

MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY 1970

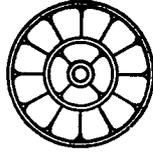
Price : Re. 1.00

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Subscription rates: Annual Rs. 10/-, Sh. 20/-, \$ 3/-
Single copy Re. 1.00 in India.

All correspondence to be addressed to
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2, India.

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

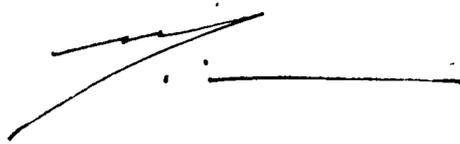


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXI

No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERY—2

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry—2

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No: R. N. 8667/63

THE MOTHER'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

1970

*The world is preparing
for a big change.*

Will you help?



WORDS OF THE MOTHER

TO THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SEVENTEENTH SEMINAR: 27th APRIL 1969

THE Seventeenth Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 27th April 1969 from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m. in the New Hall of the Centre of Education. The two subjects chosen by the Mother for this Seminar were:

- I. *Why is our Yoga an Adventure?*
- II. *The Power of Faith.*

The following four members of the Association participated as speakers:
Abhijit, Anand Reddy, Romen, Surendra Chauhan.

At the beginning a short piece of the Mother's recorded music was played. Then Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman, read out the Mother's answers to three questions concerning the subjects of the Seminar. These questions and answers are reproduced below:

Q.I: In what sense is our Yoga an adventure?

THE MOTHER: It can be called an adventure because it is the first time that a yoga aims at transformation and divinisation of physical life instead of escape from it.

Q.II: Why is faith so supremely important in Yoga?

THE MOTHER: Because we are aiming at something quite new that has never been done before.

Q.III: What is its determining power due to?

THE MOTHER: Your faith puts you under the protection of the Supreme who is all powerful.

26-4-1969

After this the four speakers were called to deliver their speeches. When the speeches were over, some passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother bearing on the subjects were read. Some of these speeches and all the passages will be published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

NOTES ON THE VISIT OF A GROUP OF AMERICAN STUDENTS TO THE MOTHER ON 29-7-69

(After Blessings and flowers had been received from the Mother, some questions were put and the Mother gave answers.)

1) X: They want to know what is the true meaning of Confidence.

The Mother: You must have confidence in the right thing.

To have confidence in the wrong thing is dangerous.

X: But they want to know the meaning of Confidence.

The Mother: The meaning of the word?

X: Yes.

The Mother: Confidence means trust. Have trust in the Divine Grace. But you must know what it is in which you are having trust.

X: Then, Mother, the question arises: what is the Divine?

The Mother: They want to know the meaning of the Divine?

X: Yes.

The Mother (*after some silence*): The Perfection that you have to realise, not necessarily in this life, that Perfection is the Divine.

2) Y: What should be the aim of our life?

The Mother: Materially speaking, to be clever; spiritually speaking, to be sincere.

3) Z: What is the nature of responsibility?

The Mother: Power and sincerity and also straightforwardness.

(Report by Udar, approved by the Mother)

THE MOTHER'S MESSAGE

ON the occasion of the Annual Re-opening of Classes of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.

LE 16 DECEMBRE 1969

Il faut avoir vécu ce que l'on veut enseigner.

Pour parler de la conscience nouvelle, laissez-la pénétrer en vous pour vous révéler ses secrets. Car alors seulement, vous pourrez en parler avec compétence.

*
**

Pour jaillir dans la conscience nouvelle, la première condition est une modestie mentale suffisante pour être convaincu que tout ce que l'on croit savoir n'est rien en comparaison de ce qui reste à apprendre.

Tout ce que l'on a appris extérieurement ne doit être qu'un échelon pour permettre de s'élever vers les connaissances supérieures.

DECEMBER 16, 1969

You must live what you want to teach.

To speak of the new consciousness, you must let it penetrate you and reveal to you its secrets. For only then can you speak with any competence.

*
**

To rise into the new consciousness, the first condition is to have enough modesty of mind to be convinced that all that you think you know is nothing in comparison to what yet remains to be learnt.

All that you have learnt outwardly must be just a step allowing you to rise towards a higher knowledge.

AN UNPUBLISHED POEM OF SRI AUROBINDO

(This poem was sent us by Dilip Kumar Roy with the words: "The other day I was selecting my songs for a new book in the press. I came across this one, 'Uma', translated by Sri Aurobindo himself, as his comment will attest. It should find a place in the next collection of his poems." The comment reads:

"Khatish Sen's translation is far from bad, but it is not perfect either and uses too many oft-heard locutions without bringing in the touch of magic that would save them. Besides, his metre, in spite of his trying to lighten it, is one of the common and obvious metres which are almost proof against subtlety of movement. It may be mathematically more equivalent to yours, but there is an underrunning lilt of celestial dance in your rhythm which he tries to get but, because of the limitations of the metre, cannot manage. I think my iambic-anapaestic choice is better fitted to catch the dance-lilt and keep it.")

UMA

O THOU inspired by a far effulgence,
Adored of some distant Sun gold-bright,
O luminous face on the edge of darkness
Agleam with strange and viewless light!

A spark from thy vision's scintillations
Has kindled the earth to passionate dreams,
And the gloom of ages sinks defeated
By the revel and splendour of thy beams.

In this little courtyard Earth thy rivers
Have made to bloom heaven's many-rayed flowers,
And, throned on thy lion meditation,
Thou slayest with a sign the Titan powers.

Thou are rapt in unsleeping adoration
And a thousand thorn-wounds are forgot,
Thy hunger is for the unseizable,
And for thee the near and sure are not.

Thy mind is affianced to lonely seeking,
And it puts by the joy these poor worlds hoard,
And to house a cry of infinite dreaming
Thy lips repeat the formless Word.

O beautiful, blest, immaculate,
My heart falls down at thy feet of sheen,
O Huntress of the Impossible,
O Priestess of the light unseen!

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

17-8-1934.

Q: Sometimes I feel sleepy during meditation. Then the more I meditate the more strain I feel. Could you kindly show some means to avoid this sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: I do not think the sleep can be avoided altogether. It will change by practice into a conscious inward condition in which you see and experience inner things.

Q: Should I write my experiences to you directly or through Dr. R. of Bundshahir?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is better to write direct.

Q: What is the best time for meditation?

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on when one is most free.¹

Q: When in the outside world, I have to face certain worries: hospital duties, the ideas of my patients, my family troubles. How to keep free from these anxieties?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is very difficult at the beginning. It is only by the concentration deepening until you get more and more absorbed inside in some inner experience that these things fall away.

Q: By this time you must have studied my nature well. Would you please give some directions to improve my inner consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: (1) Offer yourself more and more—all the consciousness, all that happens in it, all your work and action.

(2) If you have faults and weaknesses, hold them up before the Divine to be changed or abolished.

(3) Try to do what I told you, concentrate in the heart till you constantly feel the Presence there.

6-10-1934

SRI AUROBINDO: The weeping that rises in your offering of prayers is a psychic movement and a form of bhakti and aspiration welling up from within.

I do not know that I can decide for you about the student who wanted to learn eye treatment from Patna. Is there any advantage in having him there? If not, it would be better to concentrate on the work and make it successful first.

Keep a complete trust and work. You have a sufficient openness in you in your work for the Power to act; but a complete faith and courage are needed.

Our blessings are with you.

From DR. R. S. AGARWAL

¹ A follower of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga in Europe lately asked the Mother a similar question "What is the best time for anybody, anywhere in the world to meditate?" She chose 7-45 p.m. by the Indian standard time.

WORK AND THE INNER CONCENTRATION

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Self: During the work I was much covered up by depression and inertia. The vital being took advantage of my usual passivity during the work. The mind also could not react because of its own occupation in the work (though it was conscious and thought of bringing down its energy to remove the depression). During such a state I felt I should do physical activity as little as possible and try to maintain calm and quiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: No. If you stop physical work, the inertia will increase.

13-1-1934

Self: If the inertia, during the work, becomes too strong, is it permissible to stop the work for a while to counteract the dispersed condition?

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is only to concentrate for a little time and revive, it can be done.

It is no use stopping work because of rheumatism (unless it is of the kind that disables one from working),—it only makes things worse.

2-4-1934

Self: I lose my state of silence during the work as the mechanical mind begins to be active.

SRI AUROBINDO: You must be able to work and keep the silence of the inner being.

22-2-1934

Self: During the working period the useless thoughts intrude and interrupt the contact of the outer with the inner being. To what special difficulty do you attribute this?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no special difficulty beyond what everybody feels, that of reconciling work with the inner concentration. It is a difficulty that has to be conquered, but for most it takes time to conquer.

11-4-1934

Self: You wrote, "But when you concentrate what is the need of attending to the things of the exterior plane?" While concentrating, is not my attention to be maintained all the time—during the intellectual pursuits as well as during the physical work?

SRI AUROBINDO: For that a double concentration is needed, and it is successful when either the inner or the outer concentration becomes automatic.

12-4-1934

Self: Whether my failure is due to the habit of my nature or simply to my weakness, how long shall I wait to reconcile work with the inner concentration?

SRI AUROBINDO: It has to be done whether quickly or slowly. You have to work towards it without getting impatient.

16-4-1934

Self: It is noticed that the cause of not being concentrated during the work is the mental tamas. As my present consciousness has become capable to some extent of driving out the physical tamas, can it not do the same with the mental tamas?

SRI AUROBINDO: It will do it, I suppose. One has to persevere. 17-4-1934

Self: The inner concentration and quietude seem to be extending outwards. I feel quietness and I am now able to concentrate with the eyes open. When one leads an inner life, how does one deal with the outer things?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are dealt with by the Force that works through the being. 8-5-1934

Self: May I request you to elaborate your above answer?

SRI AUROBINDO: When one is concentrated within, the body can go on doing its work by the Force acting within it. Even the external consciousness can work separately under the motion of the Force while the rest of the consciousness is in concentration.

From NAGIN DOSHI

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. Manilal, 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.)

APRIL 15, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO: If the radio news is correct, the Germans have only one pocket battleship left, two being destroyed, two big battleships also sunk and many cruisers. By cruisers are meant battle-cruisers perhaps; they have then some light cruisers. So half their cruisers are also destroyed and many merchant ships—a heavy loss.

P: It is said that the Allies have broken through the line and penetrated into the Baltic.

SRI AUROBINDO: If they enter the Baltic, then the Germans are done for.

N: So it seems true then that Hitler has blundered by extending the war front.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was a very rash thing to do. These things depend in the end on sea-power. Without sea-power you can't transport supplies, mechanised troops, etc.

P: They counted on the aeroplane.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hitherto aeroplane-attacks have not been a success except in Poland and Finland. Aeroplanes are only a powerful aid. You can't conquer a country with them.

P: No, except in places like Abyssinia perhaps. There too the Italians were hard put to it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Some French general said that Hitler's move was well-planned, well-executed but not well-judged. If the forbidding of the use of petrol, etc., is true, then Germany's condition is pretty bad.... Hitler seems to succeed where there is not much resistance.

EVENING

Devata, Dr. André's lab-assistant was on the point of death from heart failure. André said, "If he is dead, I will resuscitate him," and by injections he brought him back to life. This was related to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo: This attitude reminds one of Oscar Wilde's definition of life—happy anticipation of the future.

N (*after some time*): There have been fifteen election suits in the Calcutta corporation election: three by the Bose party, one by the Hindu Sabha and one or two by the Muslims. In one of the suits the charge by the Bose group was that the Hindu Sabha candidate threatened the voters with fanatical religious threats, divine displeasure, wrath of God, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: God is angry with Bose because he is a socialist?

P: In Dacca also there was a clash between the student federation and the Bose-party students, in which one student of the federation died.

SRI AUROBINDO: What did the other party do? Did they not fight?

P: Yes, they did.

A: That's better.

P: Here in Pondicherry schoolboys were asked to write an essay on the war. A boy of fifteen wrote against the Allies, saying that it was an Imperialist war. The teacher foolishly sent it to the Director, then to the Governor. The boy's scholarship was suspended.

SRI AUROBINDO: Naturally. When it was forwarded to them, they had to take action on it. They could not do otherwise even if they wanted to.

P: In France the rules are still more severe for such crimes.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a treason and one must take the consequence. If India were free and had to fight she would do the same.

C: Mithran said some boys were shot.

SRI AUROBINDO: Shot? Can't be. How old were they?

C: Below 20 perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: I can't believe it. They can't have been shot. They may have been given some other punishment. This Quisling of Norway should have been shot. Do you know what he has done? When the Norwegians were defending Trondjheim with their coastal batteries, Q sent them directions to stop fighting and when they knew that Q had betrayed them it was too late. Also in Holland I don't know why they keep the traitors in suspension instead of shooting them.

APRIL 16, 1940

N: Dr. André was so happy last evening, thought he had saved Devata. The poor man is dead today.

SRI AUROBINDO: He was too optimistic. The attack was too strong for the man. I did not expect him to survive to-night.

P: André also said that if he survived any seizure last night, he would recover.

N: I don't understand why the attack came in the early morning on three successive occasions.

S: It is said that the vitality is at its lowest in the early morning.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: Could it be an attack of some Force as he returned from visiting various places?

SRI AUROBINDO: What places?

P: Kumbhakarnam, Trichinopoly, etc.,

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, then quite possible. Sacred places are the places for such forces, also the places of priests and pandas.

P (*after some time*): The British have landed troops at different points, leaving the occupied areas.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. But what is their manoeuvre? They seem to intend to occupy Bergen and Trondjheim because they are concentrating their attacks on them.

P: The *Indian Express* says that one-third of the German Navy is gone.

SRI AUROBINDO: May be true. The radio says half, but it may be one-third.

P: Have you read the report of the officers in the Khaksar shooting enquiry? They have made some amazing disclosures—that Allama Mushriqui intended to enlist 25 lakhs of volunteers and be a dictator.

SRI AUROBINDO: 25 lakhs! That means all the Muslim adults.

P: After this, Sikander will hesitate to lift the ban—especially after Sir Chimanlal's accusation that he was also a party to the Pakistan scheme.

SRI AUROBINDO: But, in the scheme, if the Sikhs and Hindus were separated, they would have poor success. They may try to bring in Afghanistan. But Afghanistan also is not wealthy and those people have a certain contempt for Indian Muslims. And in Bengal the West Bengalis will want a separate province.

