindo was very bashful. It was not in his nature to come to the fore.*

(Enter Aurobindo)

AUROBINDO : Good morning, Sir.

PRINCIPAL : Ah, at last you have come. Better late than never. I have sent for you three times.

AUROBINDO : Sorry, Sir, please excuse me. I was a bit busy then.

PRINCIPAL : My dear boy, nothing wrong with you, I suppose ? Now, I come to the point : your essay on Milton. I have never seen such a wonderful piece by an undergrad since I came over here. You have headed the list.

AUROBINDO (*bashfully smiling*) : Thank you, Sir, it is so kind of you. If there was any inspiration, it must have been from the great subject himself of the essay.

#### Scene 6

(*Indian Majlis. Aurobindo and a dozen Indian students.*)

AUROBINDO : The British must no more lord it over India. Come, let us be up and doing to uproot their rule from the soil of our Motherland.

1ST MEMBER : I have crossed seven seas and thirteen rivers just to appear in the I.C.S. If I abide by you I shall soon run into difficulties, and, worse still, my life may prove a failure.

AUROBINDO : I too shall sit for the I.C.S. But I shan't serve the British Government.

2ND MEMBER : To be sure, the freedom of India can never be won by us, for we are unimaginably weak. And if it is not true, show us the way

AUROBINDO : At the very outset we must make the people of India feel the unavoidable necessity of being a free country.

3RD MEMBER : You mean revolution ? Be sure, I affiliate myself with no party. You may call me a poltroon, if you like. I am not at all prepared to risk my precious life. (*Places his hands on his chest.*)

4TH MEMBER : I am absolutely at one with you. Who does not know the supreme truth that Non-violence is the greatest of all the virtues ? Circumstances will lead our dear Mother India to freedom if so is the Will of God. We are not to sacrifice our valuable lives, and again we are not to commit the horrible sin of putting an end to English lives.

AUROBINDO (*after heaving a sigh*) : Mine is a road absolutely different from yours. God guides my life to another goal.

5TH MEMBER : Where do you get so much inspiration from ?

AUROBINDO : Sorry, I am not aware of it. Just last night I had a terrible dream. I saw a demon drinking the blood from the very breast of an old woman. We all went in hot haste to her rescue. To our joy we saved her life. But some of us were removed to the other world by that demon. I was just pondering who that woman was. Soon I heard a voice, so vivid, so pathetic ! "I am your Bharatmata." And there ends my dream. From today the sole aim of my life is to make India free as a bird in the sky.

6TH MEMBER : There is a secret society named "Lotus and Dagger." Do you like to be a member of it ?

AUROBINDO : Certainly, most gladly. With all my heart I shall serve the society.

6TH MEMBER : Then one day I'll take you there.

AUROBINDO : Thanks in advance, dear friend. Let that day come soon !

### *Scene 7*

*(The momentous year 1893. Swami Vivekananda goes to America with the message of India. Aurobindo returns to India to make her free. The residence of the Gaekwar of Baroda at London.)*

*(Enter James Cotton and Aurobindo.)*

JAMES COTTON : Good morning, Sir. Here is my young friend Mr. Ghosh. A brilliant student from Cambridge.

AUROBINDO : Good morning, Sir.

GAEKWAR : Good morning. I have heard much about you from Mr.

Cotton. I would be highly pleased if you accompanied me to India. I am sure you will stand very high in the estimation of our countrymen.

AUROBINDO : Thank you, Sir, I was just waiting for an opportunity to go to India, my Motherland.

Scene 8

*(Aurobindo is asleep. It is far into the night. It is the eve of his departure.)*

*(Enter Bharatmata. Hair dishevelled, face overwhelmed with sorrow, old sari with many holes.)*

BHARATMATA : My son, I am come at last. India demands your express arrival. For you will awake the slumbering nation. Darkness has begun to heap up in my front. It will serve no use to lengthen my story by fruitless emotional gestures. Make me free, make me free, my son.

AUROBINDO : Mother, I shall offer my heart and soul to abide by your high command. No more shall you utter the wail of misery. I shall turn the wind of *Swadeshism* into a grandiose tornado.

BHARATMATA : I am so happy, I am so happy, my son, for your face shows a thunder-willed determination.

*(Enter the presiding deity of Britain.)*

DEITY : My son, I have brought you up for the last fourteen years with kindly love and affection. Have I no claim ?

