

# MOTHER INDIA

MAY, 1969

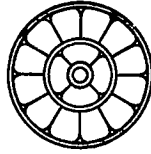
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

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Vol. XXI

No. 4

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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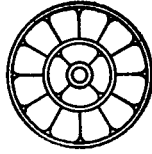
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**A MESSAGE OF THE MOTHER**

12. 2. 69.

Be more eager  
for truth than for  
success.

blessings

## THE ASHRAM AND ITS CONTACTS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

### A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO AND A COMMENT BY THE MOTHER

*Q: "...the love of the Divine in all beings and the constant perception and acceptance of its workings in all things." (The Synthesis of Yoga.)*

If this is one of the ways of realising the Divine and seeing Him in all, why do we here restrict our contacts with people in the outside world? Why can we not give our love to all?

A: That is all right in the ordinary Karmayoga which aims at union with the cosmic spirit and stops short at the overmind—but here a special work has to be done and a new realisation achieved for the earth and not for ourselves alone. It is necessary to stand apart from the rest of the world so as to separate ourselves from the ordinary consciousness in order to bring down a new one.

It is not that love for all is not part of the sadhana, but it has not to translate itself at once into a mixing with all—it can only express itself in a general and when need be dynamic universal goodwill, but for the rest it must find vent in this labour of bringing down the higher consciousness with all its effect for the earth. As for accepting the working of the Divine in all things that is necessary here too in the sense of seeing it even behind our struggles and difficulties, but not accepting the nature of man and the world as it is—our aim is to move towards a more divine working which will replace what now is by a greater and happier manifestation. That too is a labour of divine Love.

22.10.1933

SRI AUROBINDO

(A question was put to the Mother regarding the above letter of Sri Aurobindo. This question, along with the Mother's answer to it, is reproduced below.)

*Q: Mother, in the above letter Sri Aurobindo has written about the necessity of restricting our contacts with the outside world and separating ourselves from the ordinary life, in order to carry on our special work of bringing down a new consciousness for the earth.*

*This letter was written in 1933. But now all types of people from the outside world are freely allowed to come to the Ashram, and the sadhaks of the Ashram also freely mix with them. Is it because we have now reached a new stage in our work in which the earlier restrictions in our contacts with the outside world are no longer necessary? Will you please enlighten me on this point?*

What Sri Aurobindo has written is absolutely true and must be followed.

There is only one new fact— from the beginning of this year a new consciousness has manifested and is working energetically to prepare the earth for the new creation.

A: What Sri Aurobindo has written is absolutely true and must be followed.

There is only one new fact—from the beginning of this year a new consciousness has manifested and is working energetically to prepare the earth for the new creation.

17.4.1969

THE MOTHER

## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

You are *quite right*. Old methods cannot do for this new work. Not only a new consciousness must be firmly established but also a new process must be found before anything truly effective can be done.

5.1.1961

Do not beat your children—

It clouds *your* consciousness and spoils *their* character.

16.11.1968

All quarrels in the place where food is prepared make food indigestible. The cooking must be done in silence and harmony.

March 1969

*Q. Ma nature inférieure continue à faire les mêmes bêtises. Ce ne serait que Toi qui pourrait la changer. Quelles sont Tes conditions ?*

*R. 1) être convaincu que tu peux changer.*

2) vouloir changer sans accepter les excuses de la nature inférieure

3) persister dans la volonté en dépit de toutes les chutes.

4) avoir une foi inébranlable dans l'aide que tu reçois.

7.4.1969

*Q. My lower nature continues to do the same stupid things. You alone can change it. What are Your conditions ?*

*A. 1) to be convinced that you can change.*

2) to will to change without accepting the excuses of the lower nature.

3) to persist in the will in spite of every fall.

4) to have an unshakable faith in the help you receive

7 4 1969



## 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 right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Mamlal, Dr. Becharlal, 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.)*

MARCH 23, 1940

P: Laurence Binyon says that the Dragon is a symbol of water. Water is everything, forms into clouds and comes down as rain and therefore the Dragon is a symbol of the Infinite.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why "therefore"? The Dragon may symbolise the Infinite by being a symbol of the sky.

P: In China the Infinite is symbolised by the Dragon.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, as we have *ananta nāg*, the symbol of infinite Time. That symbolism has come from the prehistoric animals like the Dinosaur.

P: Binyon says that what Wordsworth has realised in poetry China and Japan have done in art, manifesting the Spirit in Nature.

N: China also?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, both have the same source of inspiration. Chinese art is greater, Japanese more subtle and perfect in detail.

P: Binyon writes that they lay a strong emphasis on hues.

SRI AUROBINDO: All oriental art does that. The Japanese of course have made beauty the standard in their life too. Now European civilization is spoiling everything. Outside people judge the art of the Japanese by their exports, but they export only mediocre things, saying these are good enough for barbarians. Only people who return from Japan bring genuine articles.

P: Binyon also says about European religious paintings by Tintoretto and others that there is too much action in them. In a picture of heaven, for instance, one feels quite outside heaven!

SRI AUROBINDO: That is just what I recently said. Mrs. Raymond, hearing it, remarked that I knew nothing of art.

P: She doesn't see anything in Indian art.

SRI AUROBINDO: She is a modernist. But Raymond is a fine artist. He has something more than modern.

P: Yes, he appreciates Indian art. But both of them like Moghul and Rajput art.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, because it has become established. They go by authorities.

P: Raymond gave up painting for architecture.

S: He has so many plans of the buildings he has done.

SRI AUROBINDO: He doesn't seem to be very practical. Somewhere he built a hotel which was not very comfortable to live in. The owner complained to him that it was not comfortable. And Raymond replied, "Comfortable? Comfortable? An architect is not concerned with comfort. He is concerned with beauty." (*Laughter*)

S: Modern decorators of rooms also have that mentality. They don't look to the comfort of the people but to their own art.

#### EVENING

P: Two Justices of Nagpur have come on a visit—one Bengali and the other Marathi perhaps. They have brought some books and are acquainted with a bit of Yoga. They say this Yoga is so new that they don't understand it.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): The newness is a disputed point.

P: They inquired if there were any Marathis here.

SRI AUROBINDO: We have none.

N: Charu Dutt won't be surprised. He says the Marathis are practical people.

SRI AUROBINDO: So Yogis are unpractical? And can a people influenced by Ramdas be of an unyogic nature?

S: They are said to be very provincial. They will go only to Marathi saints

SRI AUROBINDO: That would be rather queer. Yogis are above province or country. Yogis can't think of such things.

P: There has been a sudden change in the French Ministry. Renaud has become Prime Minister in place of Daladier.

SRI AUROBINDO: This unsteadiness looks like a bad sign

N: It is said Renaud is more efficient, has more drive:

SRI AUROBINDO: He is certainly more intelligent. In fact he is the only intelligent Minister, they say.

N: And he was handicapped by the French capitalists, I hear, while Daladier was much under their influence.

SRI AUROBINDO: French capitalists are very powerful. The Senate is at their back.

P: Have you seen Leonard Blake's book on Astrology and his predictions?

SRI AUROBINDO: What I have read of the summary seems to be almost the same as the French astrologer's prophecies. The Frenchman also says that there is a chance of peace in May, but because of some contrary indication it may come about in September. After the peace there will be Leftist influence in France and then France and England will turn communist.

P (after reading a few extracts from Blake's book): Blake calls Hitler a devil.

SRI AUROBINDO: There lies the difference from the Frenchman. The Frenchman calls Stalin a devil and Hitler human. One can say that Hitler is not a devil but possessed by one.

MARCH 24, 1940

P: Jinnah speaks of two Indian States—Hindu and Muslim.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why two and not several?

P: Armando Menezes, the Goan poet, has come. He is publishing another book called *Chaos and a Dancing Star*.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Dancing Star will be taken for a Cinema star.

P: Yes, he himself fears so.

N: One criticism of Nishikanto's book is out.

SRI AUROBINDO: I was wondering why no criticism had been made by anybody. What does it say?

N: It is by Buddhadev. He says that Nishikanto, by fine images and rhythms, gives us pictures as well as sound-patterns so that both eye and ear get plenty of joy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, what more does he want?

N: He is lamenting over Nishikanto's exclusion of prose-poems and also of his previous poetry. Bengalis think that his early work was wonderful.

SRI AUROBINDO: I didn't see anything in it. Does Nishikanto think like them?

N: Perhaps not. Buddhadev says that there are seeds of a great poet in him but they are likely to be spoiled if he remains secluded in the Pondicherry Ashram. The complaint is that he writes in the same way and on the same subject all the time.

SRI AUROBINDO: He surely doesn't write in the same way. As for the subject, others also write on the same subject, their own, though other than Nishikanto's.

N: These people seem to be too much enamoured of their prose-poems. They think prose-poetry is a great creation.

P: Yes. I wonder how Tagore could take it up.

SRI AUROBINDO: To keep up with the times. Nobody has really succeeded in prose-poetry except to some extent in France. Whitman has succeeded in one or two instances—but only when he has approached nearer poetic rhythm. I read somewhere that modern poets are giving up prose-poetry now and are going more towards irregular free-verse.

P: Tagore says that his works in this kind we must read aloud to catch the rhythm.

SRI AUROBINDO: Anything read aloud can get a rhythm, even prose.

(To be continued)

## PHILANTHROPY

A FRIEND, generous by nature, with a comparatively very limited pocket, confessed the other day that up to lately he used to think that although Sri Aurobindo was right everywhere in his writings he was not kind when speaking of philanthropy and altruism. But now the friend is happy to forgo his reservations.

He used to relate to me from time to time the incidents of his life where he had rushed to help others beyond his means and they all had made a long story of ingratitude and unseemly returns. We are naturally reminded of a letter of Sri Aurobindo:

“Your surprise at X’s behaviour shows that you do not yet know what kind of thing is the average human nature. Did you never hear of the answer of Vidyasagar when he was told that a certain man was abusing him, ‘Why does he abuse me? I never did him a good turn (*upakāra*).’ The unregenerate vital is not grateful for a benefit, it resents being under an obligation. So long as the benefit continues, it is effusive and says sweet things, as soon as it expects nothing more it turns round and bites the hand that fed it. Sometimes it does that even before, when it thinks it can do it without the benefactor knowing the origin of the slander, fault-finding or abuse. In all these dealings of yours there is nothing unusual, nothing, as you think, peculiar to you. Most have this kind of experience, few escape it altogether. Of course, people with a developed psychic element are by nature grateful and do not behave in this way.”<sup>1</sup>

This aspect of the question apart, from the viewpoint of Yoga and spirituality there has been a lot of confusion on the subject. Philanthropy or altruism has been facetiously treated as an attribute, and an essential one, of spiritual advancement. If it is an error, it has proceeded from the same error which confounds collective-life-morality with spirituality and identifies philanthropy, altruism or service to humanity with spiritual ideals. More so, when recognised spiritual personalities have been known and seen to love mankind and all creatures and to work to assuage their misery and suffering. Such names abound right from ancient times up to our own days in all countries and civilisations.

But Sri Aurobindo has made it amply clear that it is not the object of Yoga to serve humanity. “Yoga,” he says, “is directed towards God, not towards man... The true object of the yoga is not philanthropy, but to find the Divine, to enter into the divine consciousness and find one’s true being (which is not the ego) in the Divine.”<sup>2</sup>

The Mother asks:

“What do you want the Yoga for? To get power? To attain to peace and calm? To serve humanity?”

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 485.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Tome One, p. 159

Her answer is definite:

“None of these motives is sufficient to show that you are meant for the Path.

“The question you are to answer is this: Do you want the Yoga for the sake of the Divine?”