After this P read a letter from a correspondent of his, 80 years old. He had been doing some sadhana for a long time, such as reading shastras, seeing mentally the Divine in everybody, etc. Now he wanted some direct guidance from Sri Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO: The difficulty is that he is too old. It is like X trying to learn Greek at 80. These things take too long and before he has taken some steps he may be off.

Now P gave Sri Aurobindo a typed review of *The Life Divine* by N. C. Brahma. Sri Aurobindo read it and kept silent.

P: He says that what Sri Aurobindo has said is what Shankara has said. (*Laughter*). It is all Adwaita philosophy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Adwaita, yes, but not Shankara's Adwaita. And so many people have interpreted Shankara in so many ways that had he been alive he would himself have been shocked at what they had made of him.

APRIL 17, 1940

P: The French army seems to have landed in Norway.

SRI AUROBINDO: The French army also?

P: Yes. Narvik is said to be in Allied hands

SRI AUROBINDO: Nobody knows what is happening there. Have the officials said that?

P: No, not the officials. They say that the situation is quite clear now.

SRI AUROBINDO (*shaking his head and smiling*): It is not at all clear. It may be clear to Chamberlain but not to us.

S: Chamberlain is doubly convinced that the Allies are going to win.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, now he finds that right is on their side. He had suspected perhaps that God was not on his side. (*Laughter*)

P: The Allies have laid extensive mine-fields. Hitler has not much chance of success in Norway.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know what made him take this step.

P: His inner voice perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: His inner voice must have been wild then.

N: Is there any chance of his attacking the Balkans?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, when he gets wild he can do anything.

N: But that would be very hazardous. He would have lost his head to do that.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has already lost it. The Allies are waiting for him to fall into that trap. They want nothing better.

P: Italy seems to be intending to take sides.

SRI AUROBINDO: With whom? She says she won't allow herself to be found like Norway.

P: She may join the Germans.

SRI AUROBINDO: She can do anything. Today she will declare you her friend and tomorrow join the enemy. But if she intends to join Hitler, she should have done that at the beginning when the Allies were unprepared. Now if she joins she will have to keep her Mediterranean control or she will be put into a worse position than Germany. And in the Navy the English and French will be stronger than Mussolini. Moreover the Italians are not good fighters; they will open themselves to attack by land. In Abyssinia they did not achieve any wonderful success. Only after using mustard gas could they get the victory. On the other hand, if they joined the Allies, they could confirm their position though Mussolini would have to give up his idea of a Roman empire.

P: Here is a letter from Sundaram on his meeting with H. H tried to explain why he had gone away from here. He could not understand why the Mother granted an interview to the mill-owner Hukumchand who had had a monkey-gland operation, while she refused to see several poor people. The Mother replied that he should not think by the mind and judge like that her motives. On another occasion there was some dispute about a servant. This time, he said, Sri Aurobindo replied that according to French law a master has rights over a servant.

SRI AUROBINDO: I never said that and it is not true. In French law the servant has as much right of his own.

P: Then H spoke of consciousness in the heart and the force, the tranquillity, etc., he attained here.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why does he object to the monkey-gland operation?

P: He objects to the Mother seeing rich men and refusing poor men.

SRI AUROBINDO: But the Mother has refused rich men also. That is why she asked him not to think or reason by the mind.

P: Why doesn't he say plainly that he left the Ashram because he found the path difficult instead of trying to justify himself? He also says that you made so many interpretations of his poems that a book can be made out of them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Interpretations? I simply said "Very beautiful" and so on.

APRIL 18, 1940

N: Somebody in reviewing Promode Sen's book on you says that you are saying new things which are not according to the Shastra.

SRI AUROBINDO: The sin of having new ideas? One must speak only of things said and otiose?

N: He says the outer world is like a dog's tail.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the old idea. So one has to cut off the tail?

P: Vivekananda himself has done many new things.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can do new things but can't have new ideas, I suppose!

N: In the same issue Girija has started writing your biography.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! What do they know about my life?

Sri Aurobindo cast a glance here and there at the article and read in the last portion: "It was his mother who played a great part in moulding the temperament and character of Sri Aurobindo."

N: He writes also that as soon as you heard of your grandfather's death you cried out, "এ কি সর্বনাশ" (What a calamity!) (Laughter)

SRI AUROBINDO: Not a very original interjection

S: The biographers will force you to write your own biography, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: I shall have to write it just in order to contradict the biographers. I shall have to title the book: "What I did not do in my life." (Laughter)

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: What is the condition of Narvik? It seems to be a mystery.

P: They say it is in British hands.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who are they? The British Government? The Germans say it is in their hands. The British have occupied some islands north of Narvik. In that case they will take a long time to come to the South.

N: Chamberlain says they were not at all prepared. All preparation was being done at the last moment,

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes; so they have sent a small army and the rest is to follow. But in the meantime what will be the condition of the Norwegians?

S: The Norwegians were so dumbfounded by the sudden invasion that they began to stare at the invaders. It seems some Norwegians have crossed over to Sweden.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Swedes have a contempt for them as fighters.

S: The Germans are trying to divide Norway from the North.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, at Trondjheim, where Norway is narrow.

P: The Germans were ahead of the British at most by 24 hours.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, they were preparing for two months. The Germans have foresight and organisation power. (*After some time*) The Theosophical Society's prophecy about the World War in May may come true. The Russians have given an ultimatum to Rumania on 14 points, of which 13 are non-existent, Rumania says, and one is unimportant.

P: If war breaks out there, I hope Britain will strike the first blow.

SRI AUROBINDO: That will depend on Turkey. She has a pact with Russia not to go to war against her. If Germany attacks, then, of course.

N: Hasn't Turkey an agreement with the Balkan powers?

SRI AUROBINDO: If she has, we don't know of it. The Balkan powers have an *entente*, and that is with Bulgaria.

N: These two countries, Russia and Germany, seem to have a sinister scheme between themselves. When one takes Finland the other keeps quiet. And after Germany takes Norway, Russia goes against Rumania.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF 1920-26

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1969)

(These Notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in these talks seized the young aspirant's mind was jotted down the next day. Neither complete continuity nor absolute accuracy could be maintained. But in reconstructing from memory the author sought to capture something of the language no less than of the thought-substance. In places, later editing has been found necessary in order to clarify notations which had served merely as signposts.)

IN writing for a magazine month by month, as I did for the *Arya*, you cannot keep the whole thing before you. "The Yoga of Knowledge" is too long. "The Yoga of Bhakti" is too short and summary and requires to be added to *The Synthesis* must be published in small books *Lines of Karma* is turning out to be more important than I expected.

There are people who have a fine opening in some part and something bad or unbalanced in some other. You have to give them a chance. There are things which are not on the surface and they turn up afterwards. You have to take the risk. However much the Adhar may be fit yet there is always the danger in the physical being. The Mahashakti does not seem to have even the scruples I have. She does not care. She finds a possibility and she begins working, it does not matter to her if the man dies in the effort. She does not care for a little waste here and there. What is waste to the infinite Energy? Even in the material world nature works with so much waste. .

In the beginning the mind is carried away by thoughts. It requires long *abhyāsa* to get rid of this weakness. If it is not possible to have the demand from the central being, it must be in the highest mind at least. Will is pure conscious force, aspiration is the demand going up from the heart. It takes many forms. It may take the form of prayer but that is only an external form. As one advances he sees the higher and higher forms of aspiration. You should not reject the images that come into the mind at present, nor should you get attached to them. You must allow them to come up, watch them without being touched and see what they are and what develops out of them. You ought not to expect to see something—Gods or Goddesses. If you try, you may see them, but what you see would be only mental forms and traditional mental images, made by your own mind and without reality. If you see them and are satisfied the real images will not come. So you must not try to see or expect anything.

Shanti is of many kinds; it may be merely mental quiet, without anything descending from above. There is a shanti that descends with wideness. One has to deepen that Shanti more and more till it becomes constant and remains even when one is not sitting in meditation. All work must proceed from that shanti. If one can succeed in it he will be able to know how the thought in the mind comes and from where it comes. Also he will see the movements in the vital being. He has also to see whether there is something in him which is detached from all these things.

When we sleep, consciousness passes into another plane or field, there is a turnover of consciousness and another consciousness—the subconscious (in the general, not the strict sense) occupies the body. It takes some time for the normal consciousness to come back into the body after waking. If the normal consciousness is concentrated (as in Yogins), it takes a much longer time; after waking from sleep, the slightest thing may upset one before one's normal consciousness comes again into the body. What the normal consciousness does, when the body is asleep, we do not know because we are not in the habit of knowing; if we open a connection between the brain-mind (so to say) and that consciousness and make a habit of remembering, we may know much if not all. A necessary condition is will. There are all kinds of sleep; ordinary sleep is tamasic, the consciousness is not awake and illumined. The body needs sleep, the mind also may need time for assimilation. In some people the vital being may stand back from the body. It is not cut off; if the vital being is cut off, the man will die. Some people get luminous sleep; while one part of the mind is dreaming, another part is engaged in interpreting the meaning... I would often leave off writing a sentence in the middle to meditate on another train of thought and when I came back to writing I found that the sentence had been correctly completed by my hand without my being aware. Some part of the mind had acted.

In the vital world there is no evolution. And even the types there are different and separate. Each is for itself. But here in the physical world we have evolution and the purpose of evolution is the harmonising of the types for a full and concrete manifestation.

The energy of action is the energy which does something, carries out something. The energy of creation is that which forms. There are all kinds of creation. Some people throw out their energy on the mental plane, but cannot form or build. Some people can put out the mental energy, but cannot bring it down into the vital and physical. Creation in life is different from creation in art. If you want to create in life you must have a firm hold of life and of the physical world. Some people create in the vital. Blavatsky's creation was on the vital plane, supported by a mental element, an element of the vital mind. Besant could not create anything; where she tried to create, she failed.... Das had not much power of creation; his only creation was the Swarajya Party. If he had lived longer he might have created some-

thing on the vital plane. He was too full of ideas to create anything. If you have ideas, too many of them, they are an obstacle; you must have the power to make them effective. Tilak is an instance of that practical force. Whatever idea he had in mind, he could make effective in life; for instance, Ganapati Puja and Shivaji Festival. He saw that he could gather the life of Maharashtra round these occasions and he succeeded in doing it. The Swadeshi was not his creation, but as a politician and a leader he took advantage of it.

Although Shakespeare's movement is vital, we can see the psychic touch here and there. Homer is not psychic by any means but in the passage where Achilles replies to Priam who has come begging for Hector's body there is the psychic element. Keats' "magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas" is an instance of psychic vision and psychic feeling. "A thing of Beauty is a joy for ever" is merely an intellectual statement rendered poetic. Tagore's "Urvashi" is one of the best poems written, so also is his "Parosh Pathor" which has the psychic element in it.

The world is a movement of forces acted on by the Supreme Power. One cannot act against the decision of the Supreme, but can act on the movements of forces here. For instance, disease or illness is a movement of force—it may be the action of a malign force. This movement may be dislodged. But if you dislodge the disease, it may come and attack you from somebody else. If it is dissipated, it may form again. If it is dissolved, the illness disappears without any reaction on anybody. This dissolution of the movement can be done, by seeing the movement and sending a force on it through will and with the intention that it must dissolve. There are roughly three movements. The first is that of the actualities, a consequential movement in which one thing happens from another. The potentialities are not seen and are therefore limited. The second is the field of the large possibilities and here the possibilities are brought down as potentialities which could be actualised. There are many grades of potentialities and the third movement is the movement of the greatest potentialities. In the first movement one sees only some actualities and acts on them. One is not effective. The yogin may act on the actualities also... The Doctor diagnoses the disease from his scientific standpoint and treats the case. He is right from his own standpoint, but in some cases the disease happens to have a movement of force behind, and in these cases, one has to act from another level.. First I tried to build up everything as powers, but one learns to do so with difficulty and I saw that the best way is to open myself to the highest Truth and allow it to act, myself simply assisting and assenting to the movement and organising it. Of course one has to build up till this movement begins. It is the psychic nature that can open itself best to do it. The mind constructs, thinks that it is the king of the universe. The vital being is rampageous, knocks about, wants to do this and to do that, to go outside and preach religion, the lower vital being wants to show off or to humble itself (not with the true humility which sees and confesses the mistakes to

itself, to others and to God). But the psychic being does not deceive itself like this. Before the psychic being is open, we have to use the best instruments at our command.

You say that will does things, but what is will? It is a power in you. But how does it do things? You do not know. You have to see how it uses the forces that are acting. Besides your will there are contrary wills. And even behind your will you see something that moves it from above, something that decides and sanctions. That does not ignore the difficulties of the lower nature. It knows what to do and how to do. It is the higher Truth that acts in you when you are open—not power—it shows you what to do and how to do. It does not work by a miracle. It does not cook food for you. It uses, or shows you how to use, the necessary instruments.

In Taittiriya, sāma is spoken as the rhythm or harmony or flow of Truth, Rītam as truth of movement, mind as the pragmatic instrument working on the subconscious and receiving from the Vijnana. The ordinary Purusha on each plane is involved in Prakriti, when he detaches himself he becomes free but he must open himself, put himself in connection or in yoga with Vijnana. In the Vijnana there is no yoga needed; the Purusha sees in terms of truth, whereas formerly he saw what nature represented to him.

The early Christian mystery described God as Wisdom and Love. Wisdom is a powerful expression of Consciousness and Love an expression of Ananda when it applies itself. But there are many other aspects of Consciousness and Ananda. The Christians see God above the mind, but, though above the mind, still as reflected in the mind. They may see God anywhere, get some ecstasy but when they come to ordinary life there is no change; in the plane of ideas they represent their experiences in mental truths such as Liberty, Equality. In order to transform our Vyavaharika Jivan, we have to rise to a fundamental principle at the back of life and existence which can change it, such a dynamic principle is the Supermind.

The idea of the Son in Christianity corresponds to our idea of Divine Jiva, the divine element in man. The Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit or Divine Consciousness (pure consciousness). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit do not correspond to our Brahma, Vishnu, Siva; and there is no use forcing things into one another. Our Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are powers of God or aspects of God active in the Cosmos, presiding over the three Gunas, over the three functions of creation, conservation and destruction, aspects of course seen in the spiritualised mental consciousness....

