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OCTOBER 1973

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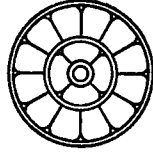
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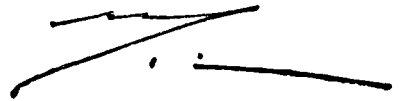


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXV

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

all sincere effort to  
progress and get rid of  
dangerous habits is assured  
and supported by an active help  
from the Grace -

but the effort must be  
steady and the  
aspiration must be  
sincere.

Blessings

All sincere effort to progress and get rid of dangerous habits is assured and supported by an active help from the grace— but the effort must be *steady* and the aspiration must be *sincere*.

Blessings

THE MOTHER

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of September, 1973)

*(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give, in a new English translation, the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)*

OCTOBER 24, 1956

I HAVE something here, I don't know if it will take us very far, but still it will make a good change. All these last few weeks it was always the question of progress: how to progress, what hindered progress, how to use the supramental Force, etc. That continues, I have a whole packet still! But we may change the subject for once.

Someone has asked me a question about death: what happens after death and how one takes a new body.

Needless to say that it is a subject which could fill volumes, that there are no two similar cases, that practically *everything* is possible in this life after death as everything is possible on earth when one is in a physical body, and that all statements when generalised become dogmatic. But still one may look at the problem in some detail, and sometimes one makes interesting discoveries.

The question is like this:

*“When a specially developed soul leaves the body, does it take with itself the subtle physical sheath? When it reincarnates, how does it put this into the new body? .”*

To answer this, as I have already told you, it would be necessary to write volumes or to speak for hours. For, to tell you the truth, no two cases are the same — there are similarities, classifications may be made, but this is purely arbitrary. What I wanted to do was to read to you the following, for it is quite amusing (oh! I don't want to be...not serious! Let us say it is quite interesting):

*“These questions are asked with reference to an old Indian tradition of the occult knowledge of the sage-king Pravanahana whom the Upamshads (Chhandogya and Brihadaranyaka) speak about:*

*“It is said that after death, the soul of those who have done good deeds takes the path of the ancestors, “pitryāna”, becomes smoke, night, etc., attains to the world of the fathers and finally to the lunar paradise. The Brahmasūtra deduces from this that the soul takes with it all the elements, even those of the subtle physical,*

*which will be needed in the next incarnation.” So a question: “Is this correct? Is the subtle physical sufficiently conscious in that case?”*

We keep aside the questions, I am continuing:

*“Then the Upanishads add: after having exhausted the store of good deeds, the soul leaves the lunar paradise, comes to the sky, then the air, then the clouds, taking on the nature of each of these things, precipitates on the earth as rain, enters the seed, penetrates into the body of the father under the form of food, and finally builds up the body of the child.”*

This is indeed a little too complicated a process, isn't it? (*Laughter*) But I found this very amusing. And now the question (*laughing*):

*“Is it necessary to follow this uncertain and hazardous process? Does not the soul animate the body directly with all the mental, vital and subtle physical elements organised around it and necessary for the next life? Does it take up the elements of the subtle physical world? If so, how do they harmonise with the hereditary characteristics? Above all, must it pass through the body of the father?”*

There we are!

The only thing I can say is that it is possible that sometimes things happen like that. Quite probably (at least I hope so) the person who described this may have observed a phenomenon of this kind; I hope this is not a mere mental construction of his occult imagination. . That raises a few practical problems! But still, evidently, there is nothing impossible. Only, one sees with difficulty the soul entering into the rain, which enters the seed, from which the plant sprouts up, and then entering the father's stomach in the form of food (more or less cooked!) and finally proceeding to the conception of the child. I don't say it is impossible, but it is very, very *very* complicated!

I may say that I have been present at innumerable incarnations of evolved souls in beings either preparing to be born or already born. As I said the cases are quite different; it depends more on psychological conditions than material ones, but it does depend also on material conditions. It depends on the state of the development of the soul which wants to reincarnate (we take the word “soul” here in the sense of the psychic being, what we call the psychic being), it depends on its state of development, on the milieu in which it is going to incarnate, on the mission it has to fulfil — that makes many different conditions.... It depends very largely on the state of consciousness of the parents. For it goes without saying that there is a stupendous difference between producing a child voluntarily, with a conscious aspiration, a call to the invisible world and a spiritual ardour, and producing a child by chance and without willing to have it, and sometimes even without wanting it at all. I don't say that in this latter

case there cannot also be a psychic incarnation, but generally it takes place later, not at the conception.

For the formation of the child this makes a great difference.

If the incarnation takes place at the conception, the whole formation of the child to be born is directed and governed by that consciousness which is going to incarnate: the choice of the elements, the attraction of the substance — a choice among the forces and even the substance of the matter assimilated. There is already a selection. And this naturally creates altogether special conditions for the formation of the body, which may already be fairly developed, evolved, harmonised even before its birth. I must say that this is quite, quite exceptional; but still it happens.

More frequently there are cases in which, just at the moment of its birth, that is to say, of its first gesture of independence, when the child begins to develop its lungs by crying as much as it can, at that moment, very often, this sort of call from life makes the psychic descent easier and more effective.

Sometimes days and at times months pass, and the preparation is slow and the entry takes place very gradually, in quite a subtle and imperceptible way.

Sometimes it comes much later, when the child itself becomes a little conscious and feels a very subtle but very real relation with something from above, far above, which is like an influence pressing upon it; and then it can begin to feel the need of being in contact with this something which it does not know, does not understand, but which it only feels; and this aspiration draws the psychic and makes it descend into the child.

I am giving you here a few of the fairly common instances; there are many others; this may happen in innumerable different ways. What I have described to you are the most frequent cases I have seen.

So, the soul which wants to incarnate at times remains in a domain of the higher mind, quite close to the earth, having chosen its future home; or else it can descend further, into the vital, and from there have a more direct action; or again it can enter the subtle physical and govern from very close quarters the development of its future body.

Now the other question, the one about departure.

That too depends on the degree of development, the conditions of death — and above all on the unification of the being and its attitude at the time of leaving the body. The question here was about fully developed beings, that is, about fully developed psychic beings (and I don't know if one may speak of a psychic being which has profited by its presence in a physical body to do yoga, for then the conditions are quite different. But more generally, often I have told you that (in what concerns the external envelope of the being), everything depends on its attitude at the moment of death, and that attitude depends necessarily on its inner development and its unification.

If we take the best instance, of someone who has unified his being completely around the divine Presence in him, who is now but *one* will, *one* consciousness, that being will have grouped around its central psychic being a fully developed and organ-



ised mind, an absolutely surrendered and collaborating vital and an obedient, docile and supple physical being. This physical, being fully developed, will have a subtle body — what Sri Aurobindo calls the “true physical” — which will infinitely surpass the limits of its body and have a sufficient suppleness, plasticity, equilibrium for it to be able to adhere to the inner parts of the being and follow the movement of the soul in its...I don't want to say in its ascent, but in its peregrinations outside the body. What the soul will do, where it will go — all depends on what it has decided before leaving the body. And this capacity to keep around itself the being that has been fully organised and unified in its physical life, will allow it a sure choice of what it wants to do — and this also represents a very different field of possibilities, from passing consciously from one body into another, quite directly (there are instances in which one of these fully conscious and fully developed beings has slowly prepared another being capable of receiving and assimilating it, and in order not to stop its material work when it leaves one body, it goes and joins another psychic being, fusing into it, combining with it in another physical body; that is an extreme case, extremely rare also, but which forms part of an altogether traditional occult knowledge), to the instance at the other extreme in which the soul having finished its corporal experience, wants to assimilate it in repose and prepare for another physical existence later, sometimes much later. And so this is what happens among many other possibilities: it leaves in each domain — in the subtle physical domain, in the vital, in the mental domain — the corresponding beings; it leaves them with a sort of link between them, but each one keeps its independent existence, and it itself goes into the zone, the reality, the world of the psychic proper, and enters into a beatific rest for assimilation, until it has assimilated (*laughing*) as described in this paper, all its good works, digested all its good works, and is ready to begin a new experience. And then, if its work has been done well and the parts of its being or its sheaths which it has left in their different domains have managed as they should there, when it descends again, it will put on one after another all these parts which lived with it in a past life, and with this wealth of knowledge and experience it will prepare to enter a new body. .. This will be perhaps after hundreds or thousands of years, for in those domains all that is organised is no longer necessarily subject to that decomposition we here call “death”. As soon as a vital being is fully harmonised, it becomes immortal. What dissolves and breaks it up are all the disorders within it and all the tendencies towards destruction and decomposition; but if it is fully harmonised and organised and, so to say divinised, it becomes immortal. It is the same thing for the mind. And even in the subtle physical, beings which are fully developed and have been impregnated with spiritual forces do not necessarily dissolve after death. They may continue to act or may take a beneficial rest in certain elements of Nature like water — generally it is in some liquid, in water or the sap of trees — or it may be as described there (*laughing*) in the clouds. But they may also remain active and continue to act on the more material elements of physical nature.

I have given you here a certain number of examples; I tell you I could talk to

you for hours and there would always be new examples to give! But this covers the subject a little in general and opens the door to imagination.

*Voilà.*

OCTOBER 31, 1956

*Mother, someone has asked me to request you to explain one of your sentences. You have said somewhere that one must become divine before one can bear the pressure of Divine Love. It is in the "Diary".*

Oh! you are repeating it a little freely!

Well, what does he want to know?

*He is asking whether man must become divine first before Love can spread over the earth.*

I don't think it is that that's meant. Surely what you mean is that Divine Love cannot manifest until man becomes divine? Is that what you mean?

*That is what we understand.*

Oh! that's how you understand it!... But I don't think it is this that is meant.

First of all, we are going to take the historical fact, if that is there. That is to say, through the action of the forces of separation, Consciousness became inconscience and matter was created such as it is, on a basis of inconscience so total that no contact whatever seemed possible between the Origin and what was created. And it is this total inconscience that made a direct descent necessary, without passing through the intermediary regions, a direct descent of the Divine Consciousness in its form of Love. And it is this descent of Divine Love into matter, penetrating it and adding a new element to its composition, which has made possible the ascent, slow for us, but an uninterrupted ascent, from inconscience to consciousness and from darkness to light. Hence, one cannot say that Love can manifest only when the creation becomes divine, for it is *on the contrary* because of its manifestation that it is possible for creation to become divine once again.

What I said there has nothing to do with this.

I was speaking not of the world in general but of the human consciousness in particular; and certainly. I was alluding to the fact that this divine Love which animates all things, penetrates all, upbears all and leads all towards progress and an ascent to the Divine, is not felt, not perceived by the human consciousness, and that even the little of it the human being perceives he finds difficult to bear; not only to hold it, but be able to bear it, I could say, for its power in its purity, its intensity in its purity, are of too strong a kind to be endured by human nature. It is only when it is diluted,

deformed, attenuated and darkened so to say, that it becomes acceptable to human nature. It is only when it moves away from its true nature and essential quality that man admits it, and even (*smiling*) approves of it and glorifies it. That means that it must be already quite warped in order to be accepted by the human consciousness. And to admit it, bear it and receive it in its plenitude and purity, the human consciousness must become divine.