To the direct question, “Is the Yoga for the sake of humanity?” the Mother answers,

“No, it is for the sake of Divinity. It is not the welfare of humanity that we seek but the manifestation of the Divine. We are here to work out the Divine Will, more truly, to be worked upon by the Divine Will so that we may be its instruments for the progressive incorporation of the Supreme and the establishment of His reign upon earth. Only that portion of humanity which will respond to the Divine Call shall receive its Grace.

“Whether humanity as a whole will be benefitted, if not directly, at least in an indirect way, will depend upon the condition of humanity itself. If one is to judge from the present conditions, there is not much hope. What is the attitude today of the average man—the representative humanity? Does he not rise in anger and revolt directly he meets something that partakes of the genuinely divine? Does he not feel that the Divine means the destruction of his cherished possessions? Is he not continually yelling out the most categorical negative to everything that the Divine intends and wills? Humanity will have to change much before it can hope to gain anything by the advent of the Divine.”<sup>1</sup>

Does it mean that Yoga is against philanthropy and service to humanity? Here there appears to be a paradox. The disciplines which advised rejection of the world and life speak of service to humanity. And Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who accept life and the world announce that service to humanity is not the object. And the paradox becomes further problematical when we see that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been working for the universe, for a new world and a new life.

In the course of a talk on 3.2.1951, with reference to the conversation held in 1929, quoted above, the Mother said,

“And then there are some great virtues in men’s eyes, ‘philanthropy’, ‘love of humanity’, so many people say, ‘I am going to do Yoga to be able to serve humanity: make the unhappy happy, organise the world in the happiest way for everybody.’ I say this is not sufficient; I do not say that this is bad in itself, although I heard one old occultist say wittily: ‘It won’t be very soon that there will no more be misery in the world, because there are too many people who are happy and live on this misery.’ It is a witticism, but it is not altogether wrong. If there were no misery to soothe, the philanthropist would have no reason for his existence—he is so satisfied with himself, he has so much the impression that he is not selfish! I knew such people who would thus be very unhappy if there were no more misery upon earth! What would they do if there were no misery to relieve, what would be their activity and what their

<sup>1</sup> *Conversations*, 1966 Edition, pp 4-5.

glorification? How could they show to people: 'I am not selfish!', that they are generous and full of kindness?"<sup>1</sup>

So, first, we have to be clear in our understanding that what is said is that service to humanity or philanthropy is not the object of yoga, not that it is bad in itself. In the second place the complacency of the philanthropist gets a jolt and he is made to ask himself whether he is not satisfying and pleasing himself by his philanthropy. And here comes the question of the ego in philanthropy, the ego which is the corroding element. Ego, one may say, feeding itself on the misery of others, in the mask of assuaging it. Ego, expecting its own satisfaction.

\*  
\*\*

The ordinary man, the man who is not a Yogi, has the ego, his own little self, as the centre of his existence. In his case,

...pity is a weakness in his breast,  
His goodness is a laxity in the nerves,  
His kindness an investment for return,  
His altruism is ego's other face:  
He serves the world that him the world may serve.<sup>2</sup>

So long as the ego is the lynch-pin holding together the motion of our wheel of nature, our altruism will be an enlargement of our ego.

We find a restatement of the problem and an indication of the solution in the following lines in *The Life Divine*:

"Our utmost universalisation on the surface is a poor and limping endeavour,—it is a construction, a make-believe and not the real thing: for in our surface consciousness we are bound to separation of consciousness from others and wear the fetters of the ego. There our very selflessness becomes more often than not a subtle form of selfishness or turns into a larger affirmation of our ego; content with our pose of altruism, we do not see that it is a veil for the imposition of our individual self, our ideas, our mental and vital personality, our need of ego-enlargement upon the others whom we take up into our expanded orbit. So far as we really succeed in living for others, it is done by an inner spiritual force of love and sympathy; but the power and field of effectuality of this force in us are small, the psychic movement that prompts it is incomplete, its action often ignorant because there is contact of mind and heart but our being does not embrace the being of others as ourselves. An external unity with others must always be an outward joining and association of external lives with a minor inner result; the mind and heart attach their movements to this common life

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, April 1964, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Savitri*, Vol. II, p. 147

and the beings whom we meet there; but the common external life remains the foundation,—the inward constructed unity, or so much of it as can persist in spite of mutual ignorance and discordant egoisms, conflict of minds, conflict of hearts, conflict of vital temperaments, conflict of interests, is a partial and insecure superstructure. The spiritual consciousness, the spiritual life reverses this principle of building; it bases its action in the collective life upon an inner experience and inclusion of others in our own being, an inner sense and reality of oneness. The spiritual individual acts out of that sense of oneness which gives him immediate and direct perception of the demand of self on other self, the need of the life, the good, the work of love and sympathy that can truly be done. A realisation of spiritual unity, a dynamisation of the intimate consciousness of one-being, of one self in all beings, can alone found and govern by its truth the action of the divine life.”<sup>1</sup>

The paradox stands resolved in the attainment of the unity of the Self with all existences and beings.

SHYAM SUNDAR

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, American Edition, pp. 912-913.

---

## AND THEN SOAR...

Do not belong to the East,  
Do not belong to the West,  
Belong to the human race.

Do not belong to the senses,  
Do not belong to the mind,  
Belong to your true self, the Soul.

And then soar and soar and soar  
Out of the void that was you,  
To enrich the East and the West,  
To spiritualise the human race.  
Find out your zero to possess infinity.

GIRDHARLAL

# KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

## CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

### VI (*Continued*)

#### FRENZY OF THE CITIZENS

LEAVING Kausalya in her predicament before the King and his favourite wife, Kamban takes us, dramatically enough, to the courtyard of the King, where the drums are beating and an excited crowd waits impatiently for the coronation ceremony to begin. Vasishtha appears before the crowd and the assembled Kings ask him:

“Has there been obstruction  
to the arrival of our Prince?  
What is that voice of endless anguish  
weeping from within?  
Oh! clear-eyed Saint,  
tell us the reason.”

Vasishtha replies:

“Two boons were obtained  
by Kekaya's daughter.  
The boons were granted her  
by Dasaratha, whose upright sceptre  
never bends.  
She has secured his consent  
for banishing to the Jungle  
our lovely Blue Cloud;  
I know not what to think.  
This is what has occurred.  
By the order of the King  
Kaikeyi's son has become  
the Protector of the Earth  
and the broad-shouldered Rama,  
the consort of Lakshmi,  
is to become  
a dweller of the Forest.”



As these words of the Truthful Saint  
struck their ears,  
the women of the bloused breasts,  
the men assembled beside them,  
the Kings, who had insatiable love for Rama,  
and the Priests, too,  
fell down, grief-stricken,  
like Dasaratha.

Their souls,  
as if grilled, roasted and smoked over the fire,  
trembled;  
their bodies, fallen in the dust,  
lay exhausted in grief;  
their eyes let loose  
a tearful deluge;  
and up went to the Heavens  
their agonized cries  
of unrestrained weeping.

The weeping women  
flung aside their cherished jewels  
and their tirumangalyams;  
with their hair in disarray,  
their Death-like eyes reddening,  
they sank quivering to the ground,  
their flower-like feet turning crimson;  
they were verily like the sinuous creepers  
tossed about by the howling wind.  
“Pitiless is the King!” shouted the Princes.  
“We will throw overboard Virtue  
which he has failed to guard!” they declared  
and they dropped down pell-mell  
like Peepal trees uprooted by a blizzard.  
Oh! the heart that tormented them,  
They called it Fate!  
The eyes that witnessed this tragedy,  
they called them sinners!

Some shouted, “Bharata will decline to rule.”  
“Our Destiny is a tyrant,” said others,  
“for our Lord will not return  
and it is a harbinger of Evil  
that has come in the shape of this Crown.”

Yet others said:

“The old King is gone cranky  
 from infatuation with Kekaya’s daughter.  
 We will follow Sita’s darling into the wilderness,  
 else we shall fall into the fire and perish.”

With hands  
 they scrub the floor,  
 which they wash  
 with their tears.  
 “To be sure, Kausalya will die,”  
 they say and sob endlessly.  
 Conjuring up the figure of Lakshmana,  
 they shout, “Prince Junior,  
 will you bear all this?”  
 The citizens went all the way  
 of butter thrown into the fire.

In their delirious frenzy, they attribute the vilest of motives to Dasaratha and declare that his desire to retire was only a ruse to slaughter the soul of the world. They ask:

“Will not Truth itself falter  
 if, after gifting the realm to his eldest son,  
 he should lawlessly give it  
 to his younger one?”

They argue, “Only this cursed earth was given back to Kaikeyi by Rama who by his very birth had gained the whole World”

“We will cluster around him  
 and, following him,  
 we will dwell in the serpent-infested Jungle—  
 and the Jungle shall in a brief while  
 turn into the City Beautiful.”

The women, who flickered  
 like the wind-tossed flame,  
 lamented;  
 “Alas! Oh Fate!  
 Are we to miss the gracious charms  
 of those deep, lotus-red eyes?”

## LAKSHMANA ON THE WAR PATH

As the citizens were bemoaning their fate, Lakshmana raged with anger upon learning that his pretty-eyed step-mother had charmed Dasaratha into banishing Rama and securing the Crown for her own son.

Up he rose in indignation  
like the primordial fire  
that will envelop the worlds  
at the Final Annihilation.

He prepared himself for battle. The handle of the sword buckled to his flank was ringed with dazzling gems. He held the bow in his hand and to his back was tied a quiver filled with arrows. He put on his gold-plated armorial coat and locked it, covering his chest and towering shoulders. His martial spirit was stirred by the coat of arms.

“Here stand I,” he roared,  
“to exterminate the folk  
who call for battle  
and to rid the Earth of their burden;  
to pile their carcasses,  
one upon the other,  
till the heap reaches the roof of the sky;  
to set the crown upon the head  
of the only King I recognize;  
Come who may,  
to cross my wishes.”

Lakshmana was standing in a central place in the City, with the citizens gathered around him. His wrathful face struck terror in the hearts of all. The morning Sun is bigger, though less hot than the noonday Sun. But Lakshmana blazed like the morning Sun with noonday heat. As he was raging around in the crowd, he looked like Mount Meru churning the legendary Ocean of Milk. He plucked the string of his bow and let out a deafening twang which sounded like the cosmic ball exploding into smithereens. Rama, who was in the palace of Sumitra, heard this explosion and rushed towards flaming Lakshmana, showering cool, flame-drenching words upon him.

## KAMBAN AND VALMIKI

Before giving Kamban's version of this confrontation between the brothers, it may be fruitful to compare it with that between Valmiki's Rama and Valmiki's

Lakshmana in the 31st sarga of Ayodhya Kanda. In Valmiki, Lakshmana does not indulge in war-like rage against the injustice done to Rama. He remains by the side of Sita, while the latter persuades Rama to take her to the forest. Then Lakshmana, follows suit by requesting Rama to take him also to the forest. Rama argues, "If you come away with me to the forest, who will be there to comfort Kausalya and Sumitra? King Dasaratha, who is usually as liberal as the Rain-God, is now upset by his lust (for Kaikeyi). As for Kaikeyi, she will rule the Kingdom but will not do good to her co-wives. Bharata will take the crown but will not care for Kausalya and Sumitra, because he will be under the influence of Kaikeyi. Lakshmana, you must therefore look after Kausalya with or without the permission of Dasaratha. If you do so, you will be demonstrating your devotion to me and obtaining the fruits of performing the great Dharma of looking after the parents. Lakshmana, you must do this for my sake. Otherwise our separated mothers will be unhappy." Lakshmana replies to Rama, "Holy Soul ! by force of your power, Bharata will look after Kausalya and Sumitra with care and will prevent any harm befalling them. You need have no doubts on this account. In case Bharata, after securing the Kingdom, becomes arrogant or evil-minded, I will kill him and those around him. Further, the good Kausalya is capable of looking after a thousand people like me. She can therefore look after herself and my mother. Therefore, please accept my request and I will, with bow, spade and basket, go in front of you to the forest and secure for you the fruits and tubers which form the diet of Saints. So, you can live a care-free life with Sita at the foot of mountains. I will attend on you while you are awake and while you are asleep." Hearing these words Rama was pleased and he said, "Lakshman, you may take leave of all your friends and follow me to the forest."