By morality you become more human but you don't go beyond humanity. Morality has done harm to man as well as good. The question is whether you can rise to something above man by morality. That sort of mental limitation is not at all condu-

cive to the growth into the spirit. To the Christians spirituality and morality are one. Gandhi's fast is a Christian idea: atonement for sin. Indian culture knew the value of morality and also its limitations. When you act from a higher consciousness you don't need to think about it because your action proceeds from Truth.

Gandhi's definition of spirituality makes it the same as morality. He never did anything in his inner life in the spiritual way, except observing rules of conduct. His is a Rajasic will with the Sattwic mind. He gets perhaps a glimpse of the truth and he is satisfied, as we see from his book *Experiments with Truth*.

Among other things the Vaishnavite sadhana has contributed much to the madness in Yoga. Its practitioners brought down the whole thing into the emotional plane and they could not distinguish between the true emotional movement of the psychic and spiritual being and the vital and lower vital part which imitates it. It is that which gives room to all sorts of lower forces. The movement of restlessness came to be accepted to such an extent that madness was almost taken as another word for Yoga "Make me mad" was the aspiration. Of course, I am not speaking of the Old Vaishnavism which originated in the South. Even in Chaitanya we find dancing and weeping. The lack of balance had already begun in his time.

Our physical mind is not well developed. Being a dependent nation we have no scope for large action and therefore our physical minds have lacked development. There must be in the physical mind something that is positive, an element that grasps the reality.

In its own nature the physical mind refuses to believe anything else than matter to be real. That is an extreme we need not go after. It reminds me of U who used to switch off the electric light when he saw the Supramental Light descending into the inner being! Not that kind of obsession by material reality but something of positive demand is necessary, so that the physical mind may question everything and accept the truth when tested.... Many people see visions and think they have attained Siddhi. But they don't ask, "What have I gained from these visions? What do they mean or amount to?"

(To be continued)

V. CHIDANANDAM

CRY IN THE WIND

So your wisdom bans me
From the sweetness of your court.
You bid your veil drop
To hide the comfort of your face.
You aim no council to aid
And teach me to find you again
Whilst without rages a storm.

Unleashed, called forth to serve you
You bring on
The thunder of my doubts
And of not knowing,
You teach me
In blowing wind
To walk straight, and to make
My way ahead,
In blinding curtain of rain
I am to find you more.
There is nothing to show a sign,
A direction of the path,
And the tumult of the elements
Has rendered me deaf eared.

Such is your love which demands
A test then,
I will stand for your lashing boon,
I love you all the same
All the more.
Let then all your forces come
To try me
And to mould me good
For your smile.
If love asks me to be shaken
Even as a mountain once thought high,
And be battered like a strong stone
Made into dust unto the winds,
Then dust will I be
And a nothing of a thing
For your love to be won,
To be raised once more.
All this I'll take,
I wish to be renewed.

GEORGETTE COTY

WORDSWORTH—MAN AND POET

1970 makes two hundred years since Wordsworth was born. Both during his lifetime and after, a lot has been written about the man and the poet. He is a figure of considerable importance and we may well set ourselves to throw together some facts and observations to stimulate a living perception of this strange and great figure.

APPEARANCE

Let us start with his appearance. We have often heard him described as most unpoetically horse-faced. But that is not the impression produced on all. Nor did he himself regard his physiognomy as poor. When Hazlitt spoke of his forehead as being narrow, Wordsworth exclaimed: "Narrow forehead! I went through three large magazines of hats in Paris, before I could find one large enough, and yet my skull is almost out away behind." It is also helpful to recall Leigh Hunt's impression of his eyes: "Certainly I never beheld eyes that looked so inspired or supernatural. They were like fires half-burning, half smouldering, with a sort of acrid fixture of regard, and seated at the further end of two caverns. One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes."

ANNETTE AND DOROTHY

Now to his life and work. It is well known today that the highly respectable and conservative sage who never let any suggestion of sensuality or of lawlessness enter his poetic works had been a sower of wild oats in his youth. He was a young man when the French Revolution broke out and in the early phase of it he was actually in France, one of the little group of fiery orators who called themselves Girondins and with whom probably he would have gone to the guillotine, had he remained longer in the country. During his stay there he had a tempestuous *liaison* with a girl named Annette Vallon who bore him a child. Herbert Read has noted that Wordsworth's genius awakened suddenly after his experiences in France, developed gloriously in the next nine years during which he had not given up the idea of marrying Annette as soon as the political situation would make it possible for him to return to her land, and declined from the time of his sedate marriage with Mary Hutchinson.

There seems little doubt that his efforts to remove all trace of Annette from his life had a harmful effect on the spontaneity and power of his inspiration. But to connect the spontaneity and power wholly with Annette is to exaggerate her significance in his life and to forget that the "culture of feeling" in which his genius lay and which made him write—

....all grandeur comes,
All truth and beauty from pervading love,
That gone, we are as dust—

was not concerned only with natural human interchanges of emotion between man and woman but with a sort of cosmic sensibility, an awareness of all life and nature in terms of the deep heart. About "every natural form, rock, fruit and flower, / Even the loose stones that cover the highway" he uses in his *Prelude* the phrase that is one of his most astonishing in bare power: "I saw them feel." And he adds:

...the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul.

His "culture of feeling" was a multi-mooded pantheism in which the deep heart of man communed with and got illumination from the sentient Spirit of the universe which was the ultimate ground of man's own self.

If any particular woman contributed vitally to the growth of Wordsworth's poetry it could not be Annette Vallon. She may have stirred his poetic imagination and remained a significant stimulus for many years, but it was his sister Dorothy who principally kept his genius alive; she was a true sister to his soul, feeding it and strengthening it by her own extreme sensitiveness to the details as well as to the vast general presence of nature. She was little of a philosopher, but no finer companion could a pantheistic poet hope for. And between her and Wordsworth there was a special passage of feeling which brought an intense personal colour to their companionship. There was something of a pure physical passion about their intimacy—nothing perverted by any direct sexuality but a love, both acute and profound, that went beyond mere brotherliness and sisterliness. No sister, in the common acceptance of the term, would dream of writing to her brother as Dorothy did when telling Wordsworth how she tried to bear his temporary absence: "I tasted and bit the apple where you had bitten it." And, again, no ordinary brother could write as he did of her:

And she who dwells with me, whom I have loved
With such communion that no place on earth
Can ever be a solitude to me.

Most probably the celebrated "Lucy" poems which are Wordsworth's high-water mark of personal love-expression were really a dramatic transformation of his relation with Dorothy. An actual Lucy has not been identified yet, while all his descriptions of her as "a child of nature" and all his tenderness and devotion in writing of her agree with what we know of Dorothy's temperament and of his relation with her. At least the poem, "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal", that most Wordsworthians take to belong to the "Lucy" series, Coleridge terms a most

sublime epitaph which, in all likelihood, reflected some gloomy moment when the poet had fancied the time his sister might die.¹ And we know for a fact that the glow-worm incident described in the "Lucy" poem starting "Among all lovely things my Love had been" took place in 1795—most probably at Racedown—between the poet and his sister.

Not Annette, therefore, but Dorothy was Wordsworth's main inspirer and sustainer. And if his genius suffered gradual eclipse after his marriage to Mary Hutchinson it was not so much because he drew the curtain completely over Annette and became respectable as because the new relationship cut across his unusual communion with Dorothy and she was too dutiful a woman to come in any way between man and wife. We know that she suffered terribly by the marriage: even if it did not lead directly to the loss of reason, to which she became subject, it had much to do with her living for twenty years an invalid in Wordsworth's house.

Wordsworth had too much self-conceit to experience the same heartbreak, he had also a philosophic intellect to fall back upon, an intellect which was not dependent on Dorothy; but his poetic springs could not help drying up, especially as he was also altogether out of touch with the only other human being of his circle who could sustain both his heart and his imagination in the paths of poetry—Coleridge. Coleridge above anyone else nourished Wordsworth's philosophic intellect and made it poetically creative, just as Wordsworth in his turn gave Coleridge's unstable and erratic genius strength and staying power. Coleridge's tragedy was even greater than Wordsworth's, for when he got estranged from his friend he lost Dorothy as well, whereas his friend had her for many more years to keep his mind kindled. But when Dorothy was made to play second fiddle in Wordsworth's emotional life and Coleridge had become just a splendid memory, the poet of *The Prelude* and the simple yet profound lyrics and the beautifully contemplative sonnets and the supreme *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* started on the way to becoming a dry stick.

TRAITS OF CHARACTER

He grew not only staid and respectable but also ridiculous in many things. For instance, he refused to attend de Quincy's marriage to the country girl who had borne him several children. In his later years he could not endure to read Goethe; he found in Goethe's works "a profligacy, an inhuman sensuality" which he described as "utterly revolting". He wrote a whole series of sonnets praising capital punishment. Several traits of his character which were merely odd in his younger days became now cranky no less than offensive.

¹ Sri Aurobindo has read a purely spiritual—pantheistic—experience in the lyric and the present author has written at length to substantiate Sri Aurobindo's interpretation (*Mother India* August 1956). Coleridge's authority is not definitive. Does not Wordsworth himself declare in general that nobody really understood him, "not even Coleridge", because the latter was "not happy enough"? However, we are not here concerned with this or any other reading—we are concerned with the identification which Coleridge, taking the poem to be an unhappy one, an epitaph, made between its "she" and Dorothy.

Even in his younger days he had always a certain self-righteousness and a particularly high opinion of all he expressed in his writings. No poet of the nineteenth century, except perhaps Tennyson who perpetrated lines like "The monkey would not eat since little Willie died," could have come out quite seriously with the line "A Mr. Wilkerson, a clergyman" as if it were great poetry, or with a strange lapse of poetic taste begun one of his best sonnets dedicated to National Independence and Liberty with the word "Jones". One recalls also his sudden remark at a dinner party: "Davy, do you know why I published *The White Doe of Rylstone* in quarto?" "No," replied Davy. Then Wordsworth said: "To show the world my opinion of it." One remembers too his statement to Lamb: "I believe I could write like Shakespeare if I had a mind to try it." We do not know what he said when Lamb's answer came, as swiftly as the stutter would allow: "Yes, n-nothing is w-wanting but the m-mind."

There is a bit of odd conceit, though mixed with a bit of startling commonsense, in that incident in the English Channel where he and Dorothy and Mary had gone boating. A squall overtook them and it seemed as if the boat would capsize. Wordsworth coolly took off his coat and vest and prepared to swim ashore, leaving his wife and his sister to drown because they could not swim. Luckily the weather changed, but that resolve to save his own skin was strangely in contrast to the sentiment he had voiced in the sonnet to his wife:

Dearer to me than life and light are dear!

Many other quaint glimpses we have of him, not always showing him in an egoistic or humourless light. Once on talking of letter-writing and the care that men like Southey lavished on it he said that such was his horror of having his letters preserved, that in order to guard against it he always took pains to make them as bad and dull as possible! There is considerable simplicity as much as the poet's proverbial enthusiasm about his own products, in the account Haydon gives of Wordsworth reading one of his most famous poems, *The Leach-Gatherer*, to his hairdresser! Even the egoism that was his was mostly unconscious: there was no deliberate attempt to magnify himself, nor any resentment of circumstances which put him in a laughable situation. When he had to go to receive his Laureateship he had no appropriate garments in his own wardrobe and went dressed in Samuel Rogers' ill-fitting suit. According to custom he had to get down on both knees. But so tight was the suit that he could not get up at all and had to be helped to a standing posture. Nothing on record indicates that he here minded looking funny, though surely he must have known the comic figure he cut, kneeling on the floor for an inordinate length of time until the bystanders realised his predicament. That he was not quite without either humour or charm is testified by Charles Greville who described him at almost sixty as "very cheerful, merry, courteous and talkative". His mood of merriment is evidenced by an anecdote related by Haydon. Wordsworth and Haydon were walking across Hyde Park one day and Wordsworth was quoting his beautiful address to the stock dove. On finishing the poem

he started telling Haydon how once in a wood Mrs Wordsworth and a lady were walking, when the stock dove was cooing. A farmer's wife coming by said to herself, "Oh I do like stock doves!" Mrs. Wordsworth, in all her enthusiasm for her husband's poetry, took the old woman to her heart; "but," continued the old woman, "some like them in a pie; for my part there's nothing like 'em stewed in onions."

POETIC EXPRESSION

The stock dove brings us back to Wordsworth the poet. And after all as the poet is Wordsworth great and destined to be remembered. What is the value of his poetic experience and expression? Not all that he wrote appealed to his fellow-poets. Blake was so upset that he got a bowel complaint that nearly killed him, when he read Wordsworth's lines on passing Jehovah unalarmed and on realising that nothing

can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our minds, into the mind of man.

"Does Mr. Wordsworth think he can surpass Jehovah?" Blake asked in horror. On the other hand, when the Immortality Ode was read out to him, he fell into almost hysterical rapture. In this connection we may mention Wordsworth's own attitude to Blake. When some of Blake's abnormalities were reported to him, he remarked: "The insanity of this man interests me far more than the sanity of Byron and Moore." The remark shows how much against Wordsworth's grain ran the slick sentimentalism of Moore and the crude power of Byron and how the central motif in his own writings was the feeling of universal mystery and the sense of profundities in the human soul. He did not have Blake's awareness of what Dr. Otto calls the "numinous", the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the transcendent Godhead, but even more intensely than Blake he had the consciousness of the perfect presence and the ineffable peace that live secretly not only in the mind of man but also in the earth, the ocean, the sky—the Cosmic Godhead who looks out at us from things of beauty and majesty, who lures us with magical or tranquil distances and

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.

Tennyson regarded this line from *Tintern Abbey* as the grandest in the entire range of English poetry. Perhaps Tennyson indulged in a little exaggeration, but part of the exaggeration consists in overlooking the fact that some other lines of Wordsworth himself merit to be ranked beside it among the greatest treasures of poetic expression in English: for example,

The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills,

or

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep,
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
 I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
 The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

or

... a mind for ever

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

In a less august manner, too, Wordsworth can work up to a marvellous felicity:

The stars of midnight shall be dear
 To her; and she shall lean her ear
 In many a secret place,
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
 And beauty born of murmuring sound
 Shall pass into her face.

But, of course, Wordsworth is not all perfection. There are immense stretches of aridity and abstractness in him, especially in his later work. And not everything that even fine critics have praised is pure gold. Thus, it is impossible to agree with Keats when he remarked that *The Excursion* was one of the wonders of the age. Much less can we join Coleridge in that fantastic estimate of *Borderers*, a play of Wordsworth: "His drama is absolutely wonderful. There are those profound touches of the human heart which I find three or four times in *The Robbers* of Schiller and often in Shakespeare, but in Wordsworth there are no inequalities."