It was this I meant, not anything else. I was stating that a human being, unless he raises himself to the divine heights, is incapable of receiving, appreciating and knowing what Divine Love is. Love must cease being divine to be accepted by man.

But that is a phenomenon of the outer, superficial consciousness; that does not prevent Love under its form of Grace from being at work everywhere and always, and from doing its work in an unknown but constant way, to put it thus; and I think, in fact, that it never works so well as when it is not known...for even the so-called human understanding is already a deformation.

That then is the meaning of the sentence, and nothing else. I was not speaking of a cosmic phenomenon.

*Mother, you said, on one of these Wednesdays: "The experience begins for you only when you can describe it; well, when you are able to describe it, the best part of its intensity and capacity for acting for the inner and outer transformation has already evaporated."*

("Answer" of October 17, 1956)

And so...?

*So what should be done with the experience? If there is an experience without the power to express it, what happens?*

There too, what I meant was that the experience precedes and transcends by far the formulation you give it in your mind. The experience comes before, often long before the capacity to formulate it. The experience has a fullness, a force, a power for direct action on the nature, an immediate, instantaneous power. Let us take as an example that in certain given circumstances or by an exceptional grace you are suddenly put in contact with a supramental light, power or consciousness. It is like an abrupt opening in your closed carapace, like a rent in that opaque envelope which separates you from the Truth, and the contact is established. Immediately this force, this consciousness, this light acts, even upon your physical cells; it acts in the mind, acts in the vital, in the body, changes the vibrations, organises the substance and begins its work of transformation. You are under the impact of this sudden contact and action; for you it is a sort of indescribable, inexpressible state which takes hold of you and of which you haven't any clear, precise, definite idea, it is... "something that happens". It may give you the impression of being wonderful or tremendous, but for you this is inexpressible

and incomprehensible. That is the experience in its essence and its true power.

Gradually, as the action is prolonged and the outer being begins to assimilate this action, there awakens a capacity of observation, first in the mental consciousness, and a sort of objectivisation occurs: something in the mind looks on, observes and translates in its own way. It is this which you call understanding, and it is this which gives you the impression (*smiling*) that you have an experience. But that is already a considerable diminution in comparison with the experience itself, it is a transcription for the use of your mental, vital and physical dimension, that is, something that is shrunken, hardened — and gives you at the same time the impression that it is growing clear; that is to say, it has become as limited as your understanding.

That is a phenomenon which always occurs and even in the best cases. I am not speaking of those instances in which this power of experience is absorbed by the unconsciousness of your being and translated by a more and more unconscious movement; I am speaking of the case in which your mind is clear, your aspiration clear, and where you have already advanced quite considerably on the path. . And even when your mind begins to be transformed, when it is accustomed to receive this Light, can be penetrated by it, is sufficiently receptive to absorb it, the moment it wants to translate in a way understandable by the human consciousness (I don't mean the ordinary consciousness but even the enlightened human consciousness), the moment it wants to formulate, state exactly, make things understandable, it reduces, diminishes, limits — it attenuates, weakens, blurs the experience, granting that it remains pure enough not to falsify it. For if, anywhere in the being, in the mind or the vital, there is some insincerity which is tolerated, well, then the experience is falsified and deformed completely. But I am speaking of the best instances, where the being is sincere, under control, and where it functions most favourably: the formulation in words understandable by the human mind is *necessarily*, perforce, a restriction, a diminution of the power of action of the experience. When you can tell yourself clearly and consciously: "This and that and that other thing happened", when you can describe the phenomenon comprehensibly, it has already lost its power of action, its intensity, its truth and force. But that does not mean that the intensity, the power of action and force were not there — they were there, and probably, in the best cases the maximum effect of the experience is produced before you begin to give it a comprehensible form.

I am speaking here of the best instances. I am not speaking of the innumerable cases of those who begin to have an experience and whose mind becomes curious, wakes up and says: "Oh! what is happening?" Then everything vanishes. Or maybe one catches a deformed tail of something which has lost all its force and all its reality.... The first thing to do is to teach your mind *not to stir*: "Above all don't move! Above all don't move, let the thing develop fully without wanting to know what is happening; don't be an idiot, keep quiet, be still, and wait. Your turn will come too soon always, never too late." It should be possible to live an experience for hours and for days together without feeling the need to formulate it to oneself. When one

does that, one gets the full benefit out of it. Then it works, it churns the nature, it transforms the cells — it begins its real work of transformation. But as soon as you begin to look and to understand and formulate, it is already something that belongs to the past.

*Voilà.*

---

## TWO POEMS

### ACROSS...

ACROSS a vast and forlorn waste, where spirit sleeps  
 And light is banished, or like a distant mirage creeps  
 Into the memory of barren mind, a stranger from the realms of  
 plenitude,

I pace vague steps, mechanical and crude,  
 And yearn to flow again in seas of shining deeps.  
 Though reason offers cause for this demise, that rapture's absence  
 Can be bought with metaphors of mud;  
 And all the toil of mind, of flesh and blood  
 Cannot undo the spell of Truth, who only will consent  
 To come, though craven, where He may stay, unsullied, resident.  
 And yet this wretched vessel, host to visitations from the dark  
 Retains, unflickering, a still, pure flame  
 That waits upon its moment, then to spark  
 Into eruptions of the sun. And though this being now may dress  
 Its flame with garb of grey and emptiness,  
 Or lose its way upon the paths of night,  
 Yet things will change; the patient courier of the Holy Name  
 His business done in bleak and trackless regions of the game,  
 This clay will transport by a life of light  
 To earth-seized heavens of imperishable delight.

### MATRIMANDIR (THE SHIP OF LIGHT)

Oh, Earth body  
 When your dream-real flame shall freeze  
 A million-voiced laughter  
 Shall shatter space from the ship of light,  
 Once-struggling hearts will sing as one  
 "I live! I live!"

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1973)

(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. Mamilal, Dr. Becharlal, Puram, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo, 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.)

JUNE 28, 1940

P: Russia's occupation of Bessarabia seems to be with the connivance of Hitler and the proper time also must have been fixed before.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably.

N: But the question is. Will Russia stop here?

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

N: In that case Hitler will have to look on, thinking he can deal with her later on.

SRI AUROBINDO: He can't afford to quarrel with Russia at present when he is fighting England and he may try to acquire Africa also, unless of course Italy jumps in in a rage.

P: Yes, then Hitler will be dragged in. Russia comes too near to Italy now.

N: Isn't Russia a danger to Turkey?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course.

N: Some Englishman wrote in the *Indian Express*, that a Russian invasion of India is a bogey.

S: That is an old article and all old views.

SRI AUROBINDO: What does he say?

S: He says that India has mechanised units, aeroplanes and good defences. What mechanised units have we got? Perhaps we have acquired a few more aeroplanes now. Russia, he says, will refrain from conquering Turkey, Afganistan and Persia.

SRI AUROBINDO. What are Turkey and Persia to Russia?

N: And, he speaks of natural defences.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Natural defence! Natural defence is no defence nowadays. One can't sit comfortably behind natural defence in modern warfare.

S: He says even Napoleon couldn't take up some adventures.

SRI AUROBINDO. Napoleon existed long before the advent of Science.

S: Even Finland with her strong army and equipment stood only a few days.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, with her very strong artificial defence of the Mannerheim Line she couldn't hold on.

N: My impression is that when Hitler gets involved with Britain, Stalin may march towards India.

SRI AUROBINDO: Before that, he will have to take Asia Minor and then Hitler also will get nervous.

P: Daladier seems to have been arrested in Casablanca.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why in Casablanca? They are not giving sufficient news. They say some French Admirals have arrived in London but don't give the names.

N: The American Republican Party in its manifesto accuses Roosevelt of ineffective defence preparation during his term.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a political stunt; he has almost doubled the defence.

S: What has happened to the public declaration of the Pondicherry Governor?

SRI AUROBINDO: He hasn't brought it out yet. It seems he went to see the British Consul who told him, "Don't fear, your successor will never arrive here, I can assure you."

N: How will a successor come to Indo-china, either?

S: He may come in disguise.

SRI AUROBINDO: As an American? But it will be too humiliating.

S: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: Syria will resist. They have about one and a half million troops there along with the British.

N: In North Africa, there are about 50,000, it appears.

SRI AUROBINDO: 50,000? Can't be. Even Italy has 90,000. How can they hold out against Italy with that number and at the same time have to provide to put down any insurgence of the native people, that is always likely?

P: No, no. It must be at least half a million.

#### EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: So Bonvain has declared himself! And Pavitra has to take up mobilisation under the order of the Foreign Minister!

P & S: Who is the Foreign Minister?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what I ask also.

P: It can't be the Minister of the Pétain Government —

SRI AUROBINDO: No, Bonvain has allied himself with the British.

S: But he has repudiated the French Government.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, but it comes to that.

N: Pavitra can be sent anywhere now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, wherever he is called. But after training which will require eight months.

S: They must have an army to protect Pondicherry also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course.

P: After training, the troops will be sent to Saigon, they say.

SRI AUROBINDO: Added to this 50,000 they can raise another 50,000 in Africa, and the same from the Senegalese, and about one million from the Arabs. The difficulty will be about equipment. It is as with India. India has manpower but that is all. Mittelhauser said to America that what is required are aeroplanes and other machines.

N: It was half a million, not 50,000 troops in Africa.

SRI AUROBINDO: I was wondering how it could be 50,000 for such a vast country (*Looking at S*): Haven't you seen in today's map what a vast colony it is?

S: Yes, compared to it France looks very small.

SRI AUROBINDO. This news about Daladier's arrest is from Gibraltar. It must be the Gibraltar gossip.

S: Otherwise I don't understand why he should be arrested in Casablanca.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so.

P: We may soon hear that he has reached London.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, like Blum. The only important man who has reached London is Blum.

S: Where is Reynaud?

N: Could he have been arrested?

SRI AUROBINDO: No

S: America is becoming queer. Ford has refused to build aeroplanes for the British. He will work only for the U S A

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: But they can sell from these to England.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, new machines can't be sold according to their law unless they declare war.

P: This Republican Candidate Wilkie is an anti-isolationist; he favours all help to the Allies

SRI AUROBINDO: Isolationists are all those who don't want to go to war. The rest want to help with their ammunition and arms.

B: Rumania doesn't seem to have gained by her Axis sympathy and declaration.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, this king is a fool. He sways from this side to that

N: Hitler has rewarded him by sacrificing him.

SRI AUROBINDO: He will sacrifice anybody

P: He can't afford war with Russia now.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, that will be too much for him. He has started his game in England

P: The Radio news is that Chamberlain and his party wanted peace with Hitler but this has been strongly denied

SRI AUROBINDO: It must be German propaganda. Chamberlain can't open his umbrella now.



N: As soon as he declared his Axis policy, Stalin jumped on him.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so.

N: The other neutrals — Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia — are repeating the same policy — closely watching the situation.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Yes, watching to see whose turn comes next!

N: And Turkey also, getting nervous, sent her fleet into the Black sea.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is nothing. Unless she wants Dobruja where there are plenty of Turks.