In the above version of Valmiki, which is embodied in grand poetical language, there is no trace of the dramaturgy or lyricism of Kamban. The following passages will show that Kamban's Rama, in his maturity and serenity, refrains from making the slightest insinuation against Kaikeyi, Dasaratha or Bharata. His demeanour is that of the ideal man, full of grace, understanding, tolerance and refinement, and if he permits Lakshmana to follow him to the forest, it is not because he can live happily in the forest with Lakshmana's assistance but because he is moved by the infinite love of Lakshmana and finds it irresistible.

#### THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER

The Poet describes the arrival of Rama to meet Lakshmana in the following words:

With his lustrous jewels  
 shedding rays of light,  
 his necklace shimmering,  
 he came sprinkling  
 a cool spray of mellowed words;

he came  
 like a blue-black cloud  
 to drench an inextinguishable fire,  
 which, whipped up by the wind,  
 shoots up,  
 emits smoke  
 and leaps with sudden fury.

Eyeing Lakshmana, Rama asks him gently "I have never seen you in anger, my boy. Why are you in battle-dress holding aloft your bow?"

"Just to crown you," replied Lakshmana,  
 "To crown you under the very nose  
 of that woman,  
 whose heart is blacker than ink,  
 and who has twisted Truth out of shape  
 and banished justice and propriety out of her heart.  
 Let the Gods themselves come to obstruct me;  
 I am resolved to incinerate them  
 as fire would incinerate cotton."

To these words Rama replied:

"Your way is the way  
 of faultless Justice.  
 How did anger,  
 which perturbs imperturbable Justice,  
 take root in the anger-proof  
 soil of your heart?"

This was a funny question to put to Lakshmana, who had grave cause for provocation. He laughed scornfully and replied:

"You took over this Realm  
 on your father declaring it yours;  
 If, by the act of the enemy,  
 you lost it and go to the Jungle—  
 it ill-becomes this slave, indeed,  
 to grow wrathful!  
 Your detractors  
 will pack you off to the Jungle;  
 and am I to bear it all,

cherishing this soul of mine  
in this vile sensuous body?

“Do you take me for that merciless King  
who made you the gift,  
in front of my very eyes,  
and, after going back upon it,  
unblushingly keeps alive?”

These harsh words about Dasaratha distressed Rama, who proceeded to administer a gentle admonition to Lakshmana.

If a river is dry, it is not the river's fault. There has been no rainfall in the hills and so the supply to the river has failed. If there has been no rainfall, it is not the fault of the clouds, for the monsoon has failed to marshal the clouds. If the monsoon has failed, it is because the rotation rate of the Earth has been impeded by the solar winds, which are in their turn determined by the occurrence of spots in the distant Sun. The genesis of every event in this spatio-temporal continuum has thus to be traced, not to its immediate predecessor, but to the whole concatenation of events since Creation. It is the weight of such events, which is called Destiny. It is this Destiny which the Poet seeks to expound to Lakshmana through Rama.

Rama tells Lakshmana:

“It is not the river's fault  
that it has run dry.  
Likewise,  
it is not the King's fault  
nor that of the mind of our mother,  
who has begotten us  
and nursed us lovingly,  
nor that of her son (Bharata).  
It is Destiny's fault, my son,  
why, then, grow wild?”

Rama's exposition of the play of Destiny goes home into the consciousness of Lakshmana. Yet his anger overpowers him, control it how he may.

A sudden sob leaps  
out of him  
like the fire  
blown with a puff of air  
from the blacksmith's bellows  
and he says:

“How to quell this raging mind?  
witness, now,  
the work of my bow,  
which will outwit the wit of that wicked woman  
and outfate that Fate,  
which is said to be stronger than the Gods.”

Lakshmana's anger became uncontrollable in spite of his trying to control it. Rama observed his condition with sympathy and understood that all this anger was born out of Lakshmana's love for him.

He tells Lakshmana:

“Will you,  
with your scripture-creating tongue,  
let slip words  
turned out haphazardly  
by the mouth?  
I regard not these words as yours.  
If those who have strayed from Virtue's path  
are your father and mother  
who have begotten you,  
can you rage against them?”

The moment Rama referred to parents, Lakshmana burst out:

“It's you  
who are my father.  
It's you  
who are my Lord.  
It's you  
who have brought me forth  
out of your womb,  
and it's none else.

“You, who have learnt to give freely to others,  
see what is going to happen to-day.”  
Whereupon  
Rama put his hand  
upon the mouth of Lakshmana  
whose ferocity was like that of the Lord of Destruction.  
The Enlightened One continued:  
“Sir, is this anger to be quenched

by defeating in battle your brother, Bharata,  
 who covets not worldly kingdoms  
 or by tormenting our sacred father,  
 who is adored by the great,  
 or by vanquishing the mother,  
 who begot us?"

This argument was irrefutable and Lakshmana quieted down, his anger turning into self-pity.

In reply to the one who knew  
 how to use words with effect,  
 the younger brother said:  
 "Yes, why grow angry?  
 I am born  
 to bear the words of scorn  
 that enemies will pour upon me;  
 to bear these two idly mounting stone limbs  
 called shoulders;  
 to bear this quiver of arrows  
 and this shapely bow!"

#### HERMIT LAKSHMANA

After this dialogue, which took place in the public street, the brothers enter the palace of Sumitra, the mother of Lakshmana. By the time Rama takes leave of Sumitra and comes out, Lakshmana appears before him, clad like Rama in hermit's weeds. Quick to understand Lakshmana's intention to follow him to the forest, Rama requests him to listen to his words:

"Our mothers all  
 and our King of Kings  
 are not like before,  
 they are sunk in sorrow.  
 Lest my separation should further torment them  
 you must, for my sake,  
 comfort them with your company."

As Rama uttered these words,  
 the shapely, column-like shoulders of dear Lakshmana  
 shuddered;  
 he sobbed intermittently



as he resumed his arrested breath.

“What crime has this slave committed against you?”

he asked.

“Have you uttered these words,  
because I am the son  
of that Guardian of Truth,  
who keeps unabashedly alive,  
whilst you go to the Forest,  
abandoning the grief-stricken Earth  
in deference to  
a woman’s word?”

Lakshmana was fretting and fuming against the cruelty of Kaikeyi. It was cruel enough on the part of Rama to have asked Lakshmana to renounce his anger. But for Rama to say that Lakshmana should not accompany him to the forest was even more cruel.

“These words of yours  
are more cruel, Sir,  
than the words with which you commanded me  
to quiet down and  
cast away my rising anger  
against your banishment.”

#### DOUBLE AFFLICTION

Lakshmana’s sublime anger, which turned at first into profound self-pity, now turns into the deepest grief. He asks:

“Are you resolved, my Lord,  
to wash your hands of us  
along with the Kingdom which is yours by right?  
Oh, bearer of the well-oiled lance,  
which, after wiping itself of oil,  
would draw tears from the eyes  
of enemy wives  
and wipe the auspicious unguent off their eyes  
before re-entering its scabbard!”

The allusion is to the double performance of Rama’s lance, which, by wiping out his enemies and bringing tears to their bereaved wives, would wipe from their eyes the black paint which only married women are permitted to use. Does Rama, whose

lance inflicts such double punishment in battle, emulate his lance by imposing a double affliction in his renunciation?

The loving words of Lakshmana moved Rama to tears.

Rama found no words  
 to reply;  
 he cast a long lingering look  
 at the face of beloved Lakshmana;  
 and stood gazing at him  
 for a long while,  
 with the tears that overbrimmed from his lotus eyes  
 dropping intermittently in a row.

Kamban's dramatic genius is quick to seize upon this intensely lyrical situation and to add a touch of drama to it by bringing Sage Vasishtha into the scene at this stage.

*(To be continued)*

S. MAHARAJAN

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## DAWN

DAWN breaks upon my silent waiting soul,  
 Over the horizon's slumber-hooded hills,  
 Across the fields of calm and the sleeping lake,  
 And through the wizard throng of phantom trees.  
 A glow, a whisper, a rumour of a gleam  
 Comes hesitant athwart the brooding skies  
 When star-dew tears moisten the inner drowse.  
 Then a swift step from the hidden chariot-dawn,  
 A bugle call of first amazing light;  
 A voice of splendour antheing a golden birth  
 And Thou art here unveiled, the Guest unnamed.  
 Thy birth in time is earth's transfiguring hour.

ROMEN

## INNOCENT SMILE

I SLOWLY to the cradle pace  
To see that smile across thy face,  
Where Beauty perfect sits on throne,  
As on a sculptured granite stone  
With angel-touch around its lips  
And envied kiss from Cherub's lips.  
Do Seraphs sing thee lullaby  
And by thee singing softly lie?  
Immaculate childhood, hold awhile  
Thy charming sky-lit magic smile.

Wait, wait. I'll come with paint and brush.  
Until I come let there be hush.  
Retain thy smile, just for a while,  
So that the world is cleansed of guile.  
Sleep, sleep on peaceful innocence' breast,  
When all around is void of rest.  
Smile, smile for miles throughout thy course,  
When billows roar with wonted force.  
Oh! Life Divine within thy soul  
Lives, smiles and speaks and makes thee whole.

GEORGE MOSES

## A PILGRIMAGE OF PAINTING

*This is a talk given by Ruty Patil on Monday the 28th April 1969, in the Ashram Playground. Slides of her paintings from the Exhibition held in Bombay (March 3-9 1969) at Chetana Art Gallery were shown and briefly commented on by the speaker.*

MY early beginning as a painter was fraught with hesitancy and filled with doubts.

Towards the end of 1964, without any knowledge of art and its background—without any training, I started with a few crayon sketches and then began water colours. It was such a revelation that I could hardly keep myself away from paints and brushes. At first I was very shy to show these pictures, but later on when some of my friends saw them, I received from them tremendous support and encouragement.

This opened up a new world of discoveries—not only about the paintings and the various methods and medias to be employed, but more about myself as a painter in relation to the expressions of colours and forms which were pouring through different levels of my being. It became an outpouring of delight to sit with a fresh sheet of paper, and a few minutes later would spread before my eyes a finished painting—the likeness of which was only in the unknown to be fathomed by the inner eye.

I was in the Ashram in July 1965. When I went to see the Mother, I took with me a few water colours to show her. The Mother saw these with considerable interest and told me, “You go on painting.” I was curious to know what was happening to me. Why was there this great urge to paint which was getting hold of me more and more? What was being manifested through these paintings? I asked the Mother all these questions, and many more. The Mother gave me a deep look and smiled warmly. She asked me, “Do you find joy in painting?” I burst out in childlike candour. “Oh, yes Mother! Immense joy!” She asked me again, “Yes?” I nodded my head. I could find no words to express the immensity of that particular joy which even today I feel as soon as I am ready to paint. I am so terribly impatient to begin. I cannot wait to dip the brush. The Mother said, “Just go on painting. It will happen.” Then she made a wide circular movement with her right hand—from herself going outward—and said with certainty, “Something will come out.”