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

(Continued from the issue of October, 1969)

XII

VALMIKI'S Guha is neither as unsophisticated nor as innocent and loving as Kamban's Guha. In fact, he is something of a diplomatic pretender. As soon as he sights Bharata's army on the opposite bank, the doubt crosses his mind that the army might be marching against Rama. Commanding his men not to allow a safe passage to the army across the Ganga, Guha goes to the opposite bank with a tribute of fish, meat and wine and meets Bharata and tells him in seeming sincerity, "This country is the kitchen-garden of your Empire. We are your slaves. We request you and your Army to accept our hospitality and stay here for the night." Accepting Guha's offer, Valmiki's Bharata says, "This forest is difficult to traverse. The Ganges is difficult to cross. By which route can I reach the Ashram of Bharadwaja?" At once Guha replies with folded hands, "Oh Prince! My hunter-warriors will escort you to your destination and I shall follow you, too. I hope you mean no evil to Rama. Your huge army excites a little suspicion in my mind." Bharata, 'who is as blameless as the sky', utters the following words, which assure Guha of his *bona fides*: "Do not doubt my good faith. Rama is my revered elder brother and I regard him as my father. I swear I have come here only to take back Rama. Please do not mistake me." These words gladden the heart of Guha, who says, "I have not seen a great soul like you, who has renounced a kingdom that has come to him unasked. As you have come to take back Rama, who is in great distress, your fame will endure for ever." This is in essence Valmiki's treatment of the encounter between Guha and Bharata.

Kamban's Guha is, on the other hand, the very personification of unconditioned love and devotion. He recalls to our mind the unspoilt awareness and the uninhibited and spontaneous reactions of a child. He jumps to the conclusion that Bharata is hard-hearted and vengeful and his army is directed against Rama, the lord of his heart. He would not temporize with the enemy, nor would he care to speak honeyed words to him if only to sound him. His love and friendship for Rama have dissolved the rigidities of his isolated self and forced new perspectives on it. He is governed by higher principles than judicial logic and weighing of pros and cons. His loyalty constrains him to act excitedly and unrestrainedly

A sword buckled to his belt,
 biting his lips,
 uttering words that cut and pierced,
 his eyes afire,
 beating his war-drum,
 sounding his bugle,
 stood he,
 with his shoulders swelling,
 like close kinsmen,
 to rush to his support.

Guha's army heard his battle-cry and rallied quickly and clamorously round him, like that combination of thunder-clouds and black sea surging to submerge the Earth at the Final Annihilation

Looking at the hunters
 falling in line around him,
 he roared,
 "Resolved am I to dispatch
 to the other world
 that Army, rooted in mischief,
 so that I may restore
 the glorious kingdom
 to the friend of my soul—Rama.
 Warriors! keep ready."

Guha recollects the graciousness of Rama, and looking at the enemy, who is the very negation of graciousness, he gives full vent to his wrath.

"This deep, long-waved river—
 Dare they cross it
 and survive?
 Are we archers that would flee
 at the sight
 of these huge elephant hordes!
 Did not Rama call me 'Friend'
 and is that not a word
 among words?
 Won't they ridicule me and say,
 'The miserable hunter dare not die?'"

Guha thinks that Bharata is not only a knave but also a fool to have underestimated the forces he had to battle with.

"Thinks he not
 he is up against his elder brother?
 that, behind him, stands, tiger-like,
 his younger brother?
 Disregard them how he may,
 how dare he despise me,
 encroaching this wise
 on my territory?
 Does he fancy
 a hunter's shaft will not pierce
 the bosom of kings?
 Fie on this Army,
 which is not fodder enough
 for the warriors in exile!
 Let the Celestials themselves aid the enemy:
 will I not, with my huge bow-clouds,
 send down arrow-showers
 and kill their elephants
 and kill their swordsmen
 and scatter their entrails to the winds
 and blot them out?"

The ungraciousness of Bharata distresses Guha most. In his martial speech to his warriors, he says,

"To my Lord, who gave them kingdom,
 they wouldn't give the jungle
 that we rule!
 Dare they advance against him?
 Charge against this flag-flaunting Army
 and earn the fame
 that it is the huntsman's tribe
 which restored to the legitimate King
 the Kingdom that is his.
 Yearn you not for such glory?"

Uttering such and similar words
 to his iron-bodied men,
 stood he—
 the one with the stout strong bow,
 the one with the towering shoulders of the wrestler,
 the one who had deathless devotion for Rama.

As Guha stands on the southern bank of the Ganges derisively surveying Bharata's army on the northern bank, Minister Sumantra approaches Bharata and gives him a description of Guha and his antecedents.

“He is the owner
of both the banks of the Ganga
and of a fleet of numberless boats;
of the incomparable Lord of your dynasty
he is soul-mate;
he is high of shoulder,
valorous and lordly as a he-elephant,
commander of a vast army of bowmen;
he goes by the name of Guha—
the one who wears a garland
of sweet-smelling, honey-filled flowers.

He is hard as flint,
but his heart is full of shoreless love.
He has a lovely body
made as if out of the darkness of the pitch-black Night.
There he stands—
to give you a big welcome.”

Bharata's mind was so spotless
that as soon as he heard these words
he burst into joy
and rose, saying,
“If he is the sweet friend
that my Rama has clasped to his bosom,
he is my elder brother, too!
I will myself rush to greet him.”

Eager to meet Guha, Bharata hastes to the water's edge, taking Satrugna with him.

So saying, he rose
and with his brother
and with love rising in his heart,
he rushed,
like a hillock rising and moving,
towards the shore of the cool Ganges;
the hunter-chief, with his black tuft
plaited with aromatic flowers,

gazed at Bharata and his body's plight,
sized him up in an instant
and was lost in bewilderment.

Dressed in jungle weeds,
his body stained with dust,
his face bereft of laughter,
like a pale beamless Moon,
his grief so mellow
as to melt the rockiest of rocks—
Such was the sorrow-stricken figure
that Guha saw.
And seeing it,
Guha stood dazed, choked and sobbing,
the bow in his hand
slithering down to the ground.

Recovering from the shock, Guha realizes that Bharata's intention is far from war-like or hostile. He bursts out at once:

“This trusty Prince does look like my lord
and the one who stands beside him
does look like my lord's brother.
He is in hermit's attire,
His grief is without end,
he salutes in the direction of Rama.
Can anyone born brother to my lord
be guilty ever of misdemeanour?”

Now Guha's anger evaporates and he tells his huntsmen:

“Surely he suffers
from some sorrow supreme
but he's filled
with unshakable love.

He has put on
the hermit's robe.
I will sound him
and be back in a trice.
Be on the alert meanwhile.”

With these words Guha rows in a lonely boat to the opposite bank and salutes Bharata.

The holy one,
 whom Brahma himself would adore,
 fell prostrate at Guha's feet;
 Guha, who sits enthroned
 in the hearts and heads of the worthy,
 embraced him
 with a gladder heart than a father's.

Holding him in his embrace,
 the hunter-king asked lotus-eyed Bharata,
 "Oh one who has shoulders
 statelier than a sculptured pillar!
 What brought you here?"
 And the prince replied,
 "Father, who was Protector of all the worlds,
 has strayed from Virtue's immemorial path.
 I have come to right his wrong
 and take back the King."

Guha's response was unreserved.

The impetuous Hunter-chief,
 as he heard these words,
 upsurged vivaciously
 and then fell down on the earth
 and sobbed;
 with ebullient joy
 he clasped tight the lotus feet
 of the unpaintable figure of Bharata,
 his arms lying interlocked
 around his feet.
 The one, whose mind was
 of all falsehood free,
 spoke thus:

"You have renounced, as if it were evil,
 the Kingdom your father gave
 at your mother's request,
 and with a face ashen with grief,
 you have come after Rama.

Oh, celebrated one!
 your nobility is such indeed
 that, in the eyes of those who ponder,
 a thousand Ramas cannot equal you.

“What praise can this poor hunter give you?
 Even as the Sun with his splendorous beams of light
 sets at nought and absorbs all the lesser lights,
 you have absorbed unto yourself
 all the glories of your glorious race,
 and made them all your own.
 You are the one whose shoulders blend
 the greatest strength with the highest virtue!”

As Guha uttered these words, Bharata, whose mind was rooted in Perfection and whose grace was oceanic in its sweep, turned southward and, joining his palms in salutation in the direction in which Rama had gone, asked Guha, “Pray, tell me where *our* elder brother has rested.” “Here it is,” said Guha, “Come along, I will show you the place.”

Bharata shot forth like a cloud
 and gazed at the hermitage,
 where, on a slab of stone overspread with grass,
 Rama had taken bed;
 he fell down at once shivering to the ground
 and was lost in a sea of grief;
 with pearl-like teardrops
 he washed and cleansed the earth.

In a bitterly self-accusatory speech, Bharata apostrophizes Rama and wails:

“Now I know I am the cause
 of all your misery;
 Now I know you ate roots and fruits
 as if they were nectar;
 that you slept on a straw bed;
 knowing all this,
 I have renounced not my life;
 And why do I live?
 To wear that towering diadem
 glistening with priceless stones
 and to usurp your kingdom!”

Bharata next enquires after Lakshmana.

“If this is where the great one slept,
 where did he spend his time—
 the one who has boundless love for him,
 and who followed close upon his heels?”

Guha replied:

“As the lovely dark Prince and she
 slept here together,
 Lakshmana kept vigil,
 bow in hand,
 heaving long hot sighs,
 his eyes pouring tears;
 unwinking, he kept vigil
 till Night’s limit-line came into view.”

Guha’s report is as touching as the Gentleman’s report to Kent of Cordelia’s reactions to Lear’s sufferings. Moved by this report to self-pity, Bharata exclaims:

“Of all the younger brothers of Rama,
 I have been the root cause
 of his limitless sorrow;
 It’s Lakshmana who stands committed to wipe it off.
 Can any limit be set to this thing called Love?
 Charming, indeed, is my devoutness!”

A common catharsis having brought Guha and Bharata close to each other, Guha causes the sixty thousand troops of Bharata and the grief-stricken people of Ayodhya to be ferried across the Ganges. Bharata dutifully waits till they have safely reached the opposite bank, and then he boards a boat. The Poet’s admiration for Bharata’s self-sacrifice is so great that he would not leave the boarding scene without emotionally elevating it. He says:

Bharata mounted the boat—
 the one who, by killing stealthy desires,
 had submerged the long line of his royal ancestors
 and mounted over them in glory.

After entering the boat, he made his brother and the three Queens and Minister Sumantra come aboard. Thereupon Guha rowed the boat, “which crawled on those lovely, swimming feet called the oars”.

As they pass over the river, Guha points to Queen Kausalya and asks Bharata, "Valorous hero, who is she?" Bharata replies:

"She is the premier Queen of the one
 whose courtyard is filled with waiting Kings;
 she is the noble one
 who gave birth to him
 who had given birth to all the worlds;
 and she is the one
 who, because I was born,
 forfeited her precious wealth."

Learning she was Rama's mother, Guha fell at her feet and sobbed, whereupon the Queen asked who he was. In reply Bharata said,

"He is the sweetest friend of Rama,
 the elder brother of Lakshmana,
 Satrugna and myself;
 he is the celebrated hero,
 with shoulders lofty and lovely as a hill:
 his name is Guha."

As Guha wept, the eyes of Bharata and Satrugna became wet with tears. Kausalya comforted them all in a song, which breathes the very spirit of serene benediction. As we read the song in the original, the air becomes vibrant with a thousand angelic wings, which waft a balmy breeze over the bruised heart of Man.

நைவீஅ லீர் மைந்தீர் !
 இனித்துயரால்; நா(டு) இறந்து
 காடு நோக்கி
 மெய்வீரர் பெயர்ந்ததுவும்
 நலமாயிற்றும் அன்றே
 விலங்கற்திண் தோள்
 கைவீரக் களி(று) அனைய
 காளை இவன் தனனோடும்
 கலந்து, நீவீர்
 ஐவீரும் ஒரு வீராய்
 அகலிடத்தை நெடுங்காலம
 அளித்தீர்? என்றான்.

Kamban's variety of musical accomplishment is prodigious. In fact, he works in larger musical units than any other Tamil or English poet. In this stanza, which consists of four lines, each line comprises 19 or 20 syllables. To be able to control so

many syllables and words at once is a sure sign of exceptional mastery, and to be able to arrange them in such a musical order as to set them to a key appropriate to the relevant emotion is the most conclusive evidence of his supremacy in poetry.

Beethoven said once that Goethe was in D-major. Likewise, everything and everybody seem to present themselves to Kamban in a certain key, and Kamban communicates them in a key most appropriate to them by resorting to musical phrases and rhythmical devices which produce the intended impression on a sensitive and penetrating reader. None of this word-magic of Kamban or the regality of his tone can come through in a translation, but lest the narrative should be interrupted the following version of Kausalya's utterance is given:

“Grieve you not, my sons, grieve no more,
it is well indeed
that the warriors of Truth renounced the realm
and came to the wilderness;
Befriend this mighty warrior
who stands like a heroic elephant,
 with a trunk as strong as the hills;
and, befriending him,
may the Five of you, becoming one,
govern this Earth
for many and many a year!”

In the mellowness of her grief, Kausalya's mother-heart embraces the lowly hunter as one of her own blue-blooded sons. There is in this song a certain epic nobility of thought which lifts the reader above human pettiness.

Sumitra, who had gladly sent her son Lakshmana to the forest to serve Rama, was standing close to Kausalya.

Pointing to her,
 who looked like Virtue herself,
Guha said, “Pray tell me
who's this lady who's brimming over with love.”
And Bharata replied,
 “**She is the junior Queen**
 of the one who died
 in order that unfaltering Truth might live,
She is the great one,
who begot that inseparable brother,
 who showed adorable Rama had a brother too.”

After this introduction, Kamban feels embarrassed that Guha's attention might

next fall on Kaikeyi. As that distinguished aesthete, T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, observes, this feeling of embarrassment is brought out with superb poignancy in the next stanza.

Her spouse gone
 to the cremation ground,
 her son gone
 down the sea of grief,
 Rama—that Ocean of Grace—
 gone to the merciless jungle,
 the woman who gauged,
 with the wanton cruelty of her mind,
 all the worlds, which, of yore,
 Mystic Vishnu had gauged with his height—
 pointing to this woman,
 Guha said, "Pray, tell me who she is."