P: Hungary wants Transylvania?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Bulgaria wants Dobruja and Yugoslavia — while Italy wants to swallow Yugoslavia.

N: How is Turkey going to gain by alliance with Russia?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know.

N: Unless she fears an attack by Russia.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. But they have always been friendly. Russia helped to build Turkey after the last war.

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

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## BELOVED SELF

BLOSSOMS of union  
 Thus found  
 Upon thy presence met  
 (As if consciousness were flowers)  
 Bloom as the gift thy natural presence gives  
 Reflected in my own nature's mirror.

Neither mine nor thine  
 Yet born of blessed both.  
 Each actionless, being sure  
 That "I" is other than manipulating force,  
 Can neither change nor claim  
 Blossoms of peace, joy, satisfaction:  
 Blessings of meeting.

LORETTA

# THE PHILOSOPHY AND YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

## AN APPRECIATION IN TERMS OF CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING

IN this brief paper, we wish to make an attempt to consider a few essential elements of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga in terms of contemporary understanding, rather than in terms of their affiliation to the concepts and values of the Indian tradition in general. Not that this tradition and modernity are totally distinct, for history ensures continuity and nowhere is this continuity so powerfully present as in the work of Sri Aurobindo. In fact, tradition is so carried forward and further enriched by contemporary experience as to present a view of the whole in the perspective of historicity. What then are these elements that we wish to consider?

1. Sri Aurobindo takes all experience to be real — inner or outer. He has a sort of innate feeling that nothing that forms part of the totality of human experience can be unreal. The role of philosophy is, firstly, to seek an enlargement of the limits of experience and, subsequently, to interpret this wealth of experience in terms of appropriate identification, right characterisation and complex inter-relationship. Thus philosophy has a strictly experiential basis. No doubt, before the validity of an experience can be accepted, there has to be a firm ground of discrimination, scrutiny, control. But given these exigencies of method, all experience must be taken to be real and considered worthy of philosophical interpretation and meaning. In respect of this essential attitude of Sri Aurobindo, says an Indian philosopher who has been a disciple of long standing: "he has a sort of innate sentiment that all experience must be real. Nothing that is experienced, that is a fact of experience, can be unreal. The essential problem is to identify the quality and the degree of reality present in the experience, and to relate it correctly to other experiences."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to observe here that in respect of the contemporary scene in the Western world, the noted French philosopher, M. Jean Wahl, says that it is essentially characterised by a seeking for "an enlargement of the field of experience, an expansion of our mode of knowing."<sup>2</sup>

2. Given this basic attitude, Sri Aurobindo assigns no limit to his investigation, which is marked by a perpetual reaching out for new ranges of experience. These ranges succeed one another in a *qualitative* progression in terms of totality and integration and the highest of these is termed, by him, the Supermind. Thus experience is distinctly multi-dimensional. But this differentiation does not imply an absolute plurality: it reveals itself only as the concrete content of an organic totality. This totality is, for Sri Aurobindo, the primary fact, the differentiation is the secondary but necessary fact of experience. The various levels of differentiation correspond to an

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Indra Sen in preface to *The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, Meerut by R M Sharma, pp IX-X

<sup>2</sup> Jean Wahl, *Vers le Concret*, Paris

ascending scale of values — from that of discrete plurality to that of progressive unity, culminating in total integration. These levels of experience correspond to the realms of matter, life, mind and supermind. Between the last two, there exists a whole hierarchy of intermediate domains delineated as the higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind and overmind. The inter-action of these different levels with one another within the framework of the organic totality and their relationship to the whole have been presented by Sri Aurobindo with luminous insight.

3. It would be useful to remark here upon Sri Aurobindo's methodological concern in the interpretation of this experience. He formulates it succinctly in these words: "Our means of knowing must be appropriate to that which has to be known."<sup>1</sup> Thus he visualises a whole ascending range of faculties of knowledge that correspond to the different levels of reality that are sought to be interpreted. These extend from sense-perception and reason to an integral intuition, which can seize the whole in a single unified perception. This possibility of integration of our means of knowing in a supreme faculty of cognition, which can know the totality as well as the differentiation present within it, is foundational to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. It is interesting to note that the very faculties of cognition are considered in the perspective of possible growth. Our present status is not a final term: it is only an intermediate stage.

4. This brings us to a point of great importance. How to characterise this organic totality to which we referred earlier? Sri Aurobindo affirms, and this is central to his philosophy, that it is an evolving fact.

The various levels of experience are linked together by means of an ascending order of evolution — from the realm of matter to life, from that of life to mind, from mind to spirit. But how does this ascension proceed, what is the exact nature of its process? This ascension from one level to another takes place by means of a triple action of the force of consciousness — that of widening, heightening and integration. Thus each level is taken up into the next higher one, and there assimilated and transformed. Evolution is consequently an integrative process. It implies, in fact, a two-fold movement: the first being an inverse process of involution by means of which each successive level of experience gets involved in the antecedent one and is present therein as potentiality. The evolution of each term out of the precedent one remains otherwise inexplicable.

5. On the subject of evolution, Sri Aurobindo evinces a very characteristic initial attitude. He feels a profound attraction for the dimension of the prospective in evolution, for the infinitely richer possibilities of the future that await man, the newer and vaster ranges of experience that can become accessible to him. This exploration of the prospective, of the ranges of experience that lie ahead, their characterisation, the means of reaching out to them and actualising them — this latter is an important point and we shall return to it further on — this is what Sri Aurobindo essentially seeks to

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, New York, 1949, p. 293.

do. Since this is the real burden of his total thought and experience, we shall consider it at some length.

Firstly, how does Sri Aurobindo characterise this dimension of the prospective? He does so in terms of *qualitatively* newer levels of experience — each successive level possessing a progressively greater integration of knowing, feeling and willing. The mental level of experience, which is our present possession, is characterised by an essential division in the personality and its functioning, even though there is present at this level a very definite and persistent seeking for wholeness. But this seeking for wholeness arrives at a slow fruition only in the ranges of experience beyond that of the mental level, which Sri Aurobindo discerns in the dimension of the prospective. It is this *qualitative* change in the level of experience towards which all evolution tends: a change which points to the possibility for man of arriving at a state of whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power.

6. It is interesting to observe here that this pre-occupation with the future, a future which is not so much a temporal category but is symbolic of a further evolutionary reach of newer and higher levels of experience that can be attained, is the dominant characteristic of contemporary thought, however variously it may be formulated or in however incipient a manner. This ascendancy of the future over the human spirit, a kind of a polarisation of attention on this particular dimension, a reaching out towards the 'not-yet-there', the urge to actualise it — these seem to be, philosophically the most powerful attitudes prevalent today. And of all philosophers, no one seems to embody them as does Sri Aurobindo. These find expression not only in the creation of a complex and consistent system of thought but, what is more pertinent, is the fact that he also elaborates a distinct psychological discipline that can help man to actualise this range of future possibility. In fact, this emphasis on the 'practical', the word being given its widest significance, or to use a richer Indian equivalent, 'realisation' in fact of experience and qualitative growth of consciousness, is the most attractive and uplifting aspect of Sri Aurobindo's entire philosophy. To know is the first indispensable necessity but thus to know that knowledge remains not merely conceptual but is embodied in the totality of the being as a fact of concrete experience. This truth is firmly embedded in the Indian tradition generally and it finds, in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, a very powerful formulation in terms of contemporary understanding. It is interesting to note that the schools of existentialist thought in the West lay a similar emphasis on the primacy of the 'practical', but the term is given a different connotation.

7. It is interesting to observe here that Prof. Julian Huxley, among Western philosophers, feels specially drawn to, what we might call, the 'practical' dimension of the problem. He states that once it is recognised that the attainment of a new *quality* of consciousness is the true and final goal of man, we would need to create "a science of human possibilities" to help us work out the long process of psycho-sociological evolution that lies ahead. The expression "a science of human possibilities" is most intriguing! Sri Aurobindo feels for this a very special attraction and elaborates

in this connection a psychological discipline of growth and evolution of the individual, which he terms "Integral yoga". This is a fresh creation but which offers, at the same time, a synthesis of the essential elements of the traditional disciplines of yoga. It has a very special relevance for the contemporary consciousness — in the matter of terminology, methodology and philosophical basis of the entire discipline. This is largely due to the fact that the "Integral Yoga" rests within the framework of a philosophy of evolution. For Sri Aurobindo affirms that the evolution of the individual can be pursued only by remaining faithful to the processes that evolutionary nature has herself pursued in her movement upward. The two are co-terminous one with the other. The difference between them being that the latter takes place subconsciously, whereas the former can proceed in a conscious and deliberated manner, thus greatly accelerating the course of the movement. These processes of evolutionary nature, i.e., the triple action which leads to the growth of consciousness — that of widening, heightening and integration — are systematised into a psychological discipline of individual self-development. It is interesting to remark upon the relevance of this discipline to the essential content of Huxley's expression "a science of human possibilities".

8. In fact, the feeling that a deliberate and methodised effort should be made towards self-enrichment and self-exceeding has become steadily more pervasive. For, with the appearance of man in the course of evolution, the product of the process becomes the agent of the process: the active participation of the individual in carrying the movement further becomes essential. On this point, there is a wide consensus of opinion amongst contemporary philosophers but the question of real importance remains to be put: *how* is this participation to be effected? A mere statement made on the subject is hardly adequate: a way must be found to make this possible. Here Sri Aurobindo alone provides the answer: an answer that is being passionately sought by modern man. This incorporation, within the framework of a philosophy of evolution, of a psychological discipline that aims at the growth and evolution of the individual is one of the very special features of his approach to the subject as a whole. Its implications are far-reaching.

9. There is a final point we would like to refer to.

This synthesis of the theoretical and the practical standpoints — philosophy and yoga, metaphysical statement of the problem and practical method which aims at the resolution of the problem — is, for the contemporary consciousness, the most fascinating aspect of Sri Aurobindo's entire work. Merely 'to know' has proved inadequate, as is clearly borne out by the present period of cultural upheaval and crisis through which we are passing. There is now an imperative need 'to become' that which we know: knowledge must need become a fact of concrete experience. Philosophy and a corresponding psychological discipline, that can actualise the truths of the former in concrete experience, are the twin necessities for modern man. This two-fold expression of the philosophical urge has been a persistent feature of the Indian tradition in general. It finds, at the hands of Sri Aurobindo, a fresh and powerful formulation in

terms of contemporary perspective and aspiration. Tradition and modernity come together in a perspective of wholeness.

To bring our short paper to a conclusion, we would like to state that what Sri Aurobindo essentially communicates to us is a rare optimism about the future destiny of man — a future towards which man tends, knowingly or unknowingly. He offers us also the possibility of doing so in full awareness of both the process and the goal and of making of this movement forward a fully conscious endeavour. This optimism does not call for merely a facile acceptance but requires a kind of a spiritual heroism, that gives us the courage to feel out for the future that is to be and to make an attempt to actualise it. Sri Aurobindo's is a veritable philosophy of the prospective: the prospective in the process of actualisation. It is both philosophy and yoga.