From then onwards—I remember it was the 2nd of July—I painted almost every day in Golconde, and I would give the day’s work to Amrita to show it to the Mother. This way I was able to send up to the Mother whatever I was doing in Golconde and almost 95% of the work which was done in Bombay.

In Golconde Mona gave me absolute freedom to paint, and I painted with zeal and with speed. Visitors were allowed to come and see the pictures all spread out on the floor. I have yet to see a more picturesque background for my paintings than the black stone flooring of Golconde. Its lovely sheen shows off the colours beautifully.

The first to display my paintings in public was my nephew Fali, who was then a naval cadet in the National Defence Academy in Kharakvasla. He wrote to me very seriously: "Remember, your first exhibition was held in my bunk."

It was in 1967 that Dr. Mulk Raj Anand saw my pictures for the first time. He is the Chairman of Lalit Kala Akademi—an authority on art by world standards, a well-known author—a genuine lover of art, and a blunt and ruthless critic. He was so obviously impressed that he began to sort out paintings and turned the whole room into a *mela* of colours. It was his express wish that I should hold an exhibition of my paintings at the earliest opportunity. He was very much struck by this type of inspirational work. He told me that naive artists, such as myself, interested him greatly—artists who could produce finished work without any training.

When the time is ripe and the particular event is ready to take formation many things arrange by themselves automatically. So far I had used water colours and textile dyes. Later in 1968, I tried out canvasses in oils. This suited my style of painting better and proved an instantaneous success. By January this year I had almost a dozen oil paintings and they were readily saleable.

It was always my aim that the exhibition of my paintings should be something different, something above the ordinary and carry the Mother's touch in such a manner that it would leave its mark not only in people's imagination, but in their hearts to live with in time to come. I also wanted to convey that in art one can and does enrich oneself and one's work through the spiritual background.

When the exhibition was fixed to be held at Chetana Art Gallery from the 3rd till the 9th March, every detail and every aspect was minutely thought of. Everything was foreseen and planned with care—not in a rigid or deliberate manner—but allowed to fall into line. In a way, it was fulfilment of aspiration. It formed by itself into near perfection—unconsciously. Everything fell into the right mould to set itself into the correct pattern. The invitation—its mode and approach carried a distinctive personal touch. There was a warm welcome behind it. Then came the question of display which called for pure simplicity, aesthetic and elegant arrangement, and every painting stood on its own light and merit. Each picture took on its own personality. It developed individuality, told its own story and created a genuine heartfelt response.

The workers and helpers acted in a spirit of dedication. There was between the visitors and the helpers harmony and companionship, and a new style and rapport was established.

The support of the Press and the journalists was very stimulating. Each one of them saw some deeper meaning, and reflected their impressions in their comments in a sincere manner.

It was an experience most rewarding not only for me and those who helped me, but also for those who visited the gallery throughout the week. Each received in full measure, and none went away empty-hearted.

The exhibition was opened officially and symbolically by the Mother on Monday the 3rd March at six in the evening. With the Mother's presence and her blessings

the entire atmosphere of the gallery was completely transformed. Bachubhai Munim is here with us this evening and will vouch for my words. Soft Ashram music in the background lent the right touch of enchantment. The first evening—the Opening Day—was something unforgettable. There was so much joy—so much cool delight that people were caught in the grip of it. There was a different air—something intangible—something new—something to be felt—to be touched by—to be believed.

The next evening, Mrs. Tara Cherian, wife of the Governor of Maharashtra, paid a friendly visit and mixed informally with the visitors. She was most interested and saw each and every painting with much attention and feeling.

Every true artist looks upon art as a form of communion with the Divine. I cannot paint unless I am in the Mother's consciousness and in her world of luminosity—of peace and delight. When I paint I do not know anything except that I am with the Mother and the Mother is near me. Once the Mother asked me what I felt when I painted. I could not answer her immediately. I could not string the words to express that particular mood. Then it began to reveal itself, and for the first time I realised that it was something like meditation. I told the Mother so. "Yes," the Mother said, and added with a firm conviction, "Yes, it is meditation."

It is an endless and deep voyage into the unknown—through the realms of colours, lines and forms. It gives me limitless joy of expression and it becomes more satisfying when the paintings are viewed and studied with seriousness of purpose—with interest to seek and search. It is then a moving experience to see my creative work awakening a true response.

In the Gallery the display of paintings was around the central theme—the photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and the letter accompanying the Mother's Blessings. Visitors at once felt that this was the symbol of the exhibition. This created a mood of silence. There was contemplation. Some link was formed. The rhythm was set. From then onwards it became a pilgrimage in homage to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

RUTTY PATEL

# THE WINTER OAK

## A SHORT STORY

“MAY I come in?”

A small figure, in battered felt boots covered with melting snow-flakes, stood in the open doorway of the school. His reddened face glowed as if it would burst; the eyebrows were white with frost.

“Late again, Savushkin,” said Anna Vasilyevna. Like most young teachers, Anna liked to be strict, but now an almost plaintive note sounded in her voice.

Considering the matter settled, Savushkin quickly slid to his place. Anna saw him shove his oil-cloth school-bag into the desk and, without turning his head, ask something of the boy next to him.

Savushkin’s lack of punctuality annoyed Anna; it somehow spoiled the fine opening of the day for her. The geography teacher, a small dried-up old woman, had once complained to Anna about Savushkin often being late to lessons. She complained of others things too—the children’s inattentiveness, their much too boisterous behaviour. “Those first morning lessons are so trying,” she said. “They may be, for incompetent teachers who do not know how to hold the interest of their pupils,” thought Anna disdainfully, and offered to change hours with the old woman. She felt a prick of conscience now: the old teacher had doubtlessly sensed the challenge in Anna’s offer.

“Is everything clear?”

“Yes,” chorused the children.

“Very well. Then give me some examples of nouns.” She was taking a lesson in “parts of speech”.

There was a short silence and then someone said haltingly: “Cat.”

“Correct,” said Anna, recalling that last year, too, “cat” had been the first example. After that examples poured in like a stream: window... table... house... highway.

“Correct,” Anna assured them. The children were joyfully excited. It amazed Anna to see such joy at the discovery of a new aspect in long-familiar words. At first the choice of examples embraced every-day tangible things: cart, tractor... From the back desk a fat boy called Vasya kept repeating in his thin voice, “Chicken, chicken, chicken.”

But then someone said hesitantly: “Town.”

“Good,” encouraged Anna.

“Street... victory... poem... play ..”

“Well, that’s enough,” said Anna. “I can see you understand it.”

The voices died down reluctantly, only fat Vasya’s “chicken” still came from the

back of the room. And then suddenly, as if aroused from sleep, Savushkin stood up behind his desk and shouted eagerly.

"Winter oak!"

The children laughed.

"Quiet, please!" Anna brought her palm down hard on the table.

"Winter oak," repeated Savushkin heedless of the laughter around him or of Anna's orders. There was something peculiar in his manner. The words seemed to have burst out like a confession, like some glorious secret which could not remain unshared.

Annoyed and uncomprehending, Anna asked, barely controlling her irritation: "Why 'winter oak'? 'Oak' is enough."

"Oh, an oak is nothing. A winter oak, that's different."

"Sit down, Savushkin. That's what coming in late leads to. Oak is a noun and what the word 'winter' in this case is we have not studied as yet. You will come to the teacher's room during the main interval."

"Now you'll catch it," whispered somebody behind Savushkin.

Savushkin sat down smiling to himself, not in the least put out by the teacher's strict tone. A difficult boy, thought Anna.

The lesson continued.

"Sit down," said Anna when Savushkin entered the teacher's room. With evident pleasure the boy sank into a soft arm-chair and rocked a few times on its spring.

"Will you please tell me why you are always late for school?"

"I really don't know, Anna Vasilyevna," he said with a gesture of surprise. "I leave home an hour before school."

There were many children who lived much farther away from school yet all of them got there on time.

"You live in Kuzminki, don't you?"

"No, I live on the sanatorium premises."

"Aren't you ashamed, then, to tell me you leave home an hour before school? It's fifteen minutes from the sanatorium to the highway, and no more than half an hour's walk down the highway!"

"But I don't never go down the highway. I take a short-cut through the forest," Savushkin said earnestly.

"Don't ever go," Anna corrected him mechanically. Why did children have to lie? she thought unhappily. Why couldn't Savushkin tell her simply "I'm sorry, Anna Vasilyevna. I stopped to play snowballs with the kids," or something else equally straightforward. But the boy said no more and just looked at her out of his large grey eyes as if wondering what else she would want of him.

"It's a sad business, Savushkin. I'll have to talk to your parents about it."

"There's only my mother, Anna Vasilyevna," Savushkin said softly.

"I'll have to come to see your mother then," said Anna.

"Please do, Anna Vasilyevna. She'll be so glad to see you."



"I doubt that. What shift does she work on?"

"The second. She goes to work at three."

"Very well then. I finish at two. We'll go together right after lessons."

Savushkin led Anna Vasilyevna along the path that started right at the back of the school. As soon as they entered the forest and the heavy snow-laden fir branches closed behind them they found themselves in a different, enchanted world of peace and quiet. Now and then magpies and crows flew from tree to tree shaking the spreading branches, knocking off dry pine cones and occasionally breaking off a brittle twig. But the sounds were short-lived and muffled.

Everything was white. Only high up against the blue sky the dainty lacework of birch tops stood out as if sketched in with India ink.

The path followed a frozen brook, now right down along the bank, now climbing up a steep rise. Occasionally the trees fell back revealing a sunlit clearing criss-crossed with hares' tracks that looked like a watch-chain pattern. There were larger tracks too, shaped like shamrock. They led away into the densest part of the woods.

"Elk's tracks," said Savushkin, following the direction of Anna's gaze. "Don't be afraid," he added, reading an unspoken question in her eyes.

"An elk?"

"No. No such luck," sighed Savushkin. "I've seen elk-droppings, though."

"What?"

"Dung," Savushkin explained, embarrassed.

Diving under a twisted willow the path ran down to the brook again. The surface of the brook was in parts covered with a thick layer of snow, in parts its icy armour lay clear and sparkling, and there were spots where unfrozen water stood out in dark blotches like evil eyes.

"Why hasn't it frozen there?" Anna asked.

"Warm springs. Look, you can see one coming up right there. Plenty of these springs here," Savushkin explained eagerly, "that's why the brook never freezes right through."

They came to another unfrozen stretch, with pitchblack but transparent water.

Anna began to throw handfuls of snow into it. Thus time passed. They were deeply engrossed in the mysteries of the forest.

Savushkin trod on ahead, bending slightly and throwing keen glances around. Anna followed behind.

The winding path led them on and on. There seemed to be no end to all those trees and huge snowdrifts, to that enchanted silence and sun-speckled twilight.

Suddenly a bluish-white patch gleamed ahead. The trees grew sparser. The path rounded a nut-bush and a vast clearing flooded with sunlight opened up before their eyes. The trees stepped humbly aside and in the middle of the clearing in sparkling white garment stood an old oak, tall and majestic like a cathedral.

"The winter oak!" gasped Anna. She reverently approached the tree and stopped under its glittering branches.

Unaware of the tumult in his teacher's heart, Savushkin got busy with something at the foot of the trunk, treating the magnificent tree with the familiarity of a long-standing friendship.

"Come here, Anna Vasilyevna," he called. "Look!" He pushed aside a large lump of snow with earth and old grass clinging to its under-side. A little ball plastered with decayed leaves lay in the hollow below.

"A hedgehog!" cried Anna.