Then Kamban makes Bharata give vent to all the pent-up fury of his mind
 The Prince replied:

"She is the Author of all evil,
 the foster-mother of Revenge
 She is the one
 who has ground down my life mercilessly
 despite my lying in her accursed womb so long.
 She is the one, the only one,
 who has a beaming grief-free face
 in a world
 where all bodies seem all dead.
 Guess you not who she is?
 The one who stands this wise
 is the one who has produced me."

These were bitter words, which created an awkward situation for the entire assembly. The Poet makes haste to relieve them and the reader from this predicament by bringing down the curtain on the boat scene. He hurriedly changes gear from a long ponderous metre to a short snappy one.

Even this woman
 who had no pity
 Guha looked upon
 as his mother

and with his holy hands
 he saluted her.
 The boat,
 like a wingless swan,
 swiftly reached the shore.

Rare dramatic skill has been used by the Poet in retrieving a situation which, in lesser hands, might well have degenerated into bathos. The similarity between a boat with in-drawn oars and a wingless swan is so startling that the attention of the reader is diverted from a distressing predicament to the comeliness of an apt simile and to the happy need for disembarkation.

(To be continued).

S. MAHARAJAN

LOVE IS AT WORK

MAN carries with him the burden of his doom.
 A little loophole to evil's influence
 Can suddenly grow its castle of offence,
 Leaving for truth and love and light no room.
 Within if the lairs of crookedness he can comb
 Out and flood-flush with Her Magnificence,
 A deep quiet, a nobility intense
 Can free him from the ever-dogging gloom.

Persistently must man, his head-uplifted
 Above the pettiness of men and matters,
 Keep glowing in him Her luminous Love that shatters
 All evil thoughts, ill-will's nefariousness,
 And back to Love and Peace bring all that drifted.
 For Love's reign is Her labour, for Love She is.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

HOMER, HOMERIC POETRY AND THE *ILIAD*

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1969)

(The author, after reading the first instalment of his own article, has written to the Editor:

"There is a point that I neglected in my 'Introduction' but think is worth mentioning. It should follow the paragraph (p.723) that ends, 'it is a large poem, not just a collection of small ones'."

The additional paragraph sent by the author runs:

"There is a theory, the 'kernel theory', that has some attractiveness about it: holding that there was an original poem, a nucleus or kernel—probably the *Wrath of Achilles*—that was added to at succeeding times, probably in large chunks or waves, until the poem became substantially what it is now, subject of course to interpolations. This in fact does seem to be what happened in the case of the *Mahabharata*; except that the 'kernel' there is a complete and great epic, more than any projected 'kernel' of the *Iliad* can be. If the *Iliad* was composed in such a way, though, it may still have been substantially one man who composed it. This indeed appears most likely, because the poem is a poem, with an organic unity; it is not a conglomerated cluster."

IN the last century and a half, book after book and paper after paper has swelled the Homeric literature; but still the proportion of it that is worth reading is perhaps quite manageable. I am a voyager with some experience in those seas, and I have a moderate acquaintance with the terms of the controversy over the Homeric authorship (which might have been a large acquaintance, if I had tried to remember it all); and the only books that I would care to recommend are *The Unity of Homer*, by John A. Scott¹, and *The Poetry of Homer*, by S. E. Bassett. These are not just exercises in scholarship; they are books that can help us in our appreciation of Homer, because they take him seriously as the great creative poet that he was.

Many a book does not. In fact there are three groups (not mutually exclusive) that have been engaging in studies around and about Homer, sometimes apparently hardly remembering that he is a poet, which is the only reason anybody is interested in him at all. These are the archaeologists, the text-dissectors, and the investigators of the oral epic that still exists in the world. We may take them in reverse order, in the Homeric way.

The studies of such singers and composers of oral epic as still survive in Yugo-

¹ The same author's *Homer and His Influence* is an excellent brief introduction to its large and complicated subject.

slavia and elsewhere have shed some light on oral poetry in itself, but not really much on Homer. For the trouble is that none of these poets or bards is nearly as good as Homer, and none works in a language or meter as refined, complex and exacting as Homer's Greek and its hexameter. These investigations have done good service, though, in drawing attention to the fact that the standards and conditions of oral poetry are not those of poetry written to be read at leisure, and liable to the minute examination of scholars in their studies; and thus they have obviated many objections: such as the one against the accommodations of Achilles in the leaguer. Mull over it as one may please, it is in fact fitting for Achilles to hold court in a palace, whether to build one on the edge of the battle-field be practicable or not; and that Achilles' "tent", "hut", or "shelter" seems to be like a palace, or at least a mansion, need disturb no one who is not looking for difficulties for their own sweet sake. Even to the reader there is no serious problem here.

And this may draw forward a further consideration: why, when the poems were written down, were all the oral features preserved? This may go with the question of why the poems were written down at all: the Yugoslavian bards, even living in literate society, do not feel such a necessity: yet the Greeks apparently did consider it necessary, in the case of Homer. It has even been speculated that the Greek alphabet may have been invented by the poets, perhaps Homer himself, for the purpose of preserving the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.¹ Then they may have continued to be delivered orally, but they were also there to be read, eventually by those not poets themselves—probably people who could enjoy poetry as poetry, without being critical and falsely critical in the later Alexandrian way. One may speculate at leisure about this, as with most questions ancillary to Homer, one is not likely to come to any definite and sure conclusions. The fact remains that they did not consider it necessary to try to make a version of Homer exclusively for reading; in which I consider them to have been wise.

More than anything else, it seems, the recent illumination cast upon oral poetry has served to silence the would-be disintegrators of Homer. But they are not yet silent altogether; and even if they were, it might be well to examine certain of the peculiarities of the tribe, which first began really to flourish at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

They have tended to refer to themselves as the Higher Critics: probably because they have been lower and lesser critics, powerfully given to prowling around on the outskirts, and more or less ingeniously avoiding coming to serious grips with the real subject. They have been primarily interested in the workings of their own minds and the playing with problems of their own invention, and they seem not to have heard of that salutary suspension of judgment that is often the only rational course, and that is so difficult for humankind. That would have been no fun: they have preferred to make their constructions and manipulate them with a monumental lack of imagination, proportion and balance. And of course they have established nothing; for attempts,

¹ See H.T. Wade-Gery, *The Poet of the Iliad*

however industrious, to unravel the strands of the *Iliad* and determine exactly how it came to be what it is, can yield nothing but conjecture upon conjecture, and thus the occupation is a fundamentally frivolous one, in which the scholar cares little about the poetry he is ostensibly concerned with. To one who does care about the *Iliad* itself (or the *Odyssey*), the reading of such scholarly books becomes wearisome pretty quickly.

Critics of this kind too often pick a poor point apart, in the attempt to make something out of nothing, or very little. For one example out of a melancholy host: Walter Leaf, in his *Companion to the Iliad*, says of the passage immediately following the great simile of the dream, when Achilles is chasing Hektor, that it is hardly intelligible, because after all Hektor did not escape. But Homer's meaning is obvious, and the objection is just as obviously silly; and there was no necessity for the clumsy explanatory periphrasis in the Lang-Leaf-Myers translation. In fact, it does not explain; it falsifies.

Then again, Leaf makes much of Achilles' being afraid of Aineias. But in the text, Achilles is simply afraid that Aineias' spear will go through his shield—somewhat as a man should be "afraid" that his watch was slow, he is not panic-stricken. If this whole episode is an interpolation, it cannot be proved by the fear of Achilles. Even a peerless hero may legitimately prefer not to be in the way of a spear, if it does come through his shield. Then again, Achilles is rather rough with Aineias, if the whole purpose of the passage is to glorify the latter, or to please his descendants: as has been supposed.

It seems an endemic disease of scholars, that they shall be given to twisting a text to fit a thesis.

Then again, some seem to expect of Homer a wooden-headed, "logical" kind of consistency that leaves out of consideration both the nature of humanity and the complexity of events.

Here again Leaf provides an example, seeing fit to remark that it is "contrary to epic usage" that one should start out by boasting, and then make his boast good, as Epeios does in the boxing contest. But it would be hard to say what he means by "epic usage". Homer *is* epic usage; and there is no need for him to be foolishly "consistent" on this point. (And incidentally, Epeios is not just praising himself; he is also excusing himself for not being better on the battle-field. This point seems to have been missed by those commentators who are concerned with Homer's view of order and justice)

Leaf again says that for Briseis to become the wedded wife of Achilles would be "entirely repugnant to Homeric manners"; but I do not know where he gets this idea, since "Homeric manners" are what we find in the Homeric poetry, which is nowhere explicit on such a point. Though, if it were, one could easily find one passage or another to be an interpolation if one wanted to, since neither on linguistic grounds nor any other is there any certainty in this area. But the rejection of something as not by Homer, because nothing like it appears elsewhere in the poem, seems to me to be

criticism beneath criticism. Some curious people seem to expect a poet to be continually telling all he knows, and "sowing with the whole sack": the mistake against which Korinna cautioned Pindar.

These "higher" critics tend to get so eagerly taken up with their theses that, close students of the text though they are, a simple accuracy sometimes eludes them. Thus, Leaf says that Odysseus would not have had to lean on his spear to come to the assembly at which Achilles is reconciled with Agamemnon, because he was only wounded in the arm. It is well that our guide here condescends to assure us that the inconsistency is not anything serious: for in fact Odysseus was wounded in the side.

In this connection, one can keep from feeling that one has to object to Odysseus' entering the foot-race on the next day, by oneself entering Homeric time.

Some of Leaf's notes are of little importance, and some belabor the obvious, or obscure it: but in the matter of Hektor's funeral, he omits to deal with a certain difficulty, that of the time involved; and the Lang-Leaf-Myers translation slurs the passage. Here Homer for all his circumstantiality omits many details, as usual; but we can hardly suppose the building of the pyre and the burning to have been almost instantaneous, and surely the quenching and gathering up took place with the next, or eleventh dawn; relieving Homer, or Priam, of one contradiction, at least.

Again, concerning a certain line omitted from the translation by Lang, Leaf and Myers (as it is said to be from some of the manuscripts), Leaf remarks that it is "evidently quite needless". But it seems also to be eminently poetical and felicitously in place, even if it was not known for some reason to Aristarchos; and one should be careful about pronouncing as to what is or is not needful to a poet or a poem. Strictly speaking, according to any logic we know, the *Iliad* itself is not really necessary.

I have dealt with Leaf's book at some length, both for the faults it illustrates and for the points it raises. But I would not have it thought that I hold this book in scorn. I have in fact found it very useful, and it can hardly lose its usefulness to one who wants to make a close study of the *Iliad*. Incidentally it contains an especially interesting few pages on the Shield.

The disintegrators have been very industrious, throwing up all kinds of suggestions and assumptions; and some of them have seemed to think that a great poet would not have been capable of weaving two or three themes together; which obtuseness is enough in itself to obviate their objections, and preserve their perplexities from becoming a general problem. But they have their own problems, right enough, and they have a way of thinking that what Homer said (after all who was he?) is not important, compared to their own ideas. Thus Gilbert Murray, who was seldom at a loss for self-assurance and slashed and flailed delightedly, had an idea that the Achians were long-haired because they had vowed not to cut their hair for the duration of the war, and that abstention from sexual congress with women was part of the vow. He does not substantiate this claim at all, and his attempts to do so are perfunctory and feeble; and surely, whatever trace of such a vow there may have been in the "original story" if there was such a thing, other than the story we have, is hardly to be traced.

If women are seldom mentioned in our *Iliad* (though perhaps it is not so seldom as one might require for a thesis), it is because there is relatively small occasion to mention them in a work that is an epic of war and not a romance of dalliance.

Gilbert Murray, skipping along blithely so full of his knowledge that he could not see, so much in a dither with all the new learning and speculation in various fields that he forgot that the subject, after all, was poetry, may be taken as the type of the lively lad with a brand-new Homer-toy: a type to avoid. Some things are sad: for scholarship is a thing that is too important to waste, or to trivialize. And in fact Murray's book, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, is misnamed; a better title might have been *The Modern Destruction of the Greek Epic*, or *The Value of the Greek Epic for the Pursuit of Ideas to Play With*. As a matter of fact, we are still in the dark as to how said epic arose.

Murray's article on Homer in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which was kept current until 1964 (that is, far too long), is taken up almost entirely with extraneous matter, and tells us next to nothing about the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as poems; though he does give puerile summaries of them in a separate article.

Unfortunately the article now current, though more up-to-date, is hardly better. It too is mainly a compendium of things that do not matter; and neither from it nor from Murray's contribution might one gather any idea as to why Homer has attracted so much attention in the world. They do not make it clear that Homer and the "Homeric Question" are two different things.

But there seems to be no end to scholarly vagaries, or the apparent inability of scholars to take a large and overall view. Thus it has become almost a common assumption that Paris was cowardly: though surely he is not so, as presented by Homer. He is as ready in the field as any man, which even the harassed and self-harassed Hektor admits; and though he may have shrunk from Menelaos—and it may have been simply shock at being confronted by the man against whom he could not deny being in the wrong—he came back and faced him. He was no more a coward than Odysseus and the other Achaians, who ran clear off the field on one occasion.

But there is a profounder subject that some have found perplexing: why the heroes of the *Iliad* never eat fish within our hearing, or even mention the possibility. Surely the old Irish had nothing against it; but then they looked at dogs differently too. Though considering the dogs of Patroklos, that he fed from his table, one might feel a need to revise the general view of the Achaians in this regard. But our subject is fish. Why do the heroes not eat it? Then again, why do they not eat fowl or venison, for all we know? These were viands by no means avoided by the ancient Irish, who were as heroic as anybody. But I am afraid that we are even in the dark as to whether Agamemnon ate cheese and olives. And in fact one might almost think that Homer wanted to perplex people; unless one read the *Iliad* as a poem.

Is it not plain that Homer considered it important to give certain details of certain special meals, but not to give us a day by day account of the diet of the Argives? By the intervention of Odysseus, the men ate before Achilles returned to battle, but

Homer does not bother to tell us *what* they ate. Not even Odysseus considers it necessary to talk about the *particulars* of food.

Perhaps it is fortunate that Homer does not show us Thersites eating fish at one time or another: for then surely we should have had fish put in its place as "the diet of common people".