ASTER PATEL

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS

A SET of mental notions and a cloud  
 Up from the small heart's unregeneracy,  
 With generous wash of raw humility  
 Across his peering eyes to do him proud,  
 O heavens, how he postures in your name,  
 And bullies me doing his Father's work!  
 Oh, how he sanctifies his every quirk,  
 And with tight lips apportioned praise and blame!  
 Or is he now so far out of the time  
 He stiffens quite, all moribund-sublime  
 Embalmed in creed and musty moral bands?  
 Then possibly the way is clear and ready  
 For spiritual advance, calm strong and steady  
 To purification and true high demands.

JESSE ROARKE

## SRI AUROBINDO — THE LITERARY CRITIC

SRI Aurobindo was not a literary critic in the professional sense of the term. Nor in any other ordinary sense, for that matter. But never did he cease criticising literature, or interpreting life itself, during his years on the earth. He was essentially a poet. If the greatest of his poetry was “supramental”, the greatest of his criticism was, creative as well as cerebral. It was not only an exercise of the intellect, but an expression of the “over-mind”. His criticism, no less than his poetry, bore the transforming touch of his Yoga.

In one’s response to the criticism or poetry of Sri Aurobindo, two or three factors press forward for one’s attention. One is that he was a classical scholar steeped in the literary heritage of Greece and Rome. English was virtually his mother-tongue and few could be more thorough in their acquaintance with the master-minds of the language, like Shakespeare and Marlowe, Milton and Dryden, Blake and Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley and Browning and Meredith. Besides, he had a good knowledge of French, German, Italian and Spanish among the modern European languages. Though coming late to the Indian languages, of which he learned Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Hindi, besides Sanskrit, he was steeped in the Indian tradition. He was anxious that no one in this country should lose sight of Indian values in life and literature.

As Professor of English at the Baroda College, he must necessarily have had to indulge in literary criticism of some kind. But that was at a different level, though Sri Aurobindo was incapable of doing the smallest thing, without a sense of complete involvement in it. Nor is he known to have left anything, be it of the spoken or the written word, which does not bear a trace of his depth of thought and integrity of imagination, intellectual and emotional. The more mature of his essays in criticism were provoked by the books of others, or written in reply to the request of literary-minded seekers at the Ashram, or recorded as an illustration of his own method of study and translation of the Indian classics.

That his intellectual range was of the widest and his approach global in comprehension is readily admitted by those who study him, whether they agree with him or not. He has also well-defined views on the world’s masters of literature, including a comparative estimate of their worth. He chooses eleven of the world’s great poets for the first class (in his letters on *Poetry and Literature* as mentioned by Mr. K.D. Sethna). Of these, he places four in the very first row on an equal basis of essential excellence: Valmiki, Vyasa, Homer and Shakespeare. The six who come in the second row are: Dante, Kalidasa, Aescholus, Sophocles, Virgil and Milton, more or less in that order of merit. Goethe alone stands in the third row, in a sort of isolated grandeur. The French Racine, the Spanish Cervantes, and a few others might form a supplementary list for the third and last row!

Valmiki represents for him, the supreme poet and seer — the *Vates* of the Greeks. All the poets of the topmost class have the elemental creativity as of a demiurge. They

might differ from one another in some particular aspect of their art but not in the force of their creative element. Vyasa might be the more intellectual in his approach, more masculine in his style, more austere in his art, more philosophical in his characterisation than Valmiki, but no less creative and, on that account, no less a poet. By the same token, Homer might have more of the Bard in him and the playwright might be more prominent in Shakespeare, but they are both poets of the highest class, all the same, in the alchemy of their imagination.

In comparing Shakespeare and Kalidasa, Sri Aurobindo does not fall a prey to the dictates of national chauvinism, as many Indian patriots tend to do, in judging of matters, cultural and literary. He finds Kalidasa perfect in form, polished in language, but as for the themes of his creation more limited in his range. He agrees, by implication, that Shakespeare is a "myriad-minded" poet. The latter's variety of characterisation was indeed unparalleled. Sri Aurobindo does not quote the actual words of his idol, Bankim, in support of his argument in this context. It is, however, worth recalling that Bankim compared Kalidasa to a pretty, formal garden neat and well-trimmed, Shakespeare to a huge forest — vast, unwieldy, all-inclusive; the one to a beautiful and placid lake, the other to the mighty ocean, deep, surging and unruly. Sri Aurobindo finds both of them natural and convincing in depicting the paternal rather than the maternal instinct in the love of children. No Kausalyas here — only Kanvas and King Lear. He admires Kalidasa's prose and Shakespeare's blank verse to an equal degree, finding parallels in verbal euphony and felicity of expression. He makes no secret of his feeling about whose psyche is the more dynamic.

Nor does Sri Aurobindo let any one go away with the notion that he is merely indulging his personal whim or making value judgments in his classification of the world poets. He has good reasons of his own for it, which are sustainable at the level of reason, with argument and illustration. Not only does he distinguish between the various levels of poetic creativity but between different poetic styles, which might sometimes occur in one and the same poet. The first is the "adequate" style, which just manages to cover the immediate impact of a thing in a language proper to it. The second is the "effective" or "dynamic" style, which responds to the subject in a more complex, vibrant manner. It is illustrated in the lines from the well-known soliloquy of Hamlet:

To die, to sleep;  
To sleep; perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause.....

The third is the "illumined" style, which has a richer imagination, bringing out the lights and shadows not obvious in the situation but brought out from an "in-look" at its psychology. The fourth is described as an "inspired" style in a special sense,



with an “intone” as well as an “in-look”. It is exemplified in the subtle and poignant lines from *Macbeth*:

..... . . . . . Duncan is in his grave;  
After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well .....

The fifth and the last style, which is the finest, is, according to Sri Aurobindo, marked by “an absolute, intensely inspired inevitability”. Examples of this are drawn from Homer, Virgil, Wordsworth and Keats. The most familiar of them (as quoted by Mr. K.D. Sethna) are from Keats (*The Grecian Urn*):

Magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn,

and from Shakespeare (*Macbeth*):

Still it cried. ‘Sleep no more’ to all the house:  
“Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!”

The criteria of literary criticism adopted by Sri Aurobindo were well-defined and his artistic models were from the highest level of human achievement. But he was eclectic in his taste, within limits. His approach was far from being rigid. It was, in fact, surprisingly flexible, willing to consider anything of real poetic value from Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, AE and Yeats to Arjuna, Harin Chatto and the more poetic among his own disciples. He would welcome sonnets and Alexandrines and heroic couplets as also blank verse and free verse or any other form, provided there was true merit in the writing. He was not against the use of the colloquial and the slang, provided it served a poetic purpose, and not resorted to merely for a modish effect. It would be too fastidious on the part of any one to find fault with him for his sympathy and understanding towards the efforts of some Indian disciples who tried their hand at English verse.

On the subject of Indians writing in English, in general, which has never been quite free from controversy, Sri Aurobindo took a point of view that would appeal to reason and common sense. Writing in 1943, in reply to a friend, he said something refreshingly free from dogma and jingo:

“It is not true in all cases that one can’t write first class things in a learned language. Both in French and English, people to whom the language was not native have done remarkable work, although that is rare. What about Jawarharlal’s autobiography? Many English critics think it, first class in its own kink,... If first class excludes everything inferior to Shakespeare and Milton, that is another matter. I think, as time goes on, people will become more and more polyglot and these mental barriers will disappear.”

Earlier he made an observation, the undeniable truth of which is not realised in the myopia of snobbery, made worse by the dustfilm of prejudice. "Many Indians," he said, "write better English than many educated Englishmen." Truer now than ever before!

Himself having done his writing almost entirely in English, Sri Aurobindo never had occasion to feel self-conscious about it. He felt at home in this medium as he felt at home in this country. He envisaged a vital role for English as a medium of creative expression, at a certain level, by Indians. He was both pragmatic and precise in the manner in which he outlined it:

"If our aim is not success and personal fame but to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and experience of all kinds in poetry, the English tongue is the most widespread and is capable of profound turns of mystic expression which make it admirably fitted for the purpose, if it could be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying."

There was no reason why the experiment should not be made by Indians. There was every reason that they should do it. (There were indeed some results that they alone could achieve.) Sri Aurobindo puts forward at least four reasons for it:

"1. The expressions of spirituality in the English tongue is needed and no one can give the real stuff like Easterners and especially Indians;

"2. We are entering an age when the stiff barriers of insular and national mentality are breaking down (Hitler notwithstanding), the nations are being drawn into a common universality with whatever differences, and in the new age there is no reason why the English should not admit the expression of other minds than the English in their tongue;

"3. For ordinary minds it may be difficult to get over the barrier of a foreign tongue, but extraordinary minds, Conrad, etc., can do it.

"4. In this case, the experiment is to see whether what extraordinary minds can do cannot be done by Yoga."

In the case of Sri Aurobindo, it was both an extraordinary mind at work and the influence of Yoga in operation to illumine the dark corners of the unconscious and subconscious.

In his approach to the Indian tradition, it was lucky for us that Sri Aurobindo came with a literary background and intellectual training very different from that of the average oriental scholar. He was thereby spared the banalities of *Ramodanta* and the verbal mechanics of *Amarakosha*, not to speak of the grammatical arithmetic of *Kaumudi*, all of which are likely to deaden the finer sensibilities of a potential *Rasika*. It was, therefore, with a pleasant shock of recognition that the wealth of Vyasa, Valmiki and Kalidasa came to a scholar-poet whose sights were set on Homer, Dante and Shakespeare. It enabled him to tell the artificial from the artistic and separate the dazzling glitter of decadence from the subdued glow of cultural maturity. While he could see the merit of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti, for what it was, he could never go into raptures over the complex artifices of Magha, the elaborate

rhetorics of Bana Bhatta, or the breath-taking acrobatics of the lesser poets of Sanskrit. The distance from which he proceeded to the subject not only lent enchantment to the view but provided the correct perspective, denied to the conventional scholar of Sanskrit, who would take many things for granted.

On the true function of poetry too, the East-West encounter in the layers of his sensibility helped Sri Aurobindo to strike a balance between Oscar Wilde and Ananda-vardhana. Nobody could have been more impressed by the Beardsley-Pater theory of art for art's sake and influenced by the Indian theory of art for the soul's sake. In his thesis on *The Future Poetry*, he lays stress on the power of the spirit, when he says:

“A poet born direct from and full of the power of the spirit and therefore a largest and deepest self-expression of the soul and mind of the race is that for which we are seeking and of which the more profound tendencies of the creative mind seem to be in travail.”

Not a mere mechanical repetition of the traditional Indian theory but a creative restatement of the ancient ideal could be seen in his view:

“To embellish with beauty is only the most outward function of art and poetry, to make life more intimately beautiful and noble and great and full of meaning is its higher office, but its highest comes when the poet becomes the seer and reveals to man his eternal self and the godheads of its manifestation.”