AUROBINDO : Certainly, you do have. But our India must have freedom to save all humanity from peril. In the years to come, India and Britain will cherish a unique amity. No futile wrangling—the flood of peace shall inundate both the countries.

DEITY : My sole request to you is that you will not do away with my language and literature. Nothing more, nothing less I ask of you.

AUROBINDO : To you I am immensely indebted. My pen shall ever serve your tongue and thus I shall as well serve you.

*(Enter the World-Mother on tip-toe. She looks intently into his face.)*

MOTHER : Do you recognise me ?

AURO : I have seen you time and again in the world of dream. But shall we ever meet in the physical world ?

MOTHER : Why not, why not ? At the divine hour I shall go and stand beside you in India. Down to earth we shall carry our highest Truth. You and I shall be the harbingers of a new humanity. I know, I know, you are the new Sri Krishna of India. You are my Lord.

CHINMOY

*(To be continued)*

## SELF-TEACHINGS

### THE DIVINE CREATIVE AUTOMATIC PROGRESSIVE FORCE

ON a careful study of Nature, from a bud to a human being, one can notice a great infinite force constantly at work. Whether the object created wills or not, this force ceaselessly works to its own satisfaction and fulfilment. From the very start of a tiny bud, there is a day-to-day (in fact, moment-by-moment) constant growing and developing progress. Out of an absolutely sealed bud, at a particular point in the process of its development the flower within, grown secretly, forces open the all-surrounding walls of its darkness, no matter whether the bud, its parent body, wishes or not. There opens out from it, enjoying its natural independence, with its full grandeur, colour, artistic form and beauty an enticing fragrant flower. No other strength, power or device can stop its natural hidden growth and its process of opening out.

A similar automatic process is at work in the case of an egg, or a human babe. After birth, step by step the babe, with the hidden aid of that divine force, the creative Shakti, reaches through an automatic self-developing process a similar ripening point in life. After restlessly moving to and fro from one object to another in a constant impatient and ceaseless effort to satisfy the various urges imposed on him by his physical, vital and mental hungers, the adult individual, surmounting an endless chain of ups and downs, pitfalls, miseries and pleasures, is compelled by that eternal force present in nature to open to the real truth of the World Shakti. From the surrounding walls of darkness thus the creative Shakti leads him on the ever-illumined road to eternal calm, complete satisfaction and heavenly bliss—the true goal—in which he enjoys a full natural freedom like a flower giving out its beauty and fragrance. Complete and unconditional dependence on that divine Mother-Shakti is therefore a sure relief from all ignorance and ills.

NARWANI

## THE HA-HA BRIDGE

THE teacher was reading a very humorous story in the class. Off and on the students broke into a peal of laughter. Everybody, except one, was tickled by the explosive fun of the writer.

The story was over. Closing the book the teacher asked Atul, who had remained gloomy all through the story, "Didn't you enjoy this?"

Atul : "I did, sir."

Teacher : "But the rollicking ingenuities of the writer did not seem to affect you even once. Besides, I have never seen you happy. You stand first in the class but it always seems that you are forced to study ; as though you had no pleasure in doing all this."

Atul very gravely replied, "No, I like studies and books but I hate laughing and merry-making."

The whole class looked at Atul and the teacher. They had tried, on various occasions, to make Atul laugh, but their tricks had failed and Atul had always asked them angrily to mind their own business. Besides, they had come to know that even at home he carried the same gloom about him. They felt very unhappy that one of their classmates should be so different and aloof from them while all the rest enjoyed the innocent and invaluable joy of their school-days. Not only during lessons but even on the play-field Atul was serious and unsmiling, They wanted to help him out of this, but he seemed to enjoy his special mood.

Now, one day the headmaster announced that the school had to prepare a drama for the Inter-school dramatic competition. The teacher-in-charge selected several boys, including Atul, for the purpose. The drama was chosen. In the final selecting test, an impressive personality, clear pronunciation and convincing command over the text won for Atul the role of the hero. The practice started, everyone trying to do his best. But the teacher had difficulties when the hero had to remain happy in adverse circumstances. Patiently he explained to Atul the importance of having a cheerful expression amidst difficulties. But this was the one thing which Atul could not do. Despite all persuasion, even by the headmaster, he could not smile. And ultimately the teacher told Atul that he would be obliged to choose another hero if Atul did not succeed in the next five days. His classmates around him were shocked to hear this. Atul lowered his head and walked away with a heavy heart. The teacher too left by the other door, leaving the children alone. The children thought that they had to do something to help Atul. They got together sincerely and thought out a beautiful plan.