"See how well he hid himself?" And Savushkin carefully restored the protective covering of earth and snow over the immobile hedgehog. Then he dug at another spot and revealed a tiny cave with icicles hanging at its opening. It was occupied by a brown frog, its tightly-stretched skin shiny as if it were lacquered.

Savushkin touched the frog. It made no movement.

"Isn't he a sly one?" laughed Savushkin "Shamming dead. But just watch him leap as soon as the sun warms him up a bit."

He guided Anna on through this world he knew so well. There were numerous other tenants in and around the oak: bugs, lizards, insects. Some hid among the roots, others in the deep cracks of the bark. Thin, withered, apparently lifeless, they hibernated there all through the winter. Fascinated, Anna watched this hidden forest life, so little known to her

"Oh, mother'll be at work by now!" came Savushkin's anxious voice.

Anna looked at her watch. A quarter past three. She felt trapped. Ashamed for her human failings and inwardly begging forgiveness of the oak she said: "Well, Savushkin, this only proves that a short-cut is not always the best way to choose. You'll have to go along the highroad from now on.

Savushkin looked down and did not reply.

Heavens! isn't this the clearest proof of my incompetence, thought Anna.

The morning lesson flashed in her mind. How dull and lifeless were her explanations, how utterly devoid of feeling. And she was teaching the children their native tongue, so beautiful, so rich in shades, colour and meaning! An experienced pedagogue, indeed!

"Thank you, Savushkin, for the lovely walk," she said. "I didn't mean what I've just told you. Of course, you can take the forest path to school."

"Thank you, Anna Vasilyevna," Savushkin blushed with pleasure. He wanted to promise his teacher then and there that he would never be late again, but checked himself, for fear of failing his word. He only raised his collar and, pulling down his hat, said:

"I'll see you back to school."

"No, don't. I'll find the way myself now."

He looked at her in some doubt, then picked up a long stick, broke off its thinner end and offered it to Anna.

"Take this," he said, "if an elk comes your way, just hit him on the back and he'll run for all he's worth. Though better not hit him, just raise the stick at him.

He might take offence, you know, and leave the woods for good.”

“Don’t worry, I shan’t hit him,” she promised.

She took a few steps back, then stopped and turned to take one last look at the winter oak, tinged with pink by the setting sun. A small dark figure stood at the foot of the trunk: Savushkin did not go home. He stayed to guard his teacher’s way if even from a distance.

And suddenly Anna knew that the most wonderful being in that forest was not the winter oak but this small boy in battered felt boots and patched clothes, the son of a “shower nurse” and a soldier killed in the war. She waved her hand to him and went on her way.

GURI NAGIBIU

*(With acknowledgements to the author)*

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## CAN I MEET YOU...?

CAN I meet you in a place  
 Remote as my mood  
 By a blue wall  
 Speckled with dark?  
 Can I see you where a sentry  
 Leaves the wood  
 And love-eyes follow  
 With a tender spark?  
 Can I see you, can I see you  
 Where the sun-rimmed dawn  
 Recalls an otherwhere  
 Or are you in the hush  
 Of diamond time?  
 O love, can I see you there?

STANLEY W. COWIE

## GIFTS OF GRACE

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

### ACTION IN THE PHYSICAL

2

HOWEVER one meditates, knee-deep mud rests hidden in the subconscious. Hence the demand upon us to surrender the whole man so that we may be rid of our animality and then of our humanity and walk the earth like gods. The crucial turn consists in the lower vital and the physical being accepting the rule of Light.

About a dream on October 29, 1936 that my physical had surrendered, the Master remarked:

“In the inner physical probably as it was in dream.”

About another dream on November 25, 1936 that my vital was undergoing a change and being psychicised, the reply was: “Yes.”

Next I wrote about a feeling on October 7, 1936:

“I feel that every part has opened to the Mother, is under her direct control and nothing bad can happen to me. Am I right in my feeling?” The answer was “Yes.”

“I dreamt of four or five buffalo-carts slowly moving upward through a wide passage. Does it signify anything?”

Sri Aurobindo wrote: “I dare say it may be symbolic of a slow and steady progression.”

Once in a dream I heard the Mother saying, “I have accepted you as my instrument.” When I asked whether it was the Mother’s voice, the Master answered “Yes.” (12-3-1936) What can bring more joy to a seeker than this one word, “Yes.”

At another time I saw the Mother (in a dream) giving a flower and saying, “It is the light in the subconscious.” For two or three hours the thought remained turned to the Mother during sleep. (24 9.1936)

The above details may be enough to show the great complexities of our sadhana. Even in sleep we must be free from the influence of the lower elements. For:

“The outer consciousness goes down into this subconscious when we are asleep, and so it becomes unaware of what is going on in us when we are asleep except for a few dreams. Many of these dreams rise from the subconscious and are made up of old memories, impressions etc put together in an incoherent way...”

“So too when sex or anger troubles the conscious vital, dreams of sex or dreams of anger and strife can still rise, it is only when the subconscious is cleared that they cease...”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p 676

On April 12, 1937 the Master wrote to me:

"You need not be so concerned by the night emissions provided they are not too frequent. They do not stop till the subconscious is clear—unless one can govern the subconscious by putting a force on it (in the sex-region) before going to sleep. Many succeed (not at once though) by that method, with others it is ineffective."

Despite the opening of the subconscious to the Mother's force from the very first year I touched her feet, it took me thirty years to have a tangible result. It was in 1962 that I got freedom from sex-dreams at night.

The following letter of mine of September 12, 1936 will speak for itself:

"While in sleep I saw at dead of night that the sun was entering the earth. Though outwardly senseless it seemed that I was wide awake and heard a voice, 'The sun in the subconscious.'

"These days I often see visions in sleep. Does it indicate that my sadhana is going on in sleep?"

The Master gave a heartening answer, "Yes."

A vision of the sun a few yards above the earth and a mass of concentrated light falling on it meant:

"Nearness of Truth to the physical."

A vision of a golden star near the earth betokened:

"The truth coming near to the physical."

To my question whether my seeing a blue light falling upon a drain and nearby thorns indicated a touch of the Divine Light in the most dirty and crude part of my being, the reply was, "Yes."

QUESTION: I saw myself climbing down a ladder into the depth of the sea. Does it mean anything?

SRI AUROBINDO: It might be descent through the physical into the subconscious.

QUESTION: I had the vision of a lotus below the feet. The feet, I think, are the seat of the material consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: Below the feet is the subconscious not the material consciousness. The red lotus is the Divine Presence beginning to open slightly there (in the subconscious).

It looks as if these were only preliminary touches. Much remained yet to be done to clear the dirt accumulated in the subconscious. After 1939 there were rare occasions of having dreams of higher grades.

Though action in the physical still continues unabated with usual breaks for assimilation<sup>1</sup> and preparation.

In the April Darshan (1963) just the moment the Mother appeared on the terrace, I felt an action below the ankle and in no time the pressure passed down to the sole.

<sup>1</sup> "The periods of assimilation continue really till all that has to be done is fundamentally done. Only they have a different character in the later stages of sadhana. If they cease altogether at the early stage (M is still in a very early stage), it is because all that the nature was capable of has been done and that would mean it was not capable of much" (*Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Fourth Series, p. 221)

The portion round the heel grew so hot that I felt as if I was standing on a heated cement-plastered road, bare-footed, although I then had sandals on and there was not a speck of sunlight anywhere on the ground, it being 6.15 in the evening. Even when the Mother withdrew, the pressure was there in all its intensity.

The very same was the experience in the next August Darshan. The only difference was that first I felt the pressure in the head and then it passed to the feet. Even when the Mother quietly retired, I stood on fully concentrated and motionless like a statue.

The first result, and a very prominent one that is perceptible, of the action of the Mother's force in the physical is the sense of freedom from lower appetites.

It might prepare the day for a new basis, of life, a new order of things.

Imagine a person who was full of passion, given to fits of anger, animal selfishness but who now sees signs of chains breaking asunder. Is it unbelievable if this awakens in him a sense of deep gratitude? An experience may help to clear the point:

That was the period when we had temporary flights into the realm of Light effortlessly. Once in meditation I lost all sense of earthly existence. After a time I saw myself rising into the sky. I went soaring up and up, leaving the clouds behind. It looked like a faintly moonlit sky. How long I remained in that state I do not remember, for there was no sense of what I was and where I was. What I saw then is still fresh in my memory—myself, a lone figure wandering in a "lonely sky".

When the rising stopped and I could not move onward, my consciousness began to fall. The fall was much more sharp than the rise, if my memory does not fail me. Of a sudden I felt a hesitation—a hesitation to enter into the earthly atmosphere. Something in me did not like to re-enter the body. It appeared full of obscurities.

At this juncture there appeared before my eyes the glorious figure of the Mother in her present form with a white gown on, in the shining sky. And this led my consciousness to enter the body. It is my belief that if the Mother had not appeared at that crucial moment, I would not have continued my life on earth.

Is there anything in the world, however precious, which can repay even in fraction all the guru does for us?

And what have we to pay in return? It is simply out of compassion that the guru accepts our services.

Here I am reminded of a story:

Guru Gorakhnath stands on the same level as our Rishis of yore. The place where he lived came to be known as Gorakhpore. Thousands are there who follow his teachings. Gambhirananda was a noted figure of his institution somewhere in 1914. When he was at Gaya, many used to flock to him. Once at dead of night a few thieves began to beat those who were staying with him. When G came to know this, he spoke to them in an affectionate tone, "Why are you trying to create a fear in them? You may take what you need. Your need should be attended to first. Whatever is here belongs to the Divine, so whenever you feel a need, you may have these things."

The thieves took full advantage of the gift and came several times to gather the

things free. Madhoda, a devotee, took upon himself the task of restoring whatever had gone.

This made Gambhirananda feel that this act of his was giving encouragement to the mischief-doer to do more mischief and put an unnecessary burden on Madhoda. So he dissuaded him from doing so. In reply M said, "What I am placing at the feet of the guru belongs in fact to him, for the more he gives the more is there ready for him."

Gambhirananda used to relate a story about his Master Gorakhnath. A devotee used to serve him daily with a milk preparation. For long he continued his services with great zeal. Once this roused in him a sense of pride. It could not remain concealed from Gorakhnath. Next day, showing him a heap of sugar, rice etc., he said, "There lies all that you have given me and you can take it back." The devotee fell at his feet and prayed to be forgiven for his folly.

A true guru does not need anything. He has gone beyond needs.<sup>1</sup> He expects no return. His is a work of love. It is for our good that he accepts a thing. Expression of gratitude according to the Mother is a psychic element.

A DISCIPLE

<sup>1</sup> "The spiritual man is one who has discovered his soul... he needs nothing external for his completeness of existence." *The Life Divine*, p 871.

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## NO EXHAUSTION

THERE IS no exhaustion of the tried and true  
 Old powerful vehicles of poetry,  
 But something in them rises ever new  
 To grace the hand of loving mastery.  
 What formerly was done with majesty  
 Is rich forever, as one knows to rise  
 And meet its sovereign necessity  
 With steady stroke and burning undimmed eyes.  
 Even though abused, a measure never dies  
 Parnassian fire has touched, and aether bright ;  
 While that which far below the summits lies,  
 However new, goes down to endless night.  
 The lyre's few strings are boundless in their range  
 For which vast discord is no true exchange.

JESSE ROARKE

## NATIONAL INTEGRATION

A FEAR of national "disintegration" has gripped our minds today. But "disintegration" has been quite a commonplace of history, in India and all over the world, since the beginning of recorded time. A study of the process as it has occurred in the past might help us better to face with some confidence an impending peril. Examples abound, but let us select some of the more well-known instances.