In his grand conception of the poetry of the future, what Sri Aurobindo looked forward to was not a wholesale revival of the great tradition of the past, which was not possible, but “a re-creation” of it in altogether new terms:

“And whatever poetry may make its substance or its subject, this growth of the power of the spirit must necessarily bring into it a more intense and revealing speech, a more inward and subtle and penetrating rhythm, a greater stress of sight, a more vibrant and responsive sense, the eye that looks at all smallest and greatest things for the significances that have not yet been discovered and the secrets that are not on the surface. That will be the type of the new utterance and the boundless field of poetic discovery left for the inspiration of the humanity of the future.”

In the striving towards the achievement of the “overhead” level in poetry, Sri Aurobindo lays great store by the inspired rhythmic patterns of word music rather than the clever fluctuations of free verse. For all his preoccupation with the spiritual values of ancient India and the dynamics of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo has his own criteria of literary judgment in estimating the true worth of secular poetry. For example, he places the blank verse of a non-philosophical poet like Shakespeare higher than the free verse of Walt Whitman, whose thoughts remind one of the Upanishadic affirmations. The occasional flashes of spiritual insight that Shakespeare might reveal (in the speeches of Prospero and the soliloquies of Hamlet, for instance) are due to a shrewd understanding of human nature and the ways of Providence rather than an avowedly spiritual bent of mind. Without transmitting any obvious spiritual message, they are likely to attain, on the wings of rhythmic intensity, added to the intensity of word and vision, the overhead level, according to the acknowledged authority on

Sri Aurobindo's poetry, Mr. K.D.Sethna.

The Shakespearean leap of the intuitive word, in fashioning sight and sound, starting at the mundane level, is elevated and extended into a leap into the unknown in the Aurobindonian concept of future poetry. The one and only complete example of this is Sri Aurobindo's own epic poem *Savitri*, in which the role of Inspiration is outlined with such undreamt of effulgence:

In darkness core she dug out wells of light,  
On the undiscovered depths imposed a form,  
Lent a vibrant cry to the unuttered vasts,  
... ..  
Bore earthward fragments of revealing thought  
Hewn from the silence of the Ineffable.

Under the driving power of this Inspiration, we could only imagine what the poets, who are also seers, are capable of doing. But Sri Aurobindo sets out in breath-taking detail all the things revealed unto them in the flood of intuitive knowledge.

Hearing the subtle voice that clothes the heavens,  
Carrying the splendour that has lit the suns,  
They sang Infinity's names and deathless powers  
In metres that reflect the moving worlds,  
Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps,

The effect of poetry as *mantra* is clearly indicated here by Sri Aurobindo. The remarkable feature with him is that he represents in himself the example as well as the precept. He provides the *lakshya* as well as the *lakshana*. What Shakespeare is known to have achieved in secular terms, through his poetic rhythm and revelatory word, Sri Aurobindo set out to achieve in spiritual terms proper. From poetry as evocation to poetry as incantation — that is what we reach in him. It is a progress from the stage of normal poetic vision through that of the overmind to the supermind. As a critic, Sri Aurobindo provides a sharp commentary that combines the insights of the past, the self-questioning of the present and the vision of the future.

D. ANJANEYULU

(With acknowledgements to *Triveni*)

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# THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

## A SEARCH APROPOS OF R. C. ZAEHNER'S STUDY IN SRI AUROBINDO AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

(Continued from the issue of September, 1973)

6

### THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TEILHARD'S FAITH: THE TRUE NATURE OF HIS CHRISTIANITY—WHAT IS BASIC TEILHARDISM?—WHAT PLACE HAS HIS CHRISTIANITY IN IT?—TEILHARDISM AND THE MODERN RELIGIOUS INTUITION

(d)

In Émile Rideau's extremely informative book<sup>1</sup> we have found from his Teilhard-quotations that Teilhard's Christianity has no vital concern for any traditional dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church but concentrates solely on preserving "Christ on the scale of and at the head of creation".<sup>2</sup> According to Teilhard, such an exclusive regard is "the most essential aim and criterion of Christian orthodoxy"<sup>3</sup> and, "since St John and St Paul, the fundamental rule of theology"<sup>4</sup>. The divine power so figured is the Cosmic or Universal Christ and, naturally, his central function is related to the cosmos with whose space-time he is co-extensive and which he works to consummate. A new quotation taken from Rideau<sup>5</sup> shows Teilhard affirming this role in a personal confrontation with his Master: "All my joy and all my triumph, my very reason for existence and my zest for life depend upon this fundamental vision of your coming together with the universe" (*Le Cœur de la matière*, 1950)

But Teilhard's double-aspected Christology — Christ Cosmic and uniting the cosmos in himself — does not hang, so to speak, in the air of a merely religious orientation. It is intrinsically connected with the mind of the modern world. It is fundamental to his Christianity because he is an embodiment of that mind at every moment of his religious life. A progressive self-exceeding of man by a collective unanimity which will constitute a super-consciousness within a sort of super-organism: such is the direction of his modernist spiritual turn. Rideau<sup>6</sup> tells us: "Teilhard speaks of the 'novelty, the boldness and at the same time the paradoxical possibility in the attitude' that must be adopted by a man who 'in his quest for holiness has decided to allow the free interaction within himself of the upward impulse of faith in God and the forward impulse of faith in the ultra-human' (*Ibid.*, p. 25)."

<sup>1</sup> *Teilhard de Chardin A Guide to His Thought* (Collins, London, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 539.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 538    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 539.    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 615    <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 588

The same turn towards a synthesis of essential Christianity with the religious spirit implicit in the modern world-sense is discovered in even more pronounced a vein in another quotation Rideau<sup>1</sup> makes from Teilhard belonging to the same year, 1950: "Even now I am still experiencing the dangers to which a man is exposed who, by internal law and necessity, sees himself forced to leave the well-beaten track of a certain traditional askesis that is now insufficiently adapted to human requirements; he then has to try to find another road that will lead to heaven by which the entire dynamism of matter and flesh is channelled into a genesis of the spirit — and it must not be a mean between the two but a synthesis of them" (*Ibid*).

The synthesis demanded sets up the temper of scientific modernism as the test to which Christianity must submit. Another quotation by Rideau<sup>2</sup> runs: "As a result of the scientific discovery of the natural unity and immensity of the world, modern man can no longer accept God except as the extension of (could one say 'under the species' of?) some universal progress of attainment of maturity" (*L'incroyance moderne. Cause profonde et remède*, 1933, in *Science et Christ*, p. 151).

We may consider along with these exceedingly important words the following of Teilhard's as cited by Rideau.<sup>3</sup> "In future, faith in Christ will never hold its own or gain ground except through the medium of faith in the world" (Letter of 4 May 1931, in *Letters from a Traveller* p. 177).

Now, if Christianity has no future save as a Christianised faith in the world and if Christ himself has to be accepted "under the species" — that is to say, under the aspect — of evolution, as a cosmic divine "extension" of the ultra-human, two capital issues arise. (1) what is first and fundamental to Teilhard — faith in the world or faith in Christ? (2) Is the name "Christ" utterly indispensable to Teilhardism?

The answer to the second question would be implicit in the answer to the first. For, with faith in the world the basis of the Teilhardian religion, the name "Christ" comes in simply because Teilhard happened to be born a Christian: the choice of it is accidental and optional. What is needed is just an Incarnation to give an intimate humanised concreteness to the cosmic divinity. Teilhard's position emerges pretty plainly from some of Rideau's excerpts from his writings:

"I have come to see more clearly the only thing I believe and the only thing I want to be my gospel and my vocation, if I may put it so. The things in which I believe: there are not many of them. They are: first and fundamental the value of the world and secondly the indispensability of some Christ to give this world a consistency, a heart and a face" (Letter of 25 February, 1929).<sup>4</sup>

Mark the expressions: "secondly" and "some Christ". A world in process of evolution and calling for total adherence: that is the prime spiritual necessity. The Christian religion is only the next desideratum. And it is wanted because it supplies a God-Man. Not this religion especially but any that provides a God-Man will serve. A Christ of one kind or another is indispensable — not necessarily the Christ

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 308<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 602<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 649-50

we know of as Jesus of Nazareth. Such, logically, is the sense of the adjective "some" which the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*<sup>1</sup> defines as: "Particular but unknown or unspecified (person or thing)."

However, Teilhard, according to his lights, has no alternative and that is why he does not look beyond Jesus of Nazareth. This we learn when, after repeating in general the need of "some Christ" by saying, "We cannot dedicate ourselves to a 'faceless' world", he continues: "And it is because we have, historically speaking, no face to give it but that of Christ that I feel myself bound until the end .." (Letter of 15 July, 1929).<sup>2</sup>

Of course, we cannot deny that, in a full religious stand which would be valid for today, Christ was to Teilhard as necessary as world-value. Occasionally he appears as even more so — but here we must be careful not to mix up two questions.

Teilhard often spoke of the Ahead and the Above — on the one hand cosmic fulfilment at Omega Point and on the other the Omega already complete though experientially seeming to be in the making, in a process of formation which will be finished in the remote future. The already completed Omega is called by Teilhard the Above, the term meaning "transcendent": this Omega is fully existent for all time and does not depend on the attainment of the ultra-human in order to become a reality. Its transcendent reality that shall fulfil the collectivity of evolution's highest products so far — human persons — is distinguished by Teilhard<sup>3</sup> as not only "ultra-conscious" and "ultra-present" but also "ultra-personalised." What else than a Super-Person can be the supreme Centre of all personal centres? Teilhard's "phenomenology", taken to its furthest, culminates in the vision of the God Ahead as actually a Super-personal God Above, both loving and lovable. "This conclusion," Rideau<sup>4</sup> claims, "...is strikingly confirmed by an appeal to another source of information besides facts of the natural order" — namely, Christianity's supernatural mysteries — but he also explicitly tells us that Teilhard's conclusion is "arrived at solely in the light of an honest appraisal of the scientific evidence". No Christ as such is yet on the scene. The "Christian phenomenon" is still to be integrated into the "ultra-physics" treating of the "Phenomenon of Man." And it is at this furthest bounty of ultra-physics without Christianity that we get a statement like the one which Henri de Lubac, S.J.,<sup>4</sup> culls from Teilhard's *Comment concevoir*<sup>5</sup>. . . *l'unanimité humaine* (1950): "However effective may be man's faith in the Ultra-human, I do not think that its urge towards Some Thing ahead can succeed without being combined with another still more fundamental aspiration, one that comes down from on high, from *Somebody*." De Lubac does not particularly bother to keep this superpersonal Omega separate from Christ. He<sup>6</sup> speaks of Teilhard holding up before the world "the figure of Christ", "Centre of total convergence" and he talks of objects "intrinsically united at their term in Christ — Omega .." Teilhard does identify Omega and Christ, but not at

<sup>1</sup> Ed 1964, p 219, col 2    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 650    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 374, note 72    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 60

<sup>5</sup> *Teilhard de Chardin The Man and His Meaning* (A Mentor-Omega Book, The New American Library, New York, 1967), p 156    <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p 157

the juncture we have mentioned. So the "still more fundamental aspiration" is not outside but inside the phenomenology of ultra-physics and is part of the philosophy of World-value.