They went out to find Atul and asked him to go for a walk with them. They took him beyond the village temple where there was an old bridge over a river. When they reached the bridge, one after another they started praising the flowers, the trees, the birds, the river and the rocks. As they did this, they constantly looked at Atul to mark whether he liked it. But he showed no signs. The next day also, they brought him here and repeated the previous day's praisings.

On the third day Atul did not find his friends at the usual meeting spot. He waited for half an hour and then went for a walk all alone. When he reached the bridge, he suddenly heard a roar of laughter. He looked everywhere in surprise, but could see no one. He walked a few steps but the laughter increased. He went on the left side and looked down at the river and the place around. He saw the flowers and the rocks and the river that his friends had been praising. The laughter went on and on and Atul decided to find out from where it came. He shouted aloud, "Who is laughing?"

Through the laughter some voices sang, "The flowers are laughing." He turned his head to look at the flowers, but a voice called from the river, "The water is laughing. Ha—ha—ha—ha." When he turned his eyes towards the river, someone called from above his head and said, "The birds are laughing. Twiweet, twiweet." Anxiously he looked up, and then he heard loud roarings, "The rocks are laughing."

Atul, bewildered by the unusual fountains of laughter around him, felt the whole of Nature laughing. Excited, he ran down to the river and under the bridge he saw his classmates, ceaselessly laughing. The children in the trees laughed above him. The children from behind the rocks laughed on his right and on his left. Everything and everyone was laughing. Atul was finally infected, he too laughed aloud openly and innocently—one with his laughing friends and Nature.

SUNANDA



## DOMINIQUE

(From *'The Fountain Head'*, by Ayn Rand, Signet Book Edition, page 108.

...*"Her eyes were not oval, but two long rectangular cuts edged by parallel lines of lashes."*)

HERE is a lady, O so rare...  
Grey eyes with a weary stare.  
Not *so* rare, you might say BUT...  
Her left eye is a long thin cut !  
This is an unusual sight,  
Let us look into her right.  
Arré ! By Jove, and what-to-do,  
Why that's another thin cut too ! !  
Now think just what her nose could be ?  
Not at all like you and me,  
To match those eyes, so strange a pair...  
It probably would be a square.  
Or then again, if it's a beak,  
Modernistic, not antique,  
As her eyes are both rectangular,  
Then her nose should be triangular.  
And would she have two thin straight lips—  
Quite unused to merry quips,  
But pressed together in a 'purse',  
Sneer, leer, or even worse,  
Solving theorems with great ease,  
Sent out by Archimedes ?  
For after all, she is unique,  
This cubist lady 'Dominique'.

LEENA

SANSKRIT SIMPLIFIED  
· BOOK I

Lesson III

I. We give here a list of some of the more common conjunct consonants :

क्क=क्क, क्त=क्त, क्र=क्र, क्ल=क्ल, क्व=क्व, क्ष=क्ष, ख्य=ख्य, ग्ध=ग्ध, ग्न=ग्न, घ्न=घ्न, डक=डक, च्च=च्च, च्छ्र=च्छ्र, च्छ्व=च्छ्व, ज्ञ=ज्ञ, ज्ञा=ज्ञा, द्द=द्द, द्र=द्र, द्रव=द्रव, ड्य=ड्य, णण=णण, त्त=त्त, त्र=त्र, त्स्न=त्स्न, द्ध=द्ध, द्व=द्व, द्ध=द्ध, द्भ=द्भ, द्म=द्म, द्य=द्य, द्र=द्र, त्न=न्न OR न्न, प्त=प्त, प्ल=प्ल, ब्ज=ब्ज, भ्य=भ्य, म्ल=म्ल, र्म=र्म, र्व=र्व, ल्प=ल्प, ल्ल=ल्ल, श्(श्)च=श्च, श्(श्)म=श्म, श्(श्)र=श्र, श्(श्)ल=शल, श्ल, श्(श्)=श्, श्व, ष्ट=ष्ट, ष्ट्वा=ष्ट्वा, ष्ठ=ष्ठ, स्न=स्न, ह्ण=ह्ण, ह्न=ह्न, ह्म=ह्म, ह्य=ह्य, ह्ल=ह्ल, ह्व=ह्व ।

From the above-given list, it will be noticed that the consonants having a perpendicular line on their right side are, when joined to some other consonant, written without that line with the next consonant coming closely after them; and there are 21 such consonants.