When the Caesars of Rome organised an empire, they had hoped it would last for ever. Within less than three centuries of Augustus, cracks began to appear in that mighty structure. By the end of the next century, the empire broke up into bits, to provide raw material for the new nations of the West, France and England and Spain and the Netherlands, to be brought to life by the vigour of the northern barbarian. The Romans had done all that the mere political mind could devise to keep their imperial unity intact. They provided for a powerful central government backed by a well-trained army and fortified by a magnificent system of legal enactments. Their provinces were held together by an efficient administration directly responsible to the centre. They had the sagacity of fostering carefully the allegiance of the provincial peoples. They gave them roads and cities and theatres and baths and all the other amenities of peace to keep them contented; they taught the semi-civilised West the language of Cicero and Virgil and left the Greek-speaking provinces of the East to exult in their ancient heritage; they even offered them the privileges of Roman citizenship, a kind of "freedom of the empire", which was the coveted trophy of all the provincial subjects. And yet, when the barbarians came in their floods, they found the empire rotten to the core, the provinces fell an easy prey, even Rome could not be saved.

Take another example, the empire of the Caliphs. The banner with the Crescent Moon was carried to the far ends of the world in record time, and the Arabic language cemented the bonds forged by the religion of the Prophet. Where conversion failed, the Zimmi was left to follow his own creed and was allowed to live in peace and prosper, on payment of a nominal tax. An "Arabic" culture, mainly borrowed from the ancient books of Greece and India, united the elite. And Baghdad became a New York of the medieval world, a home of millionaires and a hub of the world's trade. The governmental system was not altogether medieval, for it left a measure of autonomy to the regional units. But none of these things could save the Abbasids and, when the Mongols came, Baghdad retained hardly a trace of its magnificence.

The history of the modern colonial empires is too recent to need any detailed comment. Fissiparous tendencies have always been present in the empires of the Portuguese and Spaniards, the French and the Dutch and the English. The more prudent among these imperial nations have recognised the shape of things in good time and have saved their face if not always their power by a strategic withdrawal at the



right hour Those who did not have the necessary prudence have found themselves in the soup.

The nations that enjoy a reputation for their unity today have seen worse days in the past Some have at one stage or another of their history been threatened with complete dissolution Everybody knows about the "geographical entity" that not so long ago represented modern Germany or Italy. Their story until the middle of the nineteenth century is a continuous tale of disunity. But even France, perhaps the most solidly united nation on earth, had to pass through ordeals before she reached her present stage. The early Capets who became "kings" in France after the fall of the Carolingian empire could hardly boast of territory far beyond the limits of Paris; the rest of France was in the hands of the lords of Aquitaine and Guyenne and Anjou and Languedoc and a hundred other fiefs large and small, over which the king had no authority except that of an empty title. When the British laid siege at Orleans in the last days of the Hundred Years War, France was as good as lost. It was only the miraculous performance of a divinely inspired Maid that kept the soul of France alive. The threat of another invasion, this time from across the Pyrenees, put France once more on her mettle and, in spite of the cruel "religious" wars, she could be welded for good into a solid whole, thanks to the organising genius of the great Bourbons, Henry IV, Louis XIV, their ministers, and finally the Corsican Napoleon.

But no other nation, perhaps with the possible exception of Poland, has had to pass through such vicissitudes of fortune as our own motherland. The political history of India, as every schoolboy knows to his cost, has been the story of empires and kingdoms rising only to fall and leaving the country repeatedly in a chaos of petty states, a very image of disintegration. We have had to put on the foreign yoke and bear it long. And yet it is the most galling of these yokes that has finally got us to our goal.

What lessons, then, shall we draw?

In the first place, we may take consolation in the fact that no night is dark enough to preclude the possibility of a dawn, and that the worst of circumstances, even the threat or actuality of foreign invasion, has been a helpful factor. It would seem as if a nation could not grow to maturity and attain a political solidarity unless it were subjected to a cruel pressure, or at least threatened with disruption by the enemy from without. But this naturally could not be pushed too far. The nation must preserve sufficient vitality to react against the adverse pressure and throw out the intruder, if it were to survive at all.

Secondly, we may note that the possession of a strong and well-organised government, at the centre and in the provinces, is no certain guarantee that the nation will keep its unity, however essential the need for such a strong government during its early formative stages. Rome had it in its best days, the Caliphs had it when they ruled from Baghdad, all the modern colonial empires have been well-governed enough. And all of them have failed in the end. In India itself, the record of the Mauryan, the Gupta and the Mughal administration is not one of dismal failure from the purely organisational point of view. But none of them could keep India united for long, be-

cause there was in all of them an artificiality, a sense of imposition from above, which did not suit the spirit of India and they had to go. Akbar did succeed in part by creating a sense of loyalty among the government's servants, but that is not the whole of patriotism. Sivaji made his system much more broad-based by enlisting the services not only of the Brahmins and the "fighting" classes but also of the artisans and peasants in the village. We do not know what would have happened if he had not died an early death. But the Peshwas missed their chance of creating a united India when they sanctioned the levy of the Chauth and Sardeshmukhi on the Rajput and the Sikh and the distant Orissan. Sivaji's ideal of Dharma-rajya became in the hands of his successors a synonym for the Bargir and his raids.

A third and perhaps the most important point to note is that neither religion nor culture nor language is any sure means of preserving national unity, at least in the political sense. The Islamic peoples had the same religion throughout the empire of the Caliphs. Medieval Christendom was devoutly Catholic throughout its ages of greatest anarchy. Hindu India too did not know a really "heterodox" creed during its centuries of fratricidal struggle. Ancient Rome imposed a uniform culture on its western provinces. The "Arabic" culture spread through the whole of Western Asia and Egypt. And the ancient Indian culture dominated the minds of our men when the kings and regional units were fighting for precedence. A common language is no doubt a great unifying force, but it too can be imposed at the cost of losing allegiance. The Greek-speaking areas of the Roman empire never really liked the intrusion of Latin in commercial and governmental circles, and the Eastern or Byzantine empire rose, at least in part, as a protest against the Latinising influence of Rome. The Persians from the time of the Abbasid Caliphs chafed under the dominance of the Arabic tongue and one of the first signs of their national awakening was Firdausi's masterpiece in his native Persian. The most vigorous resistance to the Muslim invasion of India was furnished precisely by those areas where the regional vernacular was preserved or encouraged by the rulers—the Rajputs, the Vijayanagar kings, the Maratha chiefs—even to the detriment of Sanskrit, the old *lingua franca*.

What, then, we may now proceed to ask ourselves, are the positive factors that are likely to keep India politically one? Here too a back-look at recent history might help.

It is now coming to be gradually known that it was during the Swadeshi Movement of 1905-10 that the nation heard for the first time in recent history of the ideal of an India completely free and united. The leaders of that movement appealed directly to the glory of our past and of the still greater glory of the India to come. Patriotism became a religion for these early pioneers and they could pass on something of their fervour to the rising generation. A religion of country was born. India has always believed in religion; perhaps it is this religion of country that will keep her united in the end.

The ideal of a nation economically progressive, self-sufficient, industrious and rich—the modern socialistic gospel—is nothing so very new. Until the advent of

the foreign adventurers, India had always been famed for her riches; indeed it was this very reputation of being fantastically rich that has drawn to us the invaders. But man does not live by bread alone and economic well-being can be no sure insurance against "disintegration". It is well to note that we were, if not the richest, still among the richest nations of earth, when we sold our country to a handful of merchants from across the seas. It is not that we were less brave or capable—Nana Farnavis still ruled in Poona, Mahadaji Sindia was not yet dead, Ranjit Singh was coming to power soon. And after all, it was the Indian sepoy who won the battles for the British. It was not ability that we lacked. What we truly lacked and our adversaries possessed in a supreme degree was what Sri Aurobindo calls the sense of national honour, a pride in our race which would not care to sell the nation's freedom for purposes of selfish gain. It is this sense of national honour that we have somehow to create and develop if India is to survive.

A sense of national honour is born of the pride in our national worth. Even if it approaches obscurantism, even if we sound offensive to others, we cannot afford to neglect this attitude of mind, at least for a certain period of our development as a new nation. Every nation has had to pass through this phase and many have not yet got over it completely. And it is not an altogether wrong attitude. But the pride in our past and a strong faith in our future must evidently be based on solid grounds, or else they would evaporate at the first strenuous touch of reality. It will be for our educators to teach the rising generation and the adults too if possible that India has achieved something truly worthwhile in the past and that a still more glorious destiny is the promise of her future. "To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificent spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us the deepest-hearted deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of the peoples of the earth"—this, in the magnificent words of Sri Aurobindo uttered more than fifty years ago, is the task we have to fulfil.

But this in itself will not save us. The vision that inspired *Bandemataram* must come to the race and take possession of the heart. To quote Sri Aurobindo again: "It is not till the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves a doomed nation is born.... A great nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror "

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The Call and the Grace** by M. P. Pandit. Published by Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Sponsored by The Mother Estates, Cuddalore Price: Calico Rs. 4.00; Board Rs. 3.00.

Cortes-like, a seeker wonders at the expanse that opens up before him as he peruses Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*. *The Mother* is the luminous passage that one treks across to know the Divine Mother—a process of knowing that proves ever-wonderful and inexhaustible. Then, on turning to look back to the passage—*The Mother*—one wakes up to the fact that its tiny leaves too are ever-wonderful and inexhaustible!

*The Mother* is at once the revelation, the guide, the genesis of our strength and the Word of assurance. Few things would be happier than going through a volume of authentic discourses on the chapters of *The Mother*, which *The Call and the Grace* is. (The book is based on talks given by the author to the members of *The Mother Estates* from Cuddalore.)

The title of the work is derived from the opening sentence of *The Mother*: *There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.* And the author who has successfully driven home this truth through ten chapters of elucidations of the profound brevities of *The Mother* with a sustained style of ease and sublimity leads us to his convincing conclusions thus: "To link the call and the sanction, to relate their workings, a Dynamic Power is required and that indeed is the Power and the Presence of the Divine Mother.... It is She alone who can prepare, mould and shape the human vessel to receive and hold the Truth, the Light and the Bliss of the Divine and make possible for man the Life Divine."

MANOJ DAS

**Guide to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy.** Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Writings by K. D. Acharya. Published by Divya Jivan Sahitya Prakashan, Pondicherry-2. Price: Rs. 3.50

"Sri Aurobindo has used quite a good number of new terms in his works. He has also given new connotations to a large number of words already current in the English language. His literature is so vast, his language so complex, especially in *The Life Divine* and his ideas so profound that even after reading his works and reflecting on them for a long time the difficulty in forming a clear conception of the terms still remains for scholars." (*The Compiler's Note*)

This is the observation that motivated this slender but valuable work of compilation. Here is an assortment of terms of cardinal importance in the Aurobindo-vocabulary, presented under ten subject-oriented chapters such as *Reality and its Aspects*, *Gods*, *Consciousness*, *Supermind*, *Transformation*, *Divine Life*, etc., with descriptions and expositions churned out of the vast literature of Sri Aurobindo. Thus, all that the Master has said at various places on the key-terms of the Integral Yoga (which the readers seek most to understand—terms such as the *Psychic*, the *Vital*, the *Subliminal*, the *Intuition*, the *Supermind* and so on and so forth) have been brought together to provide annotations to them.

The work should serve as a fine guide to the readers of Sri Aurobindo's literature. We hail the compiler's achievement as a prelude to a more exhaustive attempt of this nature.