We may note that this philosophy, involving a loving and lovable Omega, whose secret presence enfolds us and attracts our adoration as well as endows the cosmos with solidarity and unity and evolves it as one whole towards ever more complex and conscious states of synthesis, has room for a "heart" in the universe no less than for a "consistency" (a holding-together) without the postulate of a Christ. Rideau has Teilhard clearly affirming this. Drawing upon Teilhard's own words, he<sup>1</sup> writes: "If, 'when all is said and done, all the forces of the world work together to bring about our fulfilment', then 'our terror of matter and of man is transformed, and reversed, to become peace and trust, and even *existential love ... and all this is so, because the world has a heart*'." Only a "face" is missing and Christ offers it. Indeed in the passage from the letter of 15 July 1929 it is just the face that Christ is credited with putting upon the divinity of the evolutionary World.

But the work of preventing this divinity from facelessness does not confer primacy on Christ in Teilhard's religion. Only as a push towards a sense of certainty in world-fulfilment at Omega Point does Teilhard consider Christ more fundamentally required. Yet Christ is thus rated because he serves the purpose of reinforcing for us the value of the world. If he did not do so he would be useless. Exclusively Christ the Evolver, Christ the Consummator of Cosmic evolution is the Christ worth having. As we saw in the preceding chapter, if our concept of Christ did not conform to the criterion of evolution it would be fit for summary dismissal and contemptuous disposal like a would-be scientific paper on perpetual motion or on squaring the circle.<sup>2</sup> Christianity independent of the scientific truth of evolution is a veritable absurdity to Teilhard: it has no *raison d'être* for him. So it is this scientific truth which, ultimately, is all in all. It needs to be enriched by a faith in the God-Man of Nazareth — it needs him if it is to become a total grip on our hearts and minds — yet it is the World that is the primary Value. If World-value were not there, nothing would be of any consequence: Christ would stand merely the Centre of a religion which would be, in Marx's phrase, "the opium of the people". Rideau<sup>3</sup> has here an apt extract from Teilhard: "Religion can become an opium. It is too often taken to be no more than an anodyne. *Its true function is to maintain and spur on the progress of life*" (*L'esprit de la terre*, 1923, in *L'énergie humaine*, p. 53.). Without belief in evolution no progress of life can be maintained and spurned on. We would be in a static universe with no natural pole of vital fulfilment, no Ultra-human awaiting our long travail. And even if Christianity brings us an assurance of success by its doctrine of the Mystical Body whose unity is assumed to be already there and by whose gathering together its members the cosmos will be unified in that unity — even if the Christian religion holds forth before us by its revelatory authority the final universal plenitude, does

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 60

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 650.



it actually set at rest the doubts arising when we witness all around us the innumerable signs of conflict and divergence instead of harmony and convergence? Teilhard's answer as cited in Rideau's book<sup>1</sup> is both Yes and No: "For a Christian... the eventual biological success of man on earth is not merely a probability but a certainty; since Christ (and in him virtually the world) is already rising. But this certainty, born as it is of a 'supernatural' act of faith, is of its nature of a higher order than the phenomenal: which means, in one sense, that it leaves all the anxieties attendant upon the human condition, on their own level, still alive in the heart of the believer" (*The Directions and Conditions of the Future*, 1948, in *The Future of Man*, p. 237).

Even if the "supernatural" act of faith could remove the anxieties of the phenomenal plane, it would not, for Teilhard, be of pre-eminent and paramount meaning. It would be something superadded: it could never be the basis of his life. The basis is a direct, independent conviction of the world as a Divine Movement. No special revelation is required to convince Teilhard on this score. Whether Christ historically happened or not, there would be a living All, claiming his religious adherence. And it is not always that he feels the scientifically inferred sense of an all-totalising future Omega to be deficient — an anticipation fragile and precarious in the absence of Christian faith. In an earlier section we have shown his irrepressible optimism. We may extract a few more "quotes" from Rideau's "Notes" to prove that the true Teilhard, for all his spells of hesitation, could have no final misgivings nor require a "supernatural" prop.

"Human molecules" may have dissensions on the surface, but Teilhard is sure that "under the rapidly mounting pressures forcing them upon one another the human molecules will ultimately succeed in finding their way through the critical barrier of mutual repulsion to enter the inner zone of attraction" (*The Human Rebound of Evolution*, 1947, in *The Future of Man*, p. 211).<sup>2</sup> Again: "No obstacle can prevent human energy — the expression of a force as irresistible and infallible as the universe itself — from freely attaining the natural term of its evolution (*L'énergie humaine*, 1937, in *L'énergie humaine*, p. 190).<sup>3</sup> Once again: "It would be easier at the stage of evolution we have reached to prevent the earth from revolving than to prevent mankind from becoming totalized" (*Directions and Conditions of the Future*, 1948, in *The Future of Man*, p. 229).<sup>4</sup>

Confronted with such confidence in an inwardly propelled world-development, we may justifiably argue that, apart from his desire for a "face" borrowed from a human-divine historical figure, there is no vacuum left to be filled by Christianity in the science-inspired philosophical religion of faith in the world, which is the basic religion of Teilhard. The desire for a God-Man's face is a legitimate one; but it never has for Teilhard an utter indispensability, nor is it ever given by him an outstanding place. And, if the secondary level of what he believes in is occupied by none other than Christ out of all historical figures, it is merely because he has no notion of any

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 559<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 368<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 369.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

other possible Avatar. Could he have visualised an alternative Incarnation, he might not have focused on Christ. When we consider the circumstances under which he made his choice, we cannot regard the choice as either basic or exclusive. And, even as things are, we may recall that the individual Jesus is, in the framework of Teilhard's vision, just the stepping-stone to the Cosmic Christ whom he saw taking shape from the Resurrection of Jesus — a stepping-stone he practically ignored in his worship once he had arrived at that universal divinity. Further, as the Cosmic Christ is but the Principle of Evolution apotheosised, the name "Christ" marks no more than a special enhanced stage of activity reached by a Universal Presence functioning under the appearance of an ascending cosmogenesis — a Presence that was there even before the birth of Jesus. Essentially this Presence, of whose all-embracing vastness the historical Jesus may be deemed a concentrated manifestation rather than the individual fount and origin, is the truth behind Teilhard's Christian stance.

The awareness of such a Presence causes what Rideau<sup>1</sup> takes to be Teilhard's overwhelming religious experience — "entrancement with the greatness of the universe".

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

## THE SHAPE OF THE MATRIMANDIR AT AUROVILLE

### An Authoritative Statement

There have been some misconceptions about the shape of the Matrimandir. It is necessary to set the matter right once and for all.

The Matrimandir is referred to in the Ashram and by the architect working on it as a "golden sphere", though it is not a perfect geometrical sphere. The shape is not, however, precisely like an egg, nor can it be described as a womb. To be exact, it is an *oblate spheroid*, a sphere flattened at the poles like the Earth, and as we refer to the earth in terms of a "sphere", though it is not a perfect sphere, so we refer to the Matrimandir.

K. D. Sethna

# THE GODDESS TWINS, KUMARI AND KORE

## A STUDY IN THE DURGA LEGEND AND RELATED MYTHS

*(Continued from the issue of September, 1973)*

### II

OUR mention of the virgin-born Kumaras brings to mind another myth, one intimately related to the Durga legend. We can say that Durga has a twin sister; she is called Persephone, or frequently Kore, which in Greek means *kumari* or *maiden*, the name also used for Durga.

In Greece, around the beginning of the 9th Manifestation, the practice of certain initiatory rites came into vogue, called the Mysteries, the principal ones being those of Eleusis. These rites were at the disposal of the whole Greek-speaking population. Each year thousands of people took part in them and acquired an insight by direct experience into that which could liberate them from the fear of the unknown, of death, — as well as the knowledge of the purpose of birth and the ultimate goal of creation. The Mysteries of Eleusis were based on the myth of Demeter — the Mother, as the name signifies — and her anguished search for her beloved daughter Persephone, or Kore. The neophytes began the rituals with a march from Athens around 16 or 18 September each year, the approximate time of the celebration of Durga, and, in the same manner as the Durga celebration, the Initiation continued for 9 nights, the last of which brought a vision and living experience of the Daughter, the secret of which no knowledge has ever been revealed nor preserved. Though thousands upon thousands of people were initiated into the Mysteries, not one has completely broken the vow of secrecy taken prior to the Initiation, and therefore today we can only vaguely speak of what occurred on that night.

I shall not go into the details of the whole initiation, these can be found in books; I want only to point out the relation between these Mysteries and the Durga Puja, which serves to show us the universality of the truth now manifesting, for as the Durga legend today takes shape in creation, so does the myth of Demeter and her daughter. In the Durga story we find the precise astrological signs revealed in which the Incarnations take place, the myth is a sort of cosmic design of collective universal scope; whereas in the Eleusinian Mysteries we have the individual participation, a more human representation of the drama, something closer to us and known on a far more intimate level, relating to the soul's journey and the divinisation of the races of Earth. The Demeter myth is perhaps one of the most poignant stories ever passed on; it is somewhat similar to the Osiris-Isis myth, in fact it is said to be the Greek version of that story.

Briefly here is the tale. We find Kore in the meadows of Elysium, gathering flowers and playing with other heavenly maidens, when the Earth opens and Pluto (Hades), the God of the Underworld, comes forth in his golden chariot, abducts her and carries her off to make her the queen of his realm. Demeter realises her daughter

has disappeared but does not know what has happened nor where she is to be found, and so she begins searching for her. She roams the entire land, finding no sign of her whereabouts. Finally Demeter is told that Persephone has been abducted by Pluto. She is so distressed that in her agony she disguises herself as an old woman, covering her divine radiance and goddess form and wanders about the Earth, refusing to remain in the company of the other Gods. A long and distraught period of mourning for her beloved Kore begins.

At last she comes to Eleusis and there, after certain events, is taken to the palace of Meteneira and is employed as nurse to the Queen's newly-born son. Disguised as she is, she carries out her duties, bringing up the child in a most splendid manner; he begins to radiate a divine immortality. The Queen, curious to know what the nurse is doing to her child to produce such results, spies on her one evening and finds Demeter placing the boy over the fires of the hearth, nourishing him on these flames in the manner of the Gods. Meteneira is shocked at seeing this and Demeter, on realising she has been discovered, becomes enraged, casts the child down and reveals herself as the Divine Mother. Seeing this and overwhelmed by her splendour, the whole household gives itself over to the Goddess and she commands that a temple be built in her honour, the Meteroion, or "Temple of the Mother". From that moment on, she goes into even deeper mourning for her lost Persephone and withdraws her grace from the Earth: famine, drought, etc., become the lot of mankind and civilisation is threatened with extinction. This is symbolised by the grain, as in many myths, man's essential food, and that is why the Goddess is linked with grain and harvest. The Gods plead with her to undo her work and restore the Earth's balance and harmony to save mankind, but she refuses to do so until Zeus, the chief of the Gods, restores her daughter to her, for she knows that Pluto abducted Persephone with Zeus' consent.