र् coming last after such a consonant is expressed by a slanting stroke from right to left from the middle of the preceding letter; but in the case of consonants that do not have that perpendicular line, it is generally expressed by an upturned angle (.) right under the preceding consonant. Thus क्र=क्र, प्र=प्र; but द्र=द्र, द्र=द्र, दर=दर, हर=हर etc.

When र् is the first member of a युक्ताक्षर, it is expressed by a curved line on the top of the following consonant, e.g. र्क=र्क, र्च=र्च, र्म=र्म, र्य=र्य, etc. र् with ऋ also is expressed in the same manner. र् ऋ=र्ऋ

2. The Present Tense forms in all the three persons and numbers of any of the given verbal bases are as follows :

Root वद् to speak; verbal base वद

## Present Tense

	Singular	Dual	Plural
First Person (1.)	वदामि	वदावः	वदामः
Second Person (2.)	वदसि	वदथः	वदथ
Third Person (3.)	वदति	वदतः	वदन्ति

Other verbal bases such as पठ, लिख, गच्छ, नम, पश्य, पिब, रक्ष, नय, हर etc. can be conjugated similarly.

We shall illustrate now how each of these verbs can be used with a proper subject.

अहम् वदामि I speak, आवाम् वदावः : we (two) speak; वयम् वदामः we (more than two) speak.

त्वम् वदसि Thou speakest, युवाम् वदथः you (two) speak, यूयम् वदथ you (more than two) speak.

सः वदति He speaks, तौ वदत. They (two) speak, ते वदन्ति They (more than two) speak.

बालः वदति The boy speaks, बालौ वदतः Boys (two) speak, बालाः वदन्ति Boys (more than two) speak.

N.B. In Sanskrit there is no separate Present Continuous Tense; the same verb expresses both the simple and the continuous Present Tense.

3. The Cases are eight in number. They are :—

1. Nominative १. प्रथमा to be used when a noun or a pronoun is the subject of a verb.
2. Accusative २. द्वितीया to be used when a noun or a pronoun is the object of a verb or a preposition.
3. Instrumental ३. तृतीया to be used when a noun or a pronoun is an agent or instrumnt of the action denoted by the verb.
4. Dative ४. चतुर्थी to be used when something is given to or meant for a noun or a pronoun.
5. Ablative ५. पञ्चमी to be used when something proceeds away from a noun or a pronoun.
6. Genitive ६. षष्ठी to be used when something belonging to a noun or a pronoun has to be expressed.
7. Locative ७. सप्तमी to be used when the place or time of the action denoted by a verb has to be expressed.
8. Vocative ८. सम्बोधनम् It is the nominative of address.

N.B. Really speaking the Vocative is not quite a separate case, but a form of प्रथमा used for addressing somebody or something. Oh ! हे, भो: etc. express its sense.

4. We shall now give all विभक्तis of two words ending in अ one masculine and the other neuter. All other similar words will have similar विभक्ति forms.

	देव m. पु. god		वन n. न. forest.			
प्र.--	देवः	देवौ	देवाः	वनम्	वने	वनानि
द्वि.--	देवम्	देवौ	देवान्	वनम्	वने	वनानि
तृ.--	देवेन	देवाभ्याम्	देवैः	वनेन	वनाभ्याम्	वनैः
च.--	देवाय	देवाभ्याम्	देवेभ्यः	वनाय	वनाभ्याम्	वनेभ्यः
पं.--	देवात्	देवाभ्याम्	देवेभ्यः	वनात्	वनाभ्याम्	वनेभ्यः
ष.--	देवस्य	देवयोः	देवानाम्	वनस्य	वनयोः	वनानाम्
स.--	देवे	देवयोः	देवेषु	वने	वनयोः	वनेषु
सं.--	देव	देवौ	देवाः	वन	वने	वनानि

It will be observed that from तृतीया to सप्तमी included, the विभक्ति forms of देव (masculine) and वन (neuter) are exactly 'similar. As a general rule, this is always so except for neuter nouns ending in इ, उ, ऋ.

5. We shall now see how by using these various विभक्ति forms in various numbers, sentences with various meanings can be built.