I have a suspicion that Nestor liked boiled duck-eggs; which perhaps he could get from the Asian meadows by Kaystrios' stream.

But enough. It is surely plain that the work of the "higher" criticism on the Homeric poems has given us no solid, unquestionable and really significant conclusions whatever; and it would seem that we are now at last free to do what was the most usual and natural proceeding before the nineteenth century, that is, accept Homer as we have him and enjoy the poetry. The ancients indeed were wise in not really caring about most of the things that plague so many of our contemporary scholars. And if we could prove that Homer was the grandson of Nestor and Odysseus, it would hardly give us a greater insight into his poetry, which is the important thing.

If there may still be some who think that the study of Homer as poetry is un-scholarly, we may be sure that the study of him as anything else is unintelligent.

(To be continued)

JESSE ROARKE

ORPHIC SADHANA

HE stood, his nude limbs young and clean and sweet,
 Upon a death-black chasm's brink; as far
 As he on razor-rock might set his feet,
 Descent still deeper plunged; no ledge would bar
 His fragile fall into that stony well
 Since back he could not turn, he gave a long,
 Last look at sky, and then—with none to tell
 Its source—he heard, a world away, the song
 Of flute, a murmuring, wandering, carefree air
 That lent an alien voice to silent night.
 So down, and down, and down—a blind despair.
 He touched hell's floor: a burst of radiant light.
 O symbol dream, do you in truth portend
 The pattern of my life, disclose its end?

WILLIAM JONES

THE BELFRY

A SHORT STORY

I HAVE been accused of associating myself too much with children. Well, I have a predilection for these innocent beings with whom I feel most at home. The older generation somehow bores me. Thus, when we went for our yearly summer holidays to the hills, my small nephew became my close companion. I did not find any interest in the ceaseless chatter in which my brother and sister-in-law and their friends were constantly engaged, but found wandering the deserted roads of the hills much more interesting. I became another grown-up child along with Bablu and together we roamed hours in search of butterflies, nameless flowers, strange birds, and unfamiliar trees and shrubs.

One day in our usual excursion, we came across a long-disused church, built by a missionary perhaps a half century back. The doors and windows were falling to pieces and large cracks on the roof caused free ingress of rain-water along the wall, making streaks of moss appear. There were cracks and holes on the floor as well, where mice, and other insects had their abode. The bats inhabited freely the roofs and at our intrusion flew aimlessly around. Most of the stained glasses in the windows were missing. And the benches where the pious had knelt and prayed were gone—taken away perhaps by the local people for fire-wood.

Moving with care amid the debris and the ruin we came to a rickety staircase. It led to a half-wrecked belfry. Most of the large and small bells were not there. The shafts bearing these bells were themselves half in splinters. Only one bell, all green and rusty, seemed to have defied the callous passage of time. Curiously, even the rope attached to the bell was intact. I gave a tug and the ancient bell moved on its axle and gave forth a deep resonant boom. My nephew who had been so long silent and had kept watching the eerie surrounding with grave curiosity, suddenly asked:

“What is this bell for?”

I had to explain. There were four or five bells which had been destroyed. They used to be sounded when the church was in use, before and after prayers, mass, communion, to denote some festivity, to mark the birth and death of certain patrons of the church or important parishioners. On those occasions men, women and children, dressed in their best, used to come to pay homage to one whom the Christians considered to be the saviour of the world.

My nephew somehow did not seem to be impressed by my recital; instead he gave a fresh pull at the rope of the bell. Another deep resonant sound arose. Its loud pealing was heard echoing among the hills. A strange light shone on his face.

Though I forgot about this incident, to Bablu it proved to be a new source of pastime. Off and on he would loiter in that broken church all alone. For hours

together he would be seen roaming in that deserted place. I could hardly conceive what interest he could find amid ruin, mildew and dirt. But since it left us alone to our own devices, we did not give any attention to his queer pastime.

One day, however, the thing went too far. Bablu had not returned from his regular jaunt although it was already late afternoon. I went in search and found him sitting still on the stairs of the belfry looking at the bell. He was so much engrossed in his reverie that he had forgotten it was already getting dark and the last rays of the setting sun came from a broken door and were lighting up the strange traceries on the walls. The whole place had a peculiarly eerie atmosphere. I questioned myself again and again as to what special attraction a little boy could find in such a quaint, uninhabited and positively repulsive place.

But my brother did not take the thing so lightly or sympathetically. Instead he reprimanded Bablu severely. We could not gather why he went there; and when my sister-in-law rebuked him very harshly, tears dropped from his downcast eyes. He went silently out of the room.

Next day he had a severe attack of brain-fever so unusual for a young boy.

He became restless, and at nights when he had high temperature, he was often delirious. What he muttered in delirium was mostly incoherent. But I gathered he mainly spoke of the bell in the belfry, of the ringing of that bell and of echoes in the hills. One morning he was feeling better and in a low and weak voice he narrated a dream which he had had the previous night. It was a very vivid dream:

"It was raining in torrents when he arose from his bed and went into the open. He walked on and on when he heard the chiming of a bell, and with that sound the rain stopped and fine flakes of snow started to fall. There was another chime and the snow too gave place to a mild breeze and the place seemed to be filled with the fragrance of flowers. Happily he went up the stairs of the belfry and gave a tug".

Then he awoke and a strange feeling of happiness was with him. "Now," he said with a sigh, leaning back on his pillows, "I shall be well." Indeed he did become well.

The illness was an unpleasant experience after all both for the child and the elders. And Bablu was asked with tact and firmness not to visit that quaint old church again. Bablu complied. To our dismay, he did not stir out of the house the rest of the days we were in the hills.

After our return to the city, the vortex of divers activities made me forget the incident. I lost trace of Bablu. My family lived miles away from my brother's and in those days of traffic-difficulties it was not possible to visit Bablu often.

Another year passed and summer returned and with it the urge to escape the agonising heat. Again I was summoned to accompany my brother and his family to the sea-side for the vacation. The hills were tinged with unhappy memories for Bablu, so they were avoided.

Bablu had changed during the period; he had grown gaunt, serious and more tall. His parents complained that he had become unsociable, moody and quite un-

manageable. As I had a way with the boy, I called him aside and questioned him. Was anything wrong? Slowly the mask of apathy was removed by my feeting approach.

"Mummy says I have changed," he confided. "But all I know is that I am not happy."

I suddenly asked, "Would you be happy if you went to the hills?" Bablu nodded assent. "But," he added reluctantly, "we are going to the sea-side, aren't we?"

"Leave that to me," I consoled him.

I pleaded on Bablu's behalf and after long deliberations it was decided to go to the hills. Perhaps this could do some good to the boy after all.

And to the hills we went. Bablu appeared more cheerful than usual.

This time I did not allow him to wander about all by himself, but accompanied him on his jaunt. My brother and sister-in-law got engaged in their numerous bridge-parties, tea-parties and picnics as usual. So we two visited all the notable places: the caves, the botanical gardens, the starky point, the rainbow fountain and other beauty spots but I did not take him to the broken-down church.

One day there was a strange occurrence. It was early morning. I was doing my daily dozen, when there was a knock at the door. I opened the door and found Bablu, to my surprise His face was shining with unexpressed excitement.

"Have you heard it?"

"What am I expected to hear?" I answered light-heartedly.

In a tone almost inaudible he said, "The bell!"

"Come in, and let's talk all about it."

This was the first time he had mentioned the bell which had become almost taboo.

"It was, I think, about three o'clock in the morning," started Bablu and a long-winded narration continued.

To put it in a few words:

At that unearthly hour, something suddenly woke Bablu. From a distance came the sound of a bell, clear, resonant and unmistakable. Bablu, now all awake, sat up in his bed and listened intently. The bell rang again and again after a shorter interval and grew louder at each chiming. After striking seven times, it gave the loudest peal and stopped. Its resonance went on and on, till it died away in the rainy morning air.

I asked, "Have you heard this today only?"

"No," replied Bablu. "I have been hearing it for four days."

So I too decided to test this curious fact. If it was some hallucination, something must be done for the boy.

My alarm clock rang to the stroke of three in the morning and hardly had I woken up when I heard the bell. It was hesitant, unearthly at first. It grew louder, more sonorous and more jubilant. The seventh stroke was the loudest, as if it was sounding just outside my window. When I opened my window, a cool wind came rushing in and all I could see were the endless slopes covered with pines and a lazy moon on the fringe of a bare tree outside our compound.

So Bablu's story was true after all. When I narrated the happening to my brother, he scoffed and jeered at me. My sister-in-law was cold. Apparently, they considered me 'off my chump' just like Bablu.

To put the thing to a final test, Bablu and I decided to go and visit the ancient church. Perhaps the place of worship had been repaired and the bells heard were actually pealing from the renovated belfry.

So we went, Bablu and I. This church was quite a long way off beyond the hill in front of our house, on the slopes of the next valley.

We climbed the difficult terrain, talking, conjecturing all the while, building castles in the air. Bablu was more animated than myself.

At last we reached the spot. But where was the church, the broken belfry, the tumbled down gothic towers—the source of so much trouble to Bablu? Had we come to the wrong place? No, the familiar landmarks were there—the cemetery on the southern side, two solitary cherry trees down below with a rude stone seat near an ancient pine close by.

In place of the church was a new bungalow, with red tiles and grey walls covered with ivy creepers. A small garden all around made it look like a print from some eighteenth-century Baroque painter. Two children and a dog played in that garden, filling the air with joy.

From that day the bell ceased to ring and Bablu was left in peace.

ROMEN

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1969)

CHAPTER XIII

METAPHYSICAL FACTORS OF DEATH

Although God made the world for his delight,
An ignorant Power took charge and seemed his Will
And Death's deep falsity has mastered Life.

Savitri, Book X, Canto III.

Death is the constant denial by the All of the ego's false self-limitation in the individual frame of mind, life and body.

Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad Commentary*, p. 103.

It was the conditions of matter upon earth that have made death indispensable. The whole sense of the evolution of Matter has been a growth from a first state of unconsciousness to an increasing consciousness A fixed form was needed in order that the organised individual consciousness might have a stable support. And yet it is this fixity of the form that made death inevitable.

Conversations of the Mother, p. 58.

How could that escape death which lives by death?

Paul Richard, *The Scourge of Christ*, p. 186.

A. First Factor: The Part against the Whole

THE individual life, emerging as a finite and ephemeral wave in the bosom of the 'All-Force' that is governing the world, has constantly to bear the disrupting impact of the latter. In order to secure permanence for itself, it has perforce to contend with this All-Force and establish its harmony with it. But although it is a fact that Life is power, *vāyoragni*, and that the growth of the individual life brings in its wake a corresponding increase of the individual power, still, in the nature of things, "it is impossible for a divided and individualised consciousness with a divided, individualised and therefore limited power and will to be master of the All-Force; only the All-Will

can be that and the individual only, if at all, by becoming again one with the All-Will and therefore with the All-Force. Otherwise, the individual life in the individual form must be always subject to the three badges of its limitation, Death, Desire and Incapacity.”¹

B. Second Factor: The Part against All Other Parts

The divided and individualised life represents but one vortex amongst a countless number of similar vortices put forth by the All-Force, *sarva-kratu*, manifesting in the universe. It is no better than “a particular play of energy specialised to constitute, maintain, energise and finally to dissolve, when its utility is over, one of the myriad forms which all serve, each in its own place, time and scope, the whole play of the universe.”²

Now, in this welter of mutually jostling fragmented life-forces, the energy of life imprisoned in a particular individual frame has constantly to withstand the multipronged attacks coming from all around. Indeed, for each individual life it turns out to be a ruthless battle of one against all. And the cosmic movement seems to take the form of a Great Hunger, *mahabubhukṣā*, wherein each separate life is trying to prey upon the energy of other lives by feverishly seeking to devour and feed on them. But, in the occult dispensation of things, a limited existence cannot be an “eater”, *annāda*, all the while, without at the same time serving as ‘food’, *anna* to others.³

Thus, “the life organised in the body is constantly exposed to the possibility of being broken up by the attack of the life external to it or, its devouring capacity being insufficient or not properly served or there being no right balance between the capacity of devouring and the capacity or necessity of providing food for the life outside, it is unable to protect itself and is devoured or is unable to renew itself and therefore wasted away or broken; it has to go through the process of death for a new construction or renewal.”⁴

C. Third Factor: Action and Reaction

Life by its very nature is self-expansive and the individual life forms no exception to this rule. Thus, even though limited in capacity and deficient in resources, it attempts, consciously or subconsciously, to extend its sway over the environment. But this environment is not a mere vacuum, nor is it a mass passively yielding to any pressure from outside. Occultly viewed, this looks like an arena swarming with innumerable entities and powers that too in their turn are constantly seeking to self-

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 177.

² *Ibid.*

³ Cf. “*Ahamannam ! ahamannādah*”, “I am food! I am the eater of food!” (*Taittirīya Upanishad*, III. 10).

⁴ *The Life Divine*, pp. 177-78.

expand, and hence become "intolerant of, revolt against and attack the existence which seeks to master them".¹

In this way, a very adverse reaction is set up in the milieu against the encroaching and impacting individual life and "however strong the mastering life, unless either it is unlimited or else succeeds in establishing a new harmony with its environment, it cannot always resist and triumph but must one day be overcome and disintegrated."²

D. Fourth Factor: Life the Consumer

What is the relation between the substantial forms and the pervading life that creates and maintains them? In the language of the Upanishad, the life-force acts as the *anna*, food, of the body, and at the same time it uses up the body as its own food.

In other words, the life-energy in the individual creature continually provides the necessary stuff and materials with which the forms are being built up, maintained and renewed through a process of dynamic equilibrium. But at the same time, as a reverse operation, the self-imprisoned life-energy in the limited individual draws upon the substantial stuff of its own creation, in an attempt to replenish its own fund.

Thus, in the matrix of the individual body, there is a constant and continuous two-way flow of energy. Life-force supporting the physical stability, and the material body supplying the needs of life. But this is not always done in harmony; rather, life and body often act as "co-wives", *sapatnātvvyādhino*, battling against each other to the detriment of both. The aforesaid state of reciprocal maintenance constitutes therefore a highly unstable state of equilibrium, apt to be easily disturbed and broken because of this lack of inner harmony and also owing to the essential limitation of the life-energy in the ego-bound separative individual existence.