MANOJ DAS

# THE PROBLEM OF THE INDUS SCRIPT

(Continued from the issue of April 24)

## Part II

### I

THE *Hindusthan Times* of March 30 and April 6, 1969, ran a number of excellent articles dealing with the problem of the Indus Script. Noted historians, archaeologists and linguists took a hand in the discussion. The general trend of their arguments apropos of the Paper by the four Finnish scholars—*Decipherment of the Proto-Dravidian Inscriptions of the Indus Civilisation: A First Announcement*—as well as the broad drift of their pronouncements on the Paper by the four Russian investigators which preceded this work—*A Brief Report on the Investigation of the Proto-Indian Texts*—may be indicated. Along with our selective summary we shall try to show that Proto-Prakrit must lie at the basis of the Indus Civilisation's speech, however overlaid it may be by other linguistic strains. This would clinch our thesis, outlined earlier, that the R̥gveda was anterior to the Indus Civilization and that the latter was at once a derivative, a development and a deviation from the R̥gvedic Culture.

The historian Romila Thapar, the archaeologist B. B. Lal and the linguist P. B. Pandit are at one in their verdict that both the Russians—Knorozov, Volcok, Gurov, Alekseyev—and the Finns—Asko Parpola, P. Aalto, Simo Parpola, S. Koskeniemi—have proceeded on admirably scientific lines in their fundamental approach. The commentators contrast this approach to the highly subjective and uncontrolled treatment of the same problem by two recent Indian researchers: Krishna Rao and Fateh Singh. The admired approach consists in detailed analyses of sign-structures and sign-combinations and in the use of a computer to get a comprehensive idea of the direction in which these analyses point. Unlike the Finns, the Russians have not linguistically prejudged the issue by excluding Indo-Aryan as a possible candidate. But even their conclusion is the same as that of the Finns: the Indus language was closest in grammatical structure to what Proto-Dravidian, the language behind all the present Dravidian varieties, is likely to have been. This conclusion is diametrically opposed to Krishna Rao's and Fateh Singh's that the language was ancient Sanskrit.

At the outset here it would be wise to con the cautionary words of Romila Thapar:<sup>1</sup> "To use the language as the basis on which to establish the race of the people of the Indus civilization is at this stage irrelevant. Nor is the rigid classification into Aryan or Dravidian particularly helpful. Cultures do not develop in purely

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindusthan Times*, March 30, 1969, p 1, col 4

racial terms, and in any case Aryan and Dravidian are not racial terms but language groups." We may briefly illustrate these points. The "original" Aryan speakers are themselves "believed to have represented a cultural union of two distinct racial stocks, the tall, blond, long-headed, straight-nosed Nordics, and the comparatively short and dark and short headed Alpines".<sup>1</sup> The Brahuis of Southern Baluchistan are Dravidian speakers, but they "are not of Dravidian race".<sup>2</sup> The ruling aristocracy of Mitanni on the upper Euphrates in the middle of the second millennium B.C. are known to have been Aryan in culture with deities—Mitra-Varuna, Indra, Nasatyas—recalling to us the R̥gveda, and yet a painstaking study has tried to show phonetic, lexical and grammatical resemblances between Mitanni and the Dravidian languages, particularly the Tamil of South India.<sup>3</sup> Thus, even if the Indus speech were to be proved wholly Proto-Dravidian, the fact would not determine the race or the culture, establishing that what we have come to term Aryanism was non-existent in the Harappā Culture. All depends on the chronological relationship of the Harappā Culture to the R̥gveda. But, of course, if we can demonstrate that even the Indus speech was not exclusive of elements suggesting Indo-Aryan in some shape or other, we shall give anti-Aryanism an all-round *coup de grâce*.

Now we may proceed to the task proper of describing and evaluating the results of the Russians and the Finns. According to either team, the Indus script is essentially logographic: each sign represents a complete word of one or more syllables. The principle of homophony is at play: a given word is expressed by a clearly recognisable picture of an object which need not correspond to that word but whose name has the same phonetic or sound value as the word intended. Thus the script has a sign resembling a comb. As excavations have proved ivory combs to have been used by the Harappā Culture, we may assume that the word for comb in the Harappan language is here. If this language is Proto-Dravidian, the word must be "pentika". But in Dravidian tongues we have the similar word "penti", meaning female/woman. Hence the comb-sign can stand for a woman and can serve to represent the feminine gender when it functions side by side with other signs. The signs are related to each other from right to left: that is, the script reads from the right side and not from the left. As F. R. Allchin reminds us in a letter to the *Hindusthan Times*,<sup>4</sup> Lal scientifically demonstrated this for the first time at the Asian Archaeology Conference in New Delhi in 1961, thus putting out of court once for all every attempt to read the script in the opposite direction. However, sometimes the reading matter continues in the next line from left to right, making a "boustrophedon" movement (as of a bull moving from the end of one furrow to the beginning of another parallel furrow while pulling a

<sup>1</sup> S K Chatterji, "The Basic Unity underlying the Diversity of Culture: The Origins and Meaning of Indian Culture", *Interrelations of Culture* (Unesco, Paris, 1953), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> D D Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India* (London, 1965), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> W G Brown, "The Possibility of a Connection between Mitanni and the Dravidian Languages", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 50 (1930), pp 273-305.

<sup>4</sup> April 6, 1969, p 7, "Decipherment of Indus Script"

plough through a field). About 300 basic signs are there for the Finns and about 350 for the Russians, the rest being ligatures (combinations of two or more signs), diacritics (marks modifying the signs) or definitives (those confining the meaning of a word). Some signs occurring mostly at the end of the inscriptions are inflexional endings. If they occur elsewhere, they associate with the preceding word.

The point of divergence between the methods of the teams is in the mode of assigning meanings. The Russians depend on the information of the possible beliefs and practices of early Dravidians and their later continuations. They have tried to "read" the drawings on the seals in terms of a reconstructed Proto-Dravidian culture. This attempt introduces a somewhat arbitrary or subjective element whereas the Finns endeavour to decide first the words on purely linguistic grounds and then connect them with cultural connotations. The Finnish procedure is adjudged more rigorous and reliable.

However, it is their common fundamental conclusion, in the midst of interpretative differences, that strikes the mind. Our commentators note the emergence, from both the studies, of a language which had gender and number categories and a case system with at least three cases and a schematic design in which the case suffix and the number suffix come in a certain order. Such a scheme of grammatical structure rules out Indo-European, Indo-Iranian and Indo-Aryan groups. The overall technical character of the language appears to be settled in favour of Proto-Dravidian, and the Finns have made one additional suggestion of a major kind. Since the Indus Civilization is known to have carried on commerce with the Sumerian and since there are also evidences of Sumerian influence on it, the Finns suggest that the primary meanings of the shapes of the script are determined by comparable signs from archaic Sumerian, a pictographic script. So the primary meanings of shapes resembling boat, arrow, hand, mountain (foreign country), etc., derive from the Sumerian script. The scholars have consistently followed up their notion here.

Thus far our commentators find much to commend in the Finns' "First Announcement". But when they come to details several misgivings arise. Thus both Pandit and Lal stress the anomalous nature of the order in which the case suffix and the number suffix stand. According to the Finns, the latter follows the former. Pandit<sup>1</sup> observes: "I doubt that we have evidence for such a Proto-Dravidian scheme because the modern Dravidian languages place the case suffix after the number suffix (see Caldwell, 'The sign of plurality also is not only distinct from the case sign, but it is one and the same in all cases. It is an unalterable postposition—a fixed quantity; and it is not postfixed to the case sign', 1961 edition, p. 234)." The Finns have quoted Andronov to justify their view. Yet Lal no less than Pandit remains unconvinced. Referring to certain signs claimed to be plurals respectively of the nominative, genitive and dative cases, Lal<sup>2</sup> remarks: "While there may not be much difficulty in accepting the pro-

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindusthan Times*, March 30, 1969, p. ii, "Cracking the Code", col. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, April 6, 1969, p. 14, "Indus Script: Inconsistencies in Claims of Decipherment", cols 4-6.



position in so far as the nominative case is concerned, it is indeed insuperable with regard to the genitive and dative cases. According to the proposition of Parpola *et al.*, the plural suffix follows the ones for genitive or dative (reading from the right), but this is never the case in the Dravidian languages. For example, in Tamil one would always say 'paiyan-kal-udaya' (boy plus plural suffix plus genitive suffix—'of the boys') or 'paiyan-kalu-kku' (boy plus plural suffix plus dative suffix—'to the boys') and not 'paiyan-udaya-kal' or 'paiyan-kku-kal'."

In connection with the genitive case, Lal brings a critical eye to bear upon another anomaly. He begins with raising the question: What was the use of the seals or what was it that the inscriptions on pots, bronze axes, etc. were meant to denote? He writes:

"The earliest deciphered seals of India, dating to a couple of centuries before the Christian era, are known to have been used primarily either to mark off packages as being the property of, say, X, or for stamping off tokens whose bearers could be identified as being the representatives of Y. Inscriptions on pots have been found to bear almost exclusively proper names, evidently of the owners. It would thus seem quite likely that the inscriptions on the Indus seals, pottery, etc. also bear names of persons, maybe along with the attributes, such as profession, etc. That at least some of the Indus seals were actually used for sealing packages is borne out by the discovery of lumps of clay bearing the impressions of reed and knotted twine on one side and of seal or seals on the other

"Now if we accept the views of Parpola *et al.*, namely, that (i) the language of the Indus seals is Dravidian and that (ii) the U-like symbol [with a pair of short horizontal lines at the top of each of the vertical lines before they slightly curve outwards] represents the genitive, and weigh these against the use of seals as enunciated in the preceding paragraph, it would follow that in the Dravidian language a genitive suffix is used at the end of a name occurring on sealings, pottery, etc. However, all known evidence goes against such a hypothesis."

Here Lal considers some of the Tamil inscriptions (together with a Prakrit one occurring on the pottery at Arikamedu near Pondicherry). He continues: "These are ascribable to the beginning of the Christian era and are almost the earliest of the kind in the Tamil language. All these inscriptions represent the names of the individuals concerned and have a nominative ending and not the genitive one. In fact it is only the Prakrit inscription which has a genitive ending, the reading being 'Ya kha mita sa', *i.e.*, 'of Ya kha mi ta' (Sanskrit 'Yakshamitra'). Thus the very hypothesis of Parpola *et al.*, that the inscriptions have a genitive ending, goes against their theory that the language used is a Dravidian one."

Lal goes on to show a number of other inconsistencies in the matter of masculine and feminine genders and in that of the numeral system.<sup>1</sup> We may content ourselves with just one more example which brings some significant issues to a head while keeping a connection with the foregoing discussion. He<sup>2</sup> tells us:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 5.

“The line of argument used by Parpola *et al.* to give to the U-like symbol the value of a genitive suffix is as follows. He regards the symbol as representing a ship which in the Dravidian languages is called ‘ota’. Using the principle of homophony, he argues that the symbol also represents a similar sound, namely, -otu-ote, the modern commitative suffix. This may sound quite a reasonable proposition provided there was a good case for identifying the U-like symbol with a ship. The Sumerian parallels quoted by these authors are not wholly convincing. However, even if one persuaded oneself to accept this Sumerian parallelism, one gets nothing but a jolt when the authors cite an Indian parallel. In the first place, this painting occurs on a pot which, though found at Harappā, does not belong to the Indus Civilization, but to the succeeding Cemetery H Culture, there also being a time-lag between the two cultures. Secondly, the Cemetery H symbol has very little in common with a ship. On the Cemetery H pottery peacocks are frequently delineated, and it is more likely than not that the motif in question represents a pair of stylized peacocks shown by their necks, beaks and eyes, etc. (The latter two are very clear in the original publication, namely, *Excavations at Harappā* by the late M. S. Vats.) For the authors to say that the picture may possibly represent the ‘boat of death’ mentioned in the Vedic literature seems to be still more unfortunate, for why should they have invoked a Vedic concept when, according to themselves, the Indus Civilization was avowedly pre- and non-Aryan?”