१. अहम् I मुखेन with the mouth खादामि eat.

I eat with the mouth.

२. आवाम् we two विद्यालये in the school पठामः read.

We two read in the school.

३. वयम् we (more than two) आम्रस्य of the mango-tree फलम् fruit भक्षयामः eat.

We eat the fruit of the mango-tree.

४. त्वम् thou (you-sing.) नगरात् from the town आगच्छसि comest.

Thou comest from the town.

५. युवाम् you two पठनाय for study कुत्र where गच्छथः go ?

Where do you two go for study ?

६. यूयम् you (more than two) समुद्रस्य of the sea तटे on the shore क्रीडथ play.

You play on the shore of the sea (sea-shore).

७. सः he उद्यानस्य of the garden वृक्षात् from the tree फलानि fruits आनयति brings.  
He brings fruits from the tree of the garden.
८. तौ they two (पुं.) स्नानाय for bath कूपस्य of the well जलम् water उत्कर्षतः draw up.  
They two draw up the water of the well for bath.
९. ते they (more than two पुं.) पूजनाय for worship देवालयम् to the temple गच्छन्ति go.  
They go to the temple for worship.
१०. छात्रः the student प्रभाते in the morning उत्तिष्ठति gets up पुस्तकम् a book च and पठति reads.  
The student gets up in the morning and reads a book.
११. हे oh ! बाल ! boy ! त्वम् thou (you sing.) विद्यालयात् from the school कदा when गृहम् home गच्छसि goest (go) ?  
Oh boy ! when do you go home from the school ?
१२. सरोवरस्य of the lake सलिले in the water कमलानि lotuses कुमुदानि च and lilies रोहन्ति grow.  
Lotuses and lilies grow in the water of the lake.
१३. मेघाः clouds वनेषु over forests पर्वतेषु च and over mountains मधुरम् sweet जलम् water वर्षन्ति shower or rain.  
Clouds shower sweet water over forests and mountains.
१४. वयम् we मस्तकेन with the head साधुजनान् saintly persons नमामः bow to.  
We bow to saintly persons with (our) head.
१५. सः that बालः boy सन्ध्याकाले in the evening भोजनाय for food भोजनालयम् to the dining room गच्छति goes.  
That boy goes to the dining room for food in the evening.
१६. वयम् we कर्णाभ्याम् with the (two) ears आकर्णयामः hear नेत्राभ्याम् च and with the (two) eyes पश्यामः see.  
We hear with (our two) ears and see with (our two) eyes.
१७. वनेषु in forests व्याघ्राः tigers बहुशः mostly वसन्ति live.  
Tigers live mostly in forests.
१८. पर्वतानाम् of mountains कन्दरेषु in the valleys or caves सिंहाः lions गर्जन्ति roar.  
Lions roar in the valleys of mountains.
१९. शिष्यौ the (two) disciples गुरुदेवाय to (their) revered master भक्तिभावेन with devotion पुष्पाणि flowers समर्पयन्ति offer.  
The (two) disciples offer flowers to (their) revered master with devotion.

२०. कविजनाः poets आनन्दाय for joy काव्यानि poems रचयन्ति compose.  
Poets compose poems for joy.

6. We give below some nouns in various विभक्तिs and वचनs together with a few verbs and अव्ययs. Let the student try to form as many sentences as possible by using them variously and appropriately :—

प्रथमा— बालः, व्याघ्रौ, जनाः, जलम्, छात्राः, मेघाः, वृक्षौ, चोरः, पण्डिताः, भगिनी, माता, पिता, भ्राता, कमलानि, पर्णानि, गङ्गा, यमुना, शत्रुः, मित्रम्, मकरः, मत्स्याः ॥

द्वितीया— सत्यम्, असत्यम्, काव्यम्, पर्वतम्, दुग्धम्, जलम्, देवम् ईश्वरम्, पुष्पाणि, नैवेद्यम्, कम्, फलम्, श्लोकान्, करण्डम्, दुर्जनान् ॥