Now, "if the balance between these two operations is imperfect or is disturbed or if the ordered play of the different currents of life-force is thrown out of gear, then disease and decay intervene and commence the process of disintegration."³

Over and above this, when mind appears on the scene and seeks to grow and develop in the individual frame, it creates an additional strain on the body and the maintenance of life becomes proportionately precarious. For, "there is an increasing demand of the life-energy on the form, a demand which is in excess of the original system of supply and disturbs the original balance of supply and demand, and before a new balance can be established, many disorders are introduced inimical to the harmony and to the length of maintenance of the life."⁴

E. Fifth Factor: War of the Members

To a superficial view of things, the individual man seems indeed to be a single whole, undivided in consciousness and integrated in will. But a deeper probe reveals

¹ *The Life Drive*, p. 178.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

the disconcerting fact that, in the present state of his evolutionary development, man's being and nature is not at all 'of one kind, of one piece', but rather a complex and heterogeneous amalgam of many elements, not all of them harmonised and co-ordinated in their urges and pulls.

Thus it is that in the compass of an individual existence, there exists an acute discord and disparity in the contrary self-drives of the three evolutionary formations, Matter, Life and Mind. Instead of being *anyonyabaddhabāhu*,¹ each one offering the others its helping hands, and *grhitakanthā*² all seized and governed by the divine Lord in the supremely harmonious cosmic Dance, *rāsālilā*,³ they try to go their own separate ways, in total disregard of the stresses and strains they are apt to inflict upon the other parts, in their whimsical separate swirls.

In particular, — and this is very much pertinent to our discussion,—“the Life is at war with the body; it attempts to force it to satisfy life's desires, impulses, satisfactions and demands from its limited capacity what could only be possible to an immortal and divine body; and the body, enslaved and tyrannised over, suffers and is in constant dumb revolt against demands made upon it by the life.”⁴

The mind on its part is engaged in war both against the life and the body. And the consequences of this battle of the members, this internecine war of attrition in the being, cannot but be disastrous for the prolonged maintenance of the embodied life.

F. Sixth Factor : Imperfect Poise of Consciousness and Force

The individual self or being is in essence one with the Divine and is secretly aware of its divine potentialities. In manifestation it assumes the aspect of Purusha or conscious being supporting the Prakriti or Nature that is the executive side of Chit-Shakti.

This one and unique Being projects itself on each plane of nature, in the form of a representative Purusha or being that is proper to that particular plane. Thus, in man, there is a mental being corresponding to the mental nature, a vital being corresponding to the vital nature, and a physical being answering to the physical nature.

Now in the evolutionary emergence so far effectuated here upon earth, the dual aspect of Chit-Shakti—the aspect of consciousness and the aspect of force—have not quite marched in step, thus creating a deleterious division between the demands of the conscious being, Purusha, and the capacities of the force of nature, Prakriti-Shakti. In man, for example, there is not only a division and conflict between the diverse demands and pulls of the mental, the vital and the physical being, but what is worse, each of them is also divided against itself.

Thus, “the capacity of the body is less than the capacity of the instinctive soul or conscious being, the physical Purusha within it, the capacity of the vital force less than the capacity of the impulsive soul, the vital conscious being or Purusha within

^{1, 2, 3} Expressions taken from the section “*Rāsālilā*” of Vyasa-deva's Bhagavatam.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, p. 197.

it, the capacity of the mental energy less than the capacity of the intellectual and emotional soul, the mental Purusha within it. For the soul is the inner consciousness which aspires to its own complete self-realisation and therefore always exceeds the individual formation of the moment, and the Force which has taken its poise in the formation is always pushed by its soul to that which is abnormal to the poise, transcendent of it; thus constantly pushed it has much trouble in answering, more involving from the present to a greater capacity."¹

Now the question is : how to solve this problem of division between consciousness and force? Mind, as it grows, tries in its own limited way to resolve the resultant conflicts, mostly through a process of makeshift compromise. But this *ad hoc* solution is no solution at all, and mind fails miserably in the end. As a matter of fact, the problem cannot be solved on the plane of the mind, for essentially this is a question of satisfying in full the infinite aspiration of an immortal being,—the secret godhead, the embodied Divine,—lodged in the confines of a mortal life and body. Hence, the mind of man, baffled by the immensity of the task, gives up the attempt in a mood of desperation "either by submission with the materialist to the mortality of our apparent being or with the ascetic and the religionist by the rejection and condemnation of the earthly life and withdrawal to happier and easier fields of existence"².

G. Seventh Factor: The Infinite as a Summation of the Finite

Now we come to the last factor,—indeed, the most crucial and fundamental of all,—that necessitates and justifies the presence of Death in the actual state of evolutionary progression. For, it arises from the basic "necessity of the nature and object of embodied life itself, which is *to seek infinite experience on a finite basis.*"³ (Italics ours.)

Indeed, this stupendous cosmic Becoming has for its secret purpose and goal the discovery and enjoyment, in Space and Time, of all that already exists beyond Time and Space. And in this cosmic Drama, *viśva-līlā*,

The soul is a figure of the Unmanifest,
The mind labours to think the Unthinkable,
The life to call the Immortal into birth,
The body to enshrine the Illimitable.⁴

But, in the as yet imperfect elaboration of evolutionary possibilities, the form and the basis through which and upon which the individual soul spurred by its secret sense of divine infinitude seeks to build up its infinite experience, is by its very organization limited and rigid, thus circumscribing the possibility of experience. In

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 198.

² *Ibid.* p. 195.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁴ *Savitri*, Book X, Canto IV.

the conditions of existence as at present prevailing, this infinite experience on a finite basis becomes at all feasible only through the successive assumption and dissolution of an infinite series of forms. In the words of Sri Aurobindo :

“The soul, having once limited itself by concentrating on the moment and the field, is driven to seek its infinity again by the principle of succession, by adding moment to moment and thus storing up a Time-experience which it calls its past; in that Time it moves through successive fields, successive experiences or lives, successive accumulations of knowledge, capacity, enjoyment, and all this it holds in sub-conscious or superconscious memory as its fund of past acquisition in Time. To this process change of form is essential, and for the soul involved in individual body change of form means dissolution of the body.”¹

We have completed our study of the metaphysics of Death; we have seen the necessity and justification for this process of Nature, not indeed as a denial of Life, but as the process of Life itself. For to repeat in part what we have quoted before, “death is necessary because eternal change of form is the sole immortality to which *the finite living substance* can aspire and eternal change of experience the sole infinity to which *the finite mind involved in living body* can attain.”² (Italics ours.)

Such is then the problem of death; and once the problem is known in its fundamental nature, the solution must be forthcoming in the march of the spirit. Indeed, the italicised portions of the above citation already suggest the possible clue to it.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 178.

² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

THE SECRET SELF IN THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1969)

CHAPTER III

PURITY

PURITY depends upon the state of the consciousness. In the divine consciousness all is purity, in the ignorance everything is tainted or coloured with impurity.

Perhaps the first urge primitive man has towards purity is the cleanliness of his body, but this would be precisely at a time when he sets his first step on the road to civilization. The more he becomes civilized, the greater the need seems to be for keeping the body clean. As an animal, there was no question of such a need, because his actions blended harmoniously with the animal cycles of Nature which responded automatically on impulse to Nature's needs.

But civilization demands a departure from the automatic safeguards of Nature, and there ensues a disharmony during the transitional period of man climbing out of the slough of the animal integument towards the illumined body of the divine being.

This disharmony, the pull of the lower animal and the attraction of the higher, is the fundamental cause of our impurity, in the mental and vital as well as the physical.

It seems obvious that we cannot escape it or overcome it; so what should our attitude be in our pursuit of sadhana?

Our attitude here concerns the very spirit of sadhana itself, which I venture to say should be:

a constant joyful progress.

If one enters the dawn of each day with the firm aspiration to do better than the day before, to climb higher towards inner and outer perfection, with an ever attendant joy of conquest and adventure, with the constant aspiration to enter into new worlds of consciousness, then one need never fear the drought of boredom or those deserts of despair which are the dread of every common life.

If one falls in climbing then it is best to laugh, pick oneself up and without another thought push on, resolved that the fall is an indication of how not to climb, if one would reach the summit.

The opening lines of that famous Sonnet CXXIX of Shakespeare—

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action—

we may adapt to our purpose, taking their flash of inspiration as revealing the essence

of the true attitude one should have towards *remorse*. False shame for a fall of consciousness perpetuates the fall, fixes it on the whole consciousness, mental, vital and physical, so as to ensure its repetition again and again and this is the most subtle cause for the continuance of ignorance and impurity, making man despair of ever getting free of this seemingly interminable wheel of cause and effect.

So the first urge towards purity in transitional man is of the body.

The first step the uncultured, uneducated man makes towards purity is to attend to his outer appearance, his body and his clothes, although the urge itself may have originated within. This is the urge for *freedom from the soil*. The next step is of the vital being, where the urge is to get clear of the many entanglements of the passions and desires, the longing to be free from anger, envy, hatred, jealousy and sex, and the persistent slavery of the emotions. This is the urge to be *free from mixture*. The next step is of the mental self, where one yearns for a rational mastery, control, silence, peace, clarity and illumination. Mental purity would be *free from the mixture of the lower nature*. The mind would not be the market place of every passing thought, nor would it allow the uncensored impulses from the vital to invade its silence and calm heights of concentration.

One might ask: But *how* is this all to come about? Well, the answer is of course attendant on the *inner urge*. It all depends on how much one wants to be pure, how much one wants the higher instead of the lower, how much one wants to be free of one's animal nature, how much one wants to be master of oneself, master of the forces of Nature which strive to maintain their hold over the being.

Like all climbing, an effort has to be made, there is no easy way, but there is a more difficult way, and that is to keep putting off the resolve to make this effort.

The sum of this effort is equal to the ratio of one's "free choice". Or to put it another way, the measure of the effort is dependent on the limitation—imposed by the ignorance—of "free choice". (Anyone who believes he actually has *full free choice* without first having liberated himself from *all desire* is still 'living' in the smog-filled atmosphere of a grand illusion.)

True, man is always 'free' to choose to live in a filthy condition or in clean surroundings. Even a pig can choose to clean his own sty. Man can also choose to act in this way rather than in that way, in one manner rather than another. He can choose good thoughts rather than bad thoughts—or can he? Does he have control over his thoughts? We have come to the most difficult of all issues: namely, at the dividing line between mind and vital being, thought and emotion, plan and will of action. It is the same psychological issue which Shakespeare raises in the character of Brutus, where the ideal is in conflict with the action; or in Hamlet's psychological dilemma of trying to choose the right thing to do when moved by unknown forces over which he has no control, pulled between idea-emotion and a demand for action. The inner conflict is of course the result of an inner impurity, a confusing of issues and a mixture of emotional impulses invading the unformed structure of the mind, making uncertain the needed power of action.

If one is to be free from this mixture, this impurity, one has either to have the right education at a young age when the education of the vital is not left to its own undisciplined impulse nor mixed in a confused competition with the mind. Mental education must be understood to be helpful to, but not subservient to, vital demands, and the difference between feeling and thought should be demonstrated at an early age—or, at a later age, one has to initiate an imposed discipline, a yoga of tapasya and purification which may take anything from ten to thirty years to accomplish, or even many lives.

Sri Aurobindo says¹: “One of the first needs in our Yoga is a discrimination and a *psychic tact* distinguishing the false from the true, putting each thing in its place and giving it its true value or absence of value, not carried away by the excitement of the mind or the vital being.”

It is this psychic tact, this soul-faculty, which alone can solve the problem of right and wrong when the mixture of the nature is rife and there is the conflict between one part and another.

The psychic alone can be the arbiter between mental and vital, vital and physical movements, urges and impulses, which are themselves a part of universal Nature.

The mental ego, the vital ego and the physical ego must give way to a new authority, the law of the psychic being—if an integral purity is to be established in the individual striving for perfection, aspiring to be accepted as an instrument of the Divine.

The word “psychology” is on everyone’s lips these days, as if a new science had been discovered whereby we may come to know our inner or hidden nature.

The subjective side of man’s consciousness may be new to the *parvenu*—the recently educated masses—but to the ever-existent *élite* it is as old as man himself.

The mystic significance of the ‘temptation’ in the Garden of Eden points to an early understanding of the ‘birth of knowledge’. Forbidden to man-the-animal, pure in his animal state, naive and innocent—but once acquired by man-the-transitional-being—knowledge is instrumental in driving him out of Eden: the Bliss of Ignorance. Now the Transitional Being has to forge on into new worlds of ever-widening consciousness, leaving the narrow confines of his animal nature; he is flung out like a fledgling from the nest, to seek the inner truth of his being through outer experience and circumstance. Leaving the security of the arms of Mother Nature, the young soul now has to fend for himself, which is the natural process of trial and selection in the course of evolution. In the very beginning he was made aware of his dual personality; Eve was created out of himself and it is *Eve* who gave him of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. *Eve* is the symbol of *Prakriti*. It is *Prakriti* which externalises the consciousness of *Purusha* and brings about His action in the world. So was born the dual personality of the One in the Many and then too the psychological conflict was initiated into the life of man.

¹ *Letters*, Fourth Series, p. 273 (italics mine).

In classical literature the psychological problem serves as a central theme around which ritual and drama are created. And in the plays of Shakespeare it reaches a dramatic eminence nowhere excelled in English literature. The conflict of thought or ideal with action is perhaps first developed in Brutus, later refined and organised around a greater complexity in Hamlet, and brought to the height of superb grandeur and sinister implication in King Lear and Macbeth.

So man has known his psychological conflicts, his inner battlefields of Kurukshetra, the constant war between the recalcitrant parts of his own nature—there lies the rub, the chaos, the mixture of parts which is the cause of all his impurity.

(To be continued)

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

INITIATION: A PRAYER

OH, Creator, reveal to me the mystery of Your law of creation. In Your great creative sacrifice, I am the base, the earthly altar. From time immemorial I have been carrying on my weary bosom the burden of earth, bricks, stones, woods and sundry other items of sacrifice..

Now, Oh Supreme Poet, bring down clarified butter from the summit source and light the sacrificial fire in me. Offer incense with your heavenly hands and make me incense-smelling through and through. Let me not compromise with evil and undivineness.

The particles constituting my body are still subject to desire and attached to luxury, lust, wealth and comfort. Thrashed by the sacrificial flame, they will all be converted to seekers of illumination and truth. The force of the superconscient fire will demolish the light-negating enemies of the nether region .