The Gods go to Zeus and plead the Earth's case, and finally he agrees to give Demeter her Persephone in order that civilisation may continue. He sends Hermes (Mercury, the messenger of the Gods) to Pluto and the latter then releases Kore. But before leaving the realm of Hades she is given by Pluto the seeds of a pomegranate to eat, and is therefore obliged to return to the underworld for a third of the year, being permitted to remain united with her Mother for the remaining two thirds. The meeting of the two Goddesses is a glorious occasion for the Earth and Demeter allows the crops to grow once again, the flowers to bloom and the fruits to be born of the trees. And all the mortals who worship the Goddesses are assured of everlasting abundance, grace and salvation. It is the union of the two that saves the world.<sup>1</sup>

The key to deciphering the mystery of the Ages came through a name of three Greek letters. Slowly I was made to discover why it was given in Greek and what

<sup>1</sup> At this point we may show the direct relation between the two myths, Indian and Greek. I quote from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* "According to Hindu mythology Durga, or Uma, is the daughter of King Himalaya. She was married, against the will of Her parents, to Shiva, who roams in the cremation ground in the company of ghosts, smearing His body with ashes and living on alms. According

the connection was to the Demeter-Persephone myth. In Greek and Hebrew the letters of the alphabet are also the numbers; the vibration of the number was given its proper letter equivalent by inspired sages capable of touching the source of vibration. (In passing, it may be said here that for this reason the Cabbalistic system based on the Hebrew and Greek is the only valid method for deciphering names in an esoteric sense. The system evolving today in the West, based on the Roman alphabet, has no validity.)

The name referred to above is *Thea*, and the numbers it contains are 9, 5 and 1, those pertaining to the Ages of our Manifestation. The first letter, *theta* (rendered in English as *th*), was written in old Greek script as  $\Theta$ , the oldest symbol of the Sun, and in Greek, Hebrew and Cabbalistic tradition it is the number 9. *Thea* means *goddess* and strangely enough this is how Persephone is called, her actual name was often thought too sacred to be mentioned and thus initiates referred to her as *Thea*, in the form of a proper noun. In the plural form found in ancient texts and sculptures it traditionally indicated the "two Goddesses". None of the other Goddesses were so called; when *Thea* was spoken of, it was always Persephone who was meant, and the "two Goddesses" were always this pair of Mother and Daughter.

The understanding then came of the connection of this myth with Durga through the arrival in India on the Navami, the discovery of the two rituals being celebrated at the same time, the festivals lasting the same amount of days, thereby occurring under similar cosmic conditions, the Goddesses both being called "maiden"; but most important of all was that which Durga herself revealed directly. In the myth Durga can actually be considered to be both Mother and Daughter, because Persephone is a part of Demeter, her most beloved part without which she cannot bear to survive; this is one of the reasons why the tender image of mother and daughter is used. Demeter and Persephone are one, and in the rape by Pluto Demeter's most precious part, her soul, is taken to the underworld, — hence her frantic and desperate plight to regain it, to bring it back to its divine abode and rescue it from the clutches of the Lord of Darkness. Pluto's realm is none other than the kingdom of Matter. Thus it is said that the Earth opened up and the King of the Underworld emerged to bear the young Goddess to the bowels of the Earth, the darkness where no light of the sun enters. The hell that is spoken of in this myth is the only hell that exists, the dumb and unilluminated condition of Matter, the imprisonment and bondage of the divine spark. Thus the redemption that takes place by the efforts of Demeter, the Divine Mother, is that of the spark of herself which has "fallen" into the realm of darkness, or that has taken birth in a body and must be made to realise its true origin

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to the terms of the marriage, Durga was allowed to stay with Her parents three days each year. The Hindu women of Bengal look on Durga as their own daughter. On the first day of the Durga Puja they sing the Agamani to welcome the Divine Mother. The song is full of the tenderness and affection of a mother for her daughter who is returning home from her husband's house after a long time" (Page 456). The exactitude of the two myths is striking, in particular the character of Shiva which is very similar to Pluto, King of the Dead, and the Agamani captures the very same poignancy of the Demeter-Persephone drama.

and divinity. For mortals the saving grace is symbolised by the pomegranate seeds.

The Mother has told a tale of the Saviour's blood shed in the desert which turned into the pomegranate. Persephone, by eating these seeds, is obliged to return to the realm of dense matter or, better said, this divine spark is forever contained in the evolution of Earth. Each solar year the symbolic process is repeated, and then again in the great Cosmic Year. It is very interesting to note that Kore remains united with her Mother for the period lasting from Aries to Sagittarius, or end March to December, the portion of the celestial wheel which represents precisely the period of the soul's "fall" and struggle to awaken itself and realise its divine essence. By the time it has reached end December in its evolution, the work is accomplished and then it passes into the final quarter of the solar wheel, which signifies Sachchidananda. This final portion is, however, the very period Persephone passes in the realm of Pluto, considered the underworld! Therefore I find it very interesting that also in this myth we are made to see that the final and total realisation for the human soul is on Earth and refers to matter itself. Capricorn, an Earth sign, is the first sign of the portion of the year of Persephone's separation from Demeter, and this sign is co-ruled by Pluto, the planet that not only bears the name of the Greek God but also corresponds in its characteristics to all that the God represents. (Almost all schools of astrology still insist on the possible rulership of Pluto of either Aries or Scorpio, an impossibility.) The period that Persephone symbolically passes with him is the portion of our present Manifestation, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces. In the myth she is called "Queen of the Dead", but it must be remembered that these are initiatic terms and for the Initiate and those versed in cosmic symbolism and harmonies, "dead" means the condition of mortals in whom the soul has not been awakened: the living dead. It is she who offers them the possibility of redemption. Therefore the Greeks had a very special feast in her honour, the Epiphany of January 5th, or the Divine Manifestation when Kore appeared and gave birth to Aeon (the Age). More will be said of this further on.

With the rise of Christianity much of this understanding was lost, since the Christians wanted the Underworld to be synonymous with their Hell, something unrelated to Earthly existence and referring to an after-life. I am not speaking here of the deeper symbolism of Christ's teachings.

This brings us to the matter of Christian festivals. The birthday of Christ was placed on the birthday of *Sol Invictus* of Mithraism. This was done supposedly because Mithraism was a potent rival of early Christianity and thus the Christians absorbed devotees of Mithras in this fashion. I have explained in other articles why this date was chosen, the traditional and cosmological reasons for the Saviour's birth on the December solstice. The actual birth of Jesus in all probability did not correspond at all to this date and the whole of his life seems to me to be a story devised to fit into and transmit an esoteric teaching of the times.<sup>1</sup> By this I do not mean that Christ was

<sup>1</sup> The following experience of Vivekananda might be of interest to the reader. He was on board a ship returning to India when he had this dream. "An old man appeared to him, 'Observe carefully this place', he said, 'it is the land where Christianity began. I am one of the therapeutic Essenes, who lived

anything less than what is claimed, but only that his life is in great part more important to us today in its symbolic content and its hidden significance, which only a small group on Earth are fully able to comprehend. A most important fact in the symbol is the constant emphasis on the Master's return to complete his mission.

Apart from the birth of Christ on Sol Invictus, there is a further festival adopted by the Christians, the Epiphany, or Divine Appearance. As previously mentioned, the Greeks had a great celebration on January 5th, the night Kore gave birth to the Age. It is she, the soul-daughter of Demeter, from whom the new cosmic year emanates. This period corresponds to her return to the realm of Pluto, the realm of the dead, and yet it is the time of the Divine Manifestation and the new aeon. She, the virgin-maiden, gives birth to a God, in the same manner as the virgin mother of Jesus.

My purpose in bringing forth these bits of information regarding the meaning of myths and the facts of early stages of some religions is only to show their inter-relatedness and how each one wants to transmit the very same message and therefore makes use of almost identical stories, and in most cases uses the same dates, because these were taken from the true calendar and time-piece, the cosmic or celestial sphere. This may often have occurred therefore without any actual contact between the civilisations; often the same incarnations were shown to have taken place, as can be found in the Mayan and Aztec traditions of Central America in the myth of Quetzalcoatl, whom I call the Krishna of the Americas, his appearance coinciding with Krishna's and being a perfect representation of the 8th Manifestation. The Mayans also made use of the zodiacal wheel and possessed the most accurate calendar known to man, thereby revealing the most advanced astronomical knowledge. Their entire society was structured in accordance with cosmic harmonies through this knowledge, like every other great civilisation; it is only now, in modern times, that we are unable to find any country or community structured according to divine law, a true theocratic society. Material power is the sole determining factor and imposes its limited field of guidance on the peoples of the world.

The Christian fathers who first went to Central America were not very sympathetic toward the "pagans" they found there, and failed to understand their profound mythology. In part this was justifiable, because at the time they reached the Americas the civilisation there was in evident decadence. The Aztecs retained, nonetheless, the knowledge of certain cosmic harmonies and through their calendar were able to predict with astonishing accuracy the arrival of the white man, and their own downfall. Fortunately some twenty years before, they had carved the great Calendar Stone, a massive piece of exquisite sculpture which the Spaniards could not destroy so easily; in order to hide it the white men buried the piece and thus preserved it for less bigo-

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there. The truths and the idea preached by us were presented as the teaching of Jesus. But Jesus the person was never born. Various proofs attesting this fact will be brought to the light when this place is dug up.' At this moment (it was midnight) Vivekananda awoke, and asked a sailor where he was he was told that the ship was fifty miles off the isle of Crete. Until that day he had never doubted the historical fact of Jesus" (From. *Prophets of the New India*, page 312, by Romain Rolland)

ted future ages. (On another occasion we may go into the details of this civilisation at greater length.)<sup>1</sup>

The hierophants of Eleusis predicted the end of the Mystery rites in a like manner, to take place in the specific year of a certain invasion, which then occurred in 396 AD, — significant numbers; we find Eleusis to be constructed precisely on the 36th latitude.

Thus in viewing the Durga Puja, though the outward ritual is of no importance to us; let us realise that this festival corresponds to certain cosmic conditions which repeat themselves every year and, because it corresponds to a greater harmony, we find the same rites and the same figures revered in other civilisations, other continents, other countries. The condition of the world today, the advancement in technology and science, the enormous facility in research and communication, make it possible for us to see clearly this unity, which should thereby assist us in letting the barriers fall that separate us from our fellowman, understanding that he too, no matter how opposed is his outward condition and superficial conditioning, works toward the same end and is a tool in the hands of the one Universal Mother, to the same degree and in equal measure as every other element in the totality of her creation.

Throughout the Ages the knowledge of the Earth's divinisation, the reality of the Satya Yuga or the Golden Age, has been preserved. The means by which man can fulfil this prophecy is given to him in certain myths and rituals. This does not mean that he must enact the rituals and through the enactment arrive at the goal, but rather that by the masses continuing to perform these rites the knowledge has been passed on. It is for man to go individually deeper than mere mechanic repetition. The myths are maintained so that certain elements who have the capacity may understand the hidden meaning, realise it and lead the entirety of evolution to the accomplishment of the goal. During Egyptian times the knowledge was preserved in the Osiris-Isis legend, for the Greeks and to our present times in the West it is the Demeter-Persephone Mysteries, and in India in our Age, it is the legend of Durga.