तृतीया— हस्तेन, मुखेन, कमलेन, नेत्राभ्याम्, कर्णाभ्याम् ॥

चतुर्थी— छात्राय, देवाय, फलाय, ब्राह्मणेभ्यः, पुत्राभ्याम् ॥

पंचमी— वृक्षात्, मेघात्, हिमालयात्, हस्तात्, वनेभ्यः ॥

षष्ठी— बालकस्य, वनस्य, फलानाम्, बालयोः, मनुष्याणाम्, मम, तव, अस्य, तस्य, कस्य ॥

सप्तमी— सरोवरे, जले, वनेषु, पर्वतेषु, आकाशे, नगरेषु ॥

सम्बोधनम्— हे छात्र, हे बालौ, हे भक्ताः ॥

क्रियापदानि verbs— वदामि, पठामि, लिखामः, नमसि, भजथः, पश्यथः, खादति, पिबथः, त्यजथ, हरति, पठन्ति, वसतः, वसन्ति, पतन्ति, पतति, गच्छति, पिबन्ति, गर्जतः, पततः, पश्यावः, पश्यन्ति, आनयसि, यच्छतः, भजावः, भवन्ति, आगच्छामः पठ, लिख ॥

अव्ययपदानि indeclinables —अत्र, तत्र, न, सदा, यदा, तदा, कदा, कुत्र, किम्, अपि, अधुना, अद्य, च, प्रातर्, सायम्, आम्, नहि, मा ॥

N.B. The subject agrees with the verb in person and number. Verbs have no gender.

श्लोक ३

प्रदोषे दीपकश्चन्द्रः प्रभाते दीपको रविः ।  
त्रैलोक्ये दीपको धर्मः सुपुत्रः— कुलदीपकः ॥

श्लोक ४\*

पादपानां भयं वातः पद्मानां शिशिरो भयम् ।  
पर्वतानां भयं वज्रः साधूनां दुर्जनो भयम् ॥

सार्थपदच्छेदः words in the श्लोकs without सन्धि (coalescence) and with their proper meanings.

or \*पादपानां भयं वातात् पद्मानां शिशिराद् भयम् ।  
पर्वतानां भयं वज्रात् साधूनां दुर्जनाद् भयम् ॥

इलोक ३. प्रदोषे (प्रदोष-पु.) at night-fall, दीपकः (पुं.) a lamp or light, चन्द्रः (पुं.) the moon प्रभाते (प्रभात-न.) in the morning, दीपकः, रविः (पुं.) the sun; त्रैलोक्ये (त्रैलोक्य-न.) in the three worlds, दीपकः, धर्मः (पुं.) righteousness; सुपुत्रः (पुं.) a noble son, कुल-दीपकः (कुल-न. family) the light of the family.

The moon (is) the light at night-fall, the sun (is) the light in the morning, righteousness (is) the light in the three worlds; (and) a noble son (is) the light of the family.

इलोक ४. (पादपानाम् पादप-पुं.) of trees, भयम् (न.) danger or fear, वातः (पुं.) the wind; पद्मिनाम् (पद्म-न.) of lotuses, शिशिरः (पुं.) frost, भयम्, पर्वतानाम् (पर्वत-पुं.) of mountains, भयम्, वज्रः (पुं. न.) thunderbolt (of Indra); साधूनाम् (साधु-पुं.) of saintly persons, दुर्जनः (पुं.) an evil-natured man, भयम् ॥ (Strong) wind (is) a danger to trees; frost (is) a danger to lotuses; (Indra's) thunder-bolt (is) a danger to mountains; (and) an evil-natured man (is) a danger to saintly persons.

### NEW WORDS

१. अद्य-अ. to-day. २. अपि-अ. also, even, and in the beginning of a sentence introduces a question. ३. आकाश-पुं.न. sky. ४. आगच्छ (verbal base) come. ५. कम् whom? ६. करण्ड-पुं. basket. ७. कर्ण-पुं. ear. ८. गर्ज (verbal base) roar, thunder, rumble. ९. नगर-न. town, city. १०. नेत्र-न. eye. ११. नैवेद्य-न. offering to God. १२. पर्ण-न. leaf. १३. पिता (पितृ-पुं.) father. १४. पुत्र-पुं. son. १५. भगिनी-स्त्री sister. १६. भ्राता (भ्रातृ-पुं.) brother. १७. मकर-पुं. crocodile. १८. मनुष्य-पुं. man. १९. माता- (मातृ-स्त्री) mother. २०. मित्र-न. friend. २१. मेघ-पुं. cloud. २२. सव (verbal base) dwell, live. २३. शत्रु-पुं. enemy.

• [अस्य his(of this), तस्य his( of that), कस्य whose?].

PUJALAL