The stream of light, chanting always the original Word OM, will flow through my mind and life and through the arteries and veins of my body. The cells of my sinews will glitter, turning my whole frame into a lamp of aspiration goldwhite in hue.

Death, disease, fear, suffering, sorrow, and other mortal distortions will depart for ever. The heavy burden of the terrestrial life will be made light and man will attain his divine status.

With open heart and outstretched body I accept the new Initiation. Simply, O Lord, let the Mystic Fire be my constant companion...

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

(A fine English rendering by the author of his own Bengali poem, not yet published.)

GIFTS OF GRACE

DEPRESSION IN SADHANA

A LONG preparation is a sadhak's life; a circling of toil, hope, joy and tears. Besides illness and fear, there was another malady with which many of us were afflicted in the old days—it was depression. There are a good many letters of the Master on the subject. The reason given by him is:

“I have explained to you why so many people (not by any means all) are in the gloomy condition, dull and despondent. It is the *tamas*, the inertia of the Inconscient, that has got hold of them. But also it is the small physical vital which takes only an interest in the small and trivial things of the ordinary daily and social life and nothing else.

“When formerly the sadhana was going on on higher levels (mind, higher vital etc), there was plenty of vigour and verve and interest in the details of the Ashram work and life as well as in an inner life; the physical vital was carried in the stream. But for many this has dropped, they live in the unsatisfied vital physical and find everything desperately dull, gloomy and without interest or issue.

“In their inner life the *tamas* from the Inconscient has created a block or a bottleneck and they do not find any way out .. That is the malady.”¹

Once I wrote, “I am being drowned in the sea of depression.” It may sound strange how, in spite of fine experiences, I should suffer from depression. Those who are on the path know very well that it is not a bed of roses all through; they must be prepared for pitfalls, rugged tracks and thorns.

“The vital in the physical,” says Sri Aurobindo, “easily slips back to its old small habits if it gets a chance. It is there that they stick...”²

“In Yoga one uses the inner will and compels the vital to submit itself to tapasya so that it may become calm, strong, obedient.... The vital is a good instrument but a bad master. If you allow it to follow its likes and dislikes, its fancies, its desires, its bad habits it becomes your master and peace and happiness are no longer possible. It becomes not your instrument or the instrument of the Divine Shakti, but of any force of the Ignorance or even any hostile force that is able to seize and use it.”³

One who tries to bring the vital under control knows how difficult it is to control this ferocious lion. Neither feeding him with delicious meat nor starving him is the remedy Experience confirms that only the opening of all the lower reaches to the working of the higher spheres is the way out, at any rate in this yoga. Even then,

¹ *On Yoga*, Tome Two, p. 691.

² *Letters*, Fourth Series, p. 442

³ *On Yoga*, Tome Two, p. 394.

“The lower forces seldom yield the ground without a protracted and often repeated struggle. What is gained can be covered, but it is never lost.”¹

The mysteries of sadhana—its thorny tracts, sharp turnings, crooked by-lanes, rugged roads, rocky grounds, all have been laid bare by Sri Aurobindo in his letters on sadhana and by the Mother in her talks. When *Bases of Yoga* came out, the Mother is reported to have said, “When you have a difficulty, concentrate and open the book; you will find the answer.” And indeed each letter appeared like a mantra. These letters are a light-house and are of great help in determining the bearings of our sadhana.

In sadhana, life sometimes feels like a desert. Why? The Master’s reply is pointed:

“The feeling of the desert comes because of the resistance of the vital which wants life to be governed by desire. If that is not allowed it regards existence as a desert and puts that impression on the mind.”³

But that is not all. To change the external being is much more difficult, ...“the external being... is a difficult animal to handle. It has to be dealt with by patience and quiet and cheerful perseverance; never get depressed by its resistance”⁴

And then there are hostile forces ever on the watch to pounce on us in our moments of weakness. They are apt to make a mountain of a mole hill. Time and again they have succeeded in taking away several of us from the path. And these departures created an unpleasant reaction in us.

Once I asked, “Is the adverse force stronger than the Divine force? In spite of the Mother’s help why do we fall a prey to it?”

The occasion was the departure of a neighbour who occupied a back room in our house. I had the impression that he had gone because I had requested him to fix a time for his music other than the night when I went into meditation.

Sri Aurobindo wrote: “X did not throw the blame on you. All he wrote about the music matter was that he would stop his music altogether rather than be fixed down to times and hours. . . When these things happened his reaction always was, I can’t do this Yoga—I will go.

“You ask whether the adverse Force is stronger than the Divine Force. The implication is that a man has no responsibility for his actions and whatever he does or however he errs and falls in consequence, the Divine Force is to blame. It may be so, but in that case there is no need or utility in doing sadhana. One has only to sit still and let the adverse Force or the Divine Force do what they like! According to that theory the Devil was quite right in telling Christ, ‘Cast thyself down from this mountain and let His angels come and upbear thee’ and Christ was quite wrong in rejecting the suggestion and saying, ‘It is written ‘Thou shalt not tempt (put to a test) the Lord thy God’! He ought to have jumped and if he got smashed, it would only have proved that the adverse forces were greater than the Divine Force!

¹ *Letters, Fourth Series, p. 450.*

“We had shown X the truth and sadhana for himself at least a dozen times; if this time he followed doggedly the adverse suggestion and refused the Mother’s message requesting him to remain, it was the Divine Force that was to be blamed!

“If an adverse Force comes, then one has not to accept and welcome its suggestions, but to turn to the Mother and refuse to turn away from her. Whether one can open or not, one has to be loyal and faithful. Loyalty and fidelity are not qualities for which one has to do Yoga; they are very simple things which any man or woman who aspires to the Truth ought to be able to accomplish. It is what everybody should realise. It is the psychic fidelity that brings the power to stand against the Asuras and enables the Protection to work.” (21-4-1937)

The following instance will show that things have since been changing:

K waited till the last to offer his birthday Pranam to Mother—it was in 1961 when at 4 p.m. people came up to the first floor for their birthday offerings.

The Mother asked K if he wanted to go to Calcutta. K, hesitating, the Mother said, “Don’t think of money. I will give it to you.”—“No, Mother, I am weak-minded. Once I go there I may get lost in the turmoil of politics. Here I am with you, all safe, although I know I can make no progress in sadhana.”

“Yes, it is a good attitude, you should be here with me. But how do you know that you are doing no sadhana? Here there is a pressure in the atmosphere, which helps. You cannot say you are doing nothing. And this pressure will grow more and more condensed...”

The Mother’s words, spoken in a different context, apply here also:

“It is not so easy to remain here. There is in the Ashram no exterior discipline and no visible test. But the inner test is severe and constant, one must be very sincere in the aspiration to surmount all egoism and to conquer all vanity in order to be able to stay. A complete surrender is not outwardly exacted but it is indispensable for those who wish to stick on, and many things come to test the sincerity of this surrender. However, the Grace and the help are always there for those who aspire for them and their power is limitless when received with faith and confidence.” (19-11-1948)

Those were the days when there was neither scope nor means for diversion. One great relief was the Mother’s silent look, blissful touch and radiant smile at the Pranam time. However depressed we might be, a look was enough to bring us back to ourselves. Her countenance is like the brook that is always changing and is yet the same. It is difficult to analyse the swift changes in her methods, her dealings, her smiles, in her relation with each of us. It is not possible for me to describe the subtle variations and nuances of her smile.

It is hard to comprehend the Mother. Her face reflected sometimes compassion, love, sweetness, tenderness, sometimes gravity or majesty. I often wondered how, carrying on her shoulders the heavy burden of the Ashram, her face could remain always lit up with a benign smile though it differed according to our way of approach and ability to respond. But, despite all these changes, she is always the same.

A new light, a new life constantly flows from her eyes, whose grandeur cannot

be imagined by those who have not felt the magic of her touch, be it through her silent look or through words spoken or written, or through a subtle impact of her force. Many of us lacked courage to gaze on her eyes intently or stand before their penetrating rays. The whole content of our being lay open to her eyes. Even her eyes with closed lids see things known and unknown to us.

It is a common experience that her mere look or a simple touch generates a subtle current of healing bliss. During the days when she gave blessings on the staircase we remained sitting there at times for hours. When she opened the door, a rapture poured into our hearts as into an empty vessel. We remained athirst, like the parched earth, for a single look, a single smile, for we believed that her one glance could change our spiritual destiny.

When one entered her chamber for an interview one felt there an atmosphere packed with ineffable peace and power and sensed a spiritual beauty illumining all the surroundings. (At least this was my personal experience in the interview on my birthday in 1961.) The moment she turned her eyes of light upon us they opened the hidden gates of our heart and a joy unknown suffused the being.

When one returned home after the interview to attend to business or other affairs one felt assured that there was one at his back on whose help he could count in a crisis; or when one came to her, stricken with grief, or with a prayer in his heart for a solution of a problem he received a ready answer in her eyes. Even in her photos this extraordinary power of her eyes has been experienced by many living thousands of miles away.

Her bodily appearance is not all. She is the Divine in human form. We feel blessed to be at Her Feet and live under Her all-blissful shelter.

When A. B. came from Gujarat he looked at the Mother most intently as if he had known her from long before and the Mother gave him much more time than to others every day. I know only one incident of his life: When he went home to see his ailing father the latter said, "I am going to breathe my last. That is why I have called you." "No, father, not yet; you will still live pretty long," spoke out the son, almost inspired.

And when the father recovered his son brought him here. To his own surprise, he could walk a mile every day on the sea-beach. Years after, when he fell ill, his son felt that that was to be the last, and he did expire that time.

When H come for Pranam a radiant smile of the Mother always greeted him and then she fixed her creative eyes upon him as if transmitting her force into him. At Pranam time he often came towards the end and no sooner did he sit at the feet of the Mother than she concentrated her gaze upon his eyes. It seemed the Mother was focusing her blazing rays upon his being.

Just after a few months' stay H began to write such poetry as was everybody's marvel. Almost daily we gathered to read his poems in the library which is now called the Reading Room. He would sit at his typewriter and go on typing line after line, page after page, without a halt. There was no touch of the mind in his

poetry. It was a flow from beyond it. But an uprush of the vital forces swept all this away. It will be wrong to infer that because the Mother gave H more time he was an advanced sadhak. In support of my statement I reproduce the following:

“The Mother deals with each one in a different way, according to their need and their nature, not according to any fixed mental rule. It would be absurd for her to do the same thing with everybody as if all were machines which had to be touched and handled in the same way. It does not at all mean that she has more affection for one than for another, or those she touches in a particular way are better sadhaks or less so.”¹

The Mother also speaks in the same vein:

“As for treating everyone in the same way, it is a still greater confusion. It is the kind of confusion one makes when one expects the Divine to act in the same way towards everybody. In that case it would be of no use that there is diversity in the world, it would be of no use that there are no two individuals alike. To treat everyone in the same way would be contradicting the very principle of diversity.”²

Let these words of the Mother be written in our heart and mind regarding depression:

“Chase away depression with a smile. A hundred mistakes do not matter: with a smile recognise that you have erred and with a smile resolve not to repeat the folly in the future. Depression is a very crude expression of the dark forces. Face your trouble joyously, oppose with invariable cheerfulness the obstacles that beset the road to transformation.

“If you slip into depression, you cut every source of energy — from above, from below, from everywhere. That is the best way of falling into inertia. You must absolutely refuse to be depressed.”

“The world of obscurity is darker even than our physical night; if you came after plunging into it you would actually find the most impenetrable night clear...

“If you keep obscurities within you, you may stay quiet and inactive for a while, so much so that you do not attach any importance to them, but then one day they will rise up and your transformation will not be able to withstand them....” This reminds me of my case. We shall come back to this later on.

“Go on hunting for all the little dark corners that hide in you and put just a little spark of goodwill on this darkness, it will yield and vanish, and what appeared to you impossible will become not only possible, practicable, but a thing done. One thing, you must truly, sincerely want to get rid of it.”

(To be continued)

A DISCIPLE

¹ Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother, p. 672.

² Bulletin of Physical Education, February 1957, p. 119.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo By *Sisir Kumar Ghose*. Pub: Chatuskone Ltd. 123 Jagadish Bose Rd. Calcutta 14. PP. 124, Price Rs. 12.50

MANY know today of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the older generation knows more about the revolutionary politics of Sri Aurobindo, but by and large very few know of Sri Aurobindo as a poet. It is only of late, as the claims of his epic *Savitri* grow on the advanced mind of the age, that attention is getting focused on the poetry of Sri Aurobindo and his philosophy of Poetry. Dr. Sisir Ghose's survey of the subject is timely and offers very good points for study.

In the course of his Introduction giving a brief account of the life of Sri Aurobindo, the author speaks of the literary activities of the poet during his Baroda days and narrates an interesting incident: "At that time he was translating portions from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Romesh Chandra Dutt's translations of these epics had received considerable praise from the English press. Dutt had gone to Baroda in 1899 at the request of the Gaekwar. On seeing some of Sri Aurobindo's translations he had said, 'Reading these poems of yours I feel sorry that I wasted my time in translation. Had I known these earlier, I would not have printed mine.'"

Dr. Sisir Ghose studies Sri Aurobindo's poetry in four periods: the first whose dominant note is 'alien and aesthetic, with many echoes from the western classics'; the second, on his return to India, which marks a shift to Eastern inspiration and is notable for the poetry on Love and the conquest of Death by Love; the third which reflects a 'more critical note, an intellectual and discursive quality that has helped in certain quarters to preserve the image of Sri Aurobindo as a philosophically-minded poet'; the fourth which strikes the mystic note bringing the harmonies of the highest firmaments of the Spirit down to the Earth, the climax of this movement being reached in *Savitri*.

There is a whole chapter devoted to the birth and growth of *Savitri* as an epic to its present form, over decades. In the course of a vigorous discussion, the author establishes the inevitability of future poetry turning into a spiritual *mantric* mould as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. He cites the views of the foremost critics and poets of the day in support of this viewpoint. He notes:

"T.S.Eliot had once been asked, 'How would you, out of the bitter experience of the present time, wish mankind to develop?' 'I should speak of a greater spiritual consciousness,' Eliot had replied, 'which is not asking that everybody should rise to the same conscious level, but that everybody should have some awareness of the depths of spiritual development and some appreciation and respect for those more exceptional people who can proceed further in spiritual knowledge than most of us.'"

A persuasive presentation of Sri Aurobindo's Poetry and the motif that governs it.

M. P. PANDIT