*(Concluded)*

29 July, 1973

PATRIZIA NORELLI-BACHELET

<sup>1</sup> Hernan Cortez came into Montezuma's court on 18 November, 1519, (9), and two years later, 1521, a year of 9 vibration, the latter's civilisation slowly fell at the hands of but a relatively small group of Spanish soldiers. The Aztecs were always aware of the prophecy in the scriptures of their wise men that Quetzalcoatl, their God, would return in that very year, thus they were completely resigned and accepted the Spaniards as such. The very appearance of the Spaniards was like their God, white-skinned, dark-haired, bearded, and seeing them on horses (something unknown to them) made the foreigners all the more godlike. It is evident that their civilisation could not last in America if evolution was to take its actual course, and it is strange that the return of their God appeared in the form of the very symbol of the 9th Manifestation, the Centaur. How un-godlike the Spaniards with their lust for gold must have proved to them. Certainly this caused a complete demoralisation in the Aztecs, facilitating the conquerors' task.



# LEGENDS FROM THE UPANISHADS (I)

## PARABLE OF CREATION

TIME was when there was Nought. There was no Universe, no Time, no Space. There was only the One, the Spirit. It was All.

This Spirit willed that it would create. Create out of what? Out of Himself, naturally, for there was nothing else outside the Spirit. So the Spirit created out of His own Being. And what did He create?

He first released into existence the Creative Waters, the flowings of His own Consciousness out of which all arises. These are the luminous Waters with their own worlds of Superconscience beyond the highest firmaments of our mind.

Next He emanated from his Being masses of Light, forming the vast Worlds of Knowledge with all Space for their self-extension. These are the worlds of Light overtopping the horizons of our mind.

Next again He put out of Himself the worlds of Form and, because of form of decay, these are the worlds that constitute our earth existence.

And last there followed another inundation of waters, but waters of a different type. These are the nether waters that conceal their content of consciousness beneath an exterior dark and obscure in keeping with the nature of their abode — the world of the subconscious below the earth, the region of concealment.

Thus were born the shining heavens, the spaces of the mind-worlds, the Earth and the nether regions.

When the worlds were created, He said to Himself: "Lo, these are the worlds. Now will I make me Guardians for my worlds". But the guardians can come to be only when they have a Guardian of their own. Therefore did the Spirit gather out of the Waters a Cosmic Being, Purusha, and endowed him with shape and substance. Bringing the Person into being, the Supreme brooded over him in creative stress till his various organs sprang into activity.

With the outbreak of life in the mouth there came forth Speech and from Speech was born Agni, Fire.

With the outbreak of life in the nostrils there came forth the Breath and from the Breath was born Vayu, Air.

With the outbreak of life in the eyes there came forth the Sight and from the Sight was born Aditya, Sun.

With the outbreak of life in the ears there came forth the Hearing and from the Hearing was born the Dik, Regions.

With the outbreak of life in the skin there came forth the Hairs and from the Hairs were born the Herbs and Plants.

With the outbreak of life in the Heart there came forth the Mind and from the Mind was born the Moon.

With the outbreak of life in the navel there came forth the lower Breath and from the lower Breath was born Death.

With the outbreak of life in the organ of pleasure was born the Seed and from the seed was born the waters.

Thus issued from the Cosmic Purusha the main elements, senses and functions — microcosmic and macrocosmic. Each of these was allotted to a God who became its Guardian. Thus did Agni, Aditya, Vayu, etc., emerge as functionaries with their respective spheres of action.

The Gods were released into the great ocean of Creative Waters. But how were they to act? They needed, each one, a base to stand upon. They could not very well function without a secure dwelling. They were overcome by a *lacuna* in their existence; Hunger and Thirst leapt upon them. Then they called to the Spirit: "Command unto us a habitation that we may dwell secure and eat of food." The Spirit responded and brought them one form after another. First He offered the cow but the Gods were not satisfied. Then He brought unto them the horse, but the Gods were still not happy. Neither Light alone (Cow) nor Power alone (Horse) would serve their purpose. Light without Power is impotent and Power without Light is blind.

Then the Supreme brought unto them a new being — Man — and the Gods were highly pleased. "Man indeed is well and beautifully made!" they exclaimed. Man indeed represented a fuller achievement, a befitting instrument or vehicle in whom the Gods could dwell and manifest. In man were both Light and Power in their seed and much else besides. Each God then entered into man through his various organs and actuated them. Fire as Speech entered into the mouth; Breath as Air into the nostrils; Sight as the Sun into the eyes; Hearing as the Regions into the ears; Hairs as the Herbs and Plants into the skin; Mind as the Moon into the heart; the lower Breath as Death into the navel and Seed as the Waters into the organ of pleasure. The Gods were born in man.

But the great need stayed, Hunger and Thirst lived on, only they were now shared by all the Gods equally. They would be satisfied by the Gods being satisfied, and God's satisfaction lay in man, for even while they fulfilled themselves in him by effectuating his life and movement, man in return was called upon to give back to the Gods, in some measure, the bounty conferred on him, by means of a consecration, a dedication, a sacrifice of what he was and had. Thus was initiated the great commerce between the Gods and man.

Next the Spirit brooded and from the ocean of Creative Waters brought forth Form. Verily form is food. Now who was to seize and absorb food? Which of the senses could do it? To which was food the object? Speech could not seize it, nor Breath, nor Sight, nor Ear, nor Hairs, nor Mind, nor organ of pleasure. To none of these was food the object; if it were so, man would be satisfied by merely speaking of food, or breathing it, or seeing or hearing or touching it or by thinking of it or emitting it. Only the lower Breath, Apana, was able to seize and absorb food. Thus food was the object of the Breath of Life and as breath is what sustains life, all living beings

came to depend on food for their existence.

The Worlds were created, the Gods were brought forth, their functions allotted, their habitation set up and their food provided. The Spirit then thought: "How should all this be without me"? Were they adequate? Could they be all in all? Then the Supreme decided and Himself entered into the human mansion and became the Soul, the effulgent Indweller.

Thus did the Soul come to be and the body became the tabernacle of the Lord. It is by the informing and the infusing Presence of the Supreme that the Gods perform their functions — the Speech speaks, Breath breathes, Sight sees, Hearing hears, the Mind thinks, in fact all moves.

KESHAVAMURTI

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## THE EARTHLY PARADISE

CAUGHT in coils of generation,  
Highways of the haunted moon,  
To ease the night's oppressive swoon:  
The shadow of the flawless sun;

Under an ugly rack that mars  
The charm of her reflected ray;  
Travellers lost upon the way,  
Alone among the tiny stars,

We make the Earthly Paradise,  
Lighting a feeble vital fire  
With wretched tinders of desire  
To warm life's hands of aching ice.

And in green fields of earth's ideal  
Dissolve into the lactate breast,  
Of Her who drew us forth from rest,  
Revolving on the turning wheel.

PETER HEEHS

**LOTUS FLAME**  
**OR**  
**SURYAMAN**

*(Continued from the issue of September 1973)*

All was the changeless in the Gods' mid-air  
Gods unconcerned in beauty's paradise  
Where birth and death had never meaning or sense —  
The kingdom of a grandeur imperishable,  
Unaware that the descending ray was their source,  
The parent-wave, the origin's fire unborn,  
The love-ruby ecstasies splendid and intense;  
These heavens large in a bright iridescent air  
Were mere echoings of that one lightning-ray,  
The mere pin-points in that eternity.  
Above them was the typical universe  
Of mind and thought of which they were the beats  
And which the earth-substance essayed to seize  
Futilely in a sombre yearning-need  
But falling back each time into its gulf  
Of ancient nothingness, the archaean sleep.  
Behind these hectic patterns and these deeds  
The soul of things, the mystic rainbow-stream  
Touched the exalted summit-realms, sheer, whole,  
To follow immune the curve of moonlight-drowse  
Behind the glory of the gods and the stars,  
Behind the waiting seed of thought and sense —  
A silver dream within an opal cave.  
Else where were all the thrilled kinetic dreams  
Dreamt by a dreamer lost in infinity's maze;  
Or waves rising from the primordial seas?  
Presences hovered unseen like a myriad moods  
Casting their lights upon the emerging worlds  
Or creators of the middle-air of bliss,  
Distant and strange, peopling the universe  
Some broke the occult barriers of hush,  
Released in wanton beauty's sunlight and fling,  
Sending out winds of creative laughs like tides.  
Some stood immense, moveless, a surveying masque,

Some thrilled to the far and lucid wonder surge  
 Born in the whiteness of the Imperishable.  
 Some thoughts winged by, like seeds or atom-sparks,  
 Seeking a home in the waste of increate void.  
 All were the shadow-scape of unrealised dawns,  
 A deity dead without the smile of God.  
 All were the moods, the shapes, the eyeless schemes,  
 The common hues, the joy without a fire,  
 A marvel-note that made all things divine,  
 Without the seed that changed the world to a sea  
 Of boundless raptures, bliss without a name.  
 Something behind was absent like a ray  
 Touching unseen the twilight-heart of the earth,  
 A presence with a mystic inarming beam.  
 Until that moment in eternity arose  
 Creation moved between the drunken poles  
 Of rapturous births and slow eventless deaths,  
 The striding alternate curves of dawn and dusk.  
 Till God awakes shattering his cosmic veil  
 His sacrifice shall be a tragic wave,  
 A debt that is written off in the books of Time,  
 The earth shall flounder like to a sinking craft,  
 Its rudder lost in the typhoonic whirl.  
 A point was there to which none found a key.  
 A marvel dot, the centre of the Unknown.  
 All seemed the strange experiments of a Power  
 Eyeless, and groping, the blizzard energy's roll  
 Following the unsure line of incessant change,  
 Nature slumbered below the apparent foam  
 As yet lost in the gleaming of its soul  
 Too vague ever to sense the bodiless seed  
 That woke the suns and loosed the cosmic floods,  
 An unthinking spark moved now the visionless stars;  
 An unmapped idea coursed through the sleeping space,  
 A vagrant in a universe of things.  
 All there was a substance intangible, unseized,  
 A force without a name, an orphaned light.

*(To be continued)*

## THE HARP AND THE CREATOR

To the generous and sunlit mind, one of the most attractive figures in our literature must certainly be Sidney Lanier. Through a life so difficult that one almost wonders how he could engage in scholarly and literary labors at all, in spirit he was indomitable, and with a sweet serenity he did persevere, to give us not only a modest shelf of fine prose and one of our best prosodical studies, but a handful of poems that will live, or deserve to live, as long as anything in English, that unparalleled poetical language. He extended the musical and rhythmical possibilities with the utterance of a deep soul, and that he died still young and when he was teeming with unwritten poems and just finding his true voice is a loss to our cultural heritage that we can only hope may somehow, in the fulness of time, be repaired.

His circumstances, in the Southern states of later nineteenth-century America after the so destructive war, made life, as he said, pretty much just not dying: and, his health having been broken in the war, the shadow of death was always upon him to give added piquancy, it may be said, to the scene. He accepted the situation and the prospect calmly. He worked feverishly (often literally in a fever), he wanted to do as much as possible, and yet he was ready to go at any time, with most left