The impression we get from what Lal and his colleagues have submitted is: not only is Proto-Dravidian as the exclusive language very unlikely but also a Proto-Prakrit, with a cultural background of Indo-Aryan Vedism, seems partly operative. The Finns are unable to demonstrate a wholly Dravidian structure of the language as well as to avoid passing beyond cultural Dravidianism. The Russian researchers too are guilty of cultural trespass. Romila Thapar<sup>1</sup> points out how they, on the one side, refer the sign showing a female with uplifted arms to a mother-goddess originating in an earlier pre-Harappan neolithic period and, on the other, the sign of a man with a stick to *daṇḍadhara*, the god Yama of what they regard as the later post-Harappan Vedic period. Iconographic similarities between the Indus signs and Vedic mythology and religion are seen as survivals of the Harappā Culture in a subsequent period. But, as with the “boat of Yama”, it is quite gratuitous to present the stick-wielding Yama as a Harappan element recurring in Vedism.

A serious doubt comes also to be cast on any solely Dravidian reading by the differences the Finns and the Russians exhibit among themselves. Pandit<sup>2</sup> cites the instance (involving a word-interpretation which provoked in our previous article the charge against the Finns of a pro-Dravidian obsession). Where the Finns spell out for a vessel-like sign the Proto-Dravidian word for pot—“mata”—and trace its homophony as “mati” (ceremonial purity) and “mata” (pond), the Russians interpret it as a sacrifice and, since it occurs with numerals, as the name of a sacrifice: “the Proto-Dravidian etyma \*vel ‘sacrifice’ is connected with Proto-Dravidian \*vil ‘outside’—\*vel

<sup>1</sup> P. 1, col. 8.

<sup>2</sup> P. III, col. 1.

'flood'; considering that sprinkling (flooding) is connected with sacrifice, they arrive at the meaning of 'sacrifice' by assuming a semantic shift from the act (of sprinkling) to the process." Pandit mentions also the "yoke" sign which the Finns consider the plural suffix and the Russians "(1) 'protector' (2) 'village deity' when it occurs with dative, (3) 'weight' with numerals." Romila Thapar<sup>1</sup> offers other divergences. The Finns take a certain compound sign as the genitive plural, while the Russians have suggested as one alternative meaning that it represents a measure of weight, expressing, as it seems to do, the idea of a burden. A particular sign the Finns make out to be a hand and read it in the sense of a definitive indicating a profession when it is used in association with another sign. "The Russians reading it as a 'handful' suggest it was a unit of measure."

We may here apply Allchin's apt remarks<sup>2</sup> on the plethora of decipherments that is now to be met with among Indian and foreign scholars: "as the number of widely divergent readings increases the probability of any one of them being correct correspondingly decreases. For whatever else we may believe, it is surely axiomatic that the Harappans had only one reading for each seal!" The Finns and the Russians thus appear to cancel each other out and create a *prima facie* case against Proto-Dravidian as the basic tongue.

Romila Thapar<sup>3</sup> has also the argument: "If the script records Proto-Dravidian, why did the script disappear whereas the language continued to be used? Why did the speakers of this language migrate to the peninsula and what was the route by which they migrated? Archaeological evidence so far does not indicate a route." *Vis-à-vis* this argument we must bear in mind that she, like most historians, dates the R̥gveda after the Harappā Culture and thus has no antecedent bias for Indo-Aryan.

On the other hand, she does not take it for granted that Dravidianism preceded Indo-Aryanism in the Indus Valley. She<sup>4</sup> remarks: "Insistence on the cultural dichotomy of Aryan and Dravidian has clouded our perception of the Harappā Culture. Since the latter predates historically both the former cultures the need to ascribe it to either one of the two is unnecessary." Here, actually, she goes beyond the data by assuming the so-called Aryan invasion of India in about the middle of the second millennium B.C. Once we refuse to make the assumption we rule out simultaneously the posteriority of both Indo-Aryanism and Dravidianism to the Harappā Culture. With the R̥gveda no longer posterior, Dravidianism too must go back in time. For, the language of the R̥gveda has already strong traces of a long interaction between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian: (1) its second series of dentals or cerebral sounds (*t ḍ n l sh*) such as exist in no other Indo-European language, not even in Gāthic Iranian which is sister to R̥gvedic Sanskrit, (2) the 20 Dravidian words which T. Burrow has found in the hymns. Yes, Romila Thapar is on shifting sands in making the Harappā Culture liable to be both non-Aryan and non-Dravidian. But she has sound sense in

<sup>1</sup> P. i, col. 3.

<sup>2</sup> P. 7, col. 2.

<sup>3</sup> P. 1, cols. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> P. ii, col. 2.

refusing to plump for either the one or the other as if no alternative to such a disjunctive policy existed.

And Lal<sup>1</sup> strikes a similar note when he concludes his own survey of all present-day shots at decipherment in terms of Dravidian or Sanskrit; but he keeps a more open outlook on the whole: "From the foregoing review... it would be seen that no case has yet been established to prove that the language used by the Indus people was either Sanskrit or Dravidian. This is not to say that the Indus language could not have been either of these. Far from it. All that has been demonstrated here is that there are internal inconsistencies.... However, one wonders as to why the Indus language must necessarily be either Sanskrit or Dravidian. Is it impossible that it could have been yet another language which is since dead? After all, what happened in Egypt and Mesopotamia could as well have happened in India."

Face to face with the realisation that the Indus script as read so far could not have embodied a clear-cut Indo-Aryan or Dravidian but that neither is finally thrown overboard by the present failures and that yet another language is quite on the cards, we may deem it the wisest course to make-do with the known rather than juggle with the unknown and, concentrating on the positive aspects of the Finnish and Russian experiments, suppose that the language concerned might be a mixture of Proto-Prakrit and Proto-Dravidian in diverse combinations of form and usage and structure, with a further infusion of Sumerian graphics and semantics crossed by linguistic currents from still other sources, say, indigenous Munda and foreign Iranian.

No hint of the last two sources mentioned emerges from the discussions we have quoted. But it would be fair to assume them for certain reasons. Stuart Piggott<sup>2</sup> goes so far as to opine: "The fact that the Harappā Culture is characterized by stamp-seals should indicate that its eventual antecedents are likely to be found in Persia" The Harappā Culture is characterised also by its cotton cloth. Sir Mortimer Wheeler<sup>3</sup> comments apropos of the traces of this material which have survived at Mohenjo-dāro: "The occurrence, with another reputed example at Lothal, is by far the earliest known..." Now, what we gather from S. K. Chatterji,<sup>4</sup> reviewing the contribution that Munda culture and speech which belong to the so-called Austric or Proto-Australoid race have made to the Indian heritage, is: "weaving of cotton was...an Austric or Proto-Australoid invention" and the name for cotton (*karpāsa*, *karpata*) is of Austric origin. Thus a Munda as well as an Iranian current of language is bound to be there within the main mixture.

The main mixture we suggest of Proto-Prakrit and Proto-Dravidian is nothing to be surprised at. Prakrit is merely the popular or dialectal and therefore corrupt or distorted version of Sanskrit. Sanskrit and Prakrit are companion limbs of Indo-

<sup>1</sup> P. 14, col. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Prehistoric India* (A Pelican Book, Harmondsworth, 1961), p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> *The Indus Civilization* (Third Edition, Cambridge, 1968), p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> *The Vedic Age*, edited by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker (London, 1952), p. 150.

Aryan. The Rigveda itself hints at Prakrit here and there. B. K. Ghosh<sup>1</sup> informs us : “De-occludization of some occlusives in the *Rigveda* shows that this characteristic of the Prakrit dialects was latent also in the oldest Sanskrit....The Prakritic verbal stem *kuru* appears...in the tenth Maṇḍala for the earlier *krinu*.” So Prakrit could be as old as Sanskrit ; and, if the Rigveda was Dravidianised to some extent, the earliest Prakrit too could undergo a similar change. As Prakrit developed, the role of Dravidian in Indo-Aryan kept increasing. R. K. Mookerji<sup>2</sup> affirms the occurrence of Dravidian elements in the historic Prakrit we know. Chatterji<sup>3</sup> has observed “the gradual ‘Dravidization’ in spirit of the Aryan languages leading to a very large approximation of the Modern or New Indo-Aryan languages [ derived from Prakrit ] to the speech-habits of Dravidian” and how “the syntax of the later Indo-Aryan dialects agrees more with that of the Dravidian languages than with that of Vedic and of the extra-Indian Indo-European languages.” With no *a priori* opposition to the idea of a pre-Harappan Rigveda we may well consider a highly Proto-Dravidianised Proto-Prakrit as the basic Harappan tongue. Much of the grammatical structure could be, as the Finns and Russians have found, Proto-Dravidian but, as they have not realised, without the exclusion of Proto-Prakrit from being foundational. The dialectal nature of this foundation would naturally lead to a great deal of Proto-Dravidianisation.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 336, 339.

<sup>2</sup> *Hindu Civilization* (Bhavan Book University, Bombay, 1951), I, p. 51.   <sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 155, 164.

## SHE IS HERE !

HAVE you indeed completely ruined yourself?  
 And totally flayed your ego's teguments?  
 If not, you cannot wing o'er life's black delf  
 Beyond which zoom free flights to Her firmaments.

The tests are cruel, betray no palms to grease,  
 Chaff needs be separated from the wheat,  
 Unsuspectedly the Invigilator sees  
 And is found out unsuspectingly the cheat.

Eternal are the Eternal's laws of the Way  
 Dogging dangerously our life within, without,  
 Only the faith-firm and pure heart can stay,  
 Bearing the whips of Time, immune from rout.

But God's self gives sometimes His own Hand's Lead.  
 Now that rare Grace is here, is here indeed!

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

**SRI AUROBINDO BIRTH CENTENARY LIBRARY  
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**FOCUS**

**8. A Request**

From 1893 onwards Sri Aurobindo wrote incessantly for more than half a century. He adopted various forms of expression—apart from his poems, plays and short stories. His political articles, essays, editorials and speeches were mainly written during 1893-1910. Of this period the first thirteen years were spent in Baroda and the remaining five (1906-1910) in Bengal. After his crowded political activity there Sri Aurobindo retired to Pondicherry. In 1914 he started publishing his philosophical monthly, the *Arya*, in which he wrote several series of articles on philosophy, yoga, social and political thought, Indian culture, English literature, etc., including *The Life Divine*. And in subsequent years a huge mass of his letters on numerous subjects kept growing along with the writing of the epic *Savitri*, and of a few other works. Also he revised his earlier writings, which had originally appeared in the *Arya*, for publication in book-form.

It is quite possible that some of these writings, especially letters, may still be 'in the possession of individuals and we intend to include all that are available in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.

Again, while Sri Aurobindo was engaged in active politics (1902-1910), many of the contemporary periodicals (e.g. *The Mahratta*, *The Madras Standard*, etc.) used to carry reports of his speeches, comments on the editorials he wrote in the *Bande Mataram* and the *Karmayogin*, and discussions of relevant events. We should like to have all the material of this kind for our records.

Apart from books written on Sri Aurobindo, there are studies and collections, Government Reports and Files having documentary references made to him. This material is also important for recording purposes.

The complete file of the *Bande Mataram* (both the weekly and the daily editions) is also not available. If the missing numbers could be traced, it would be a great service.

We request all who can render help in securing any unpublished writings of Sri Aurobindo or contemporary reports, and can furnish details of other references, to kindly communicate with Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Pondicherry 2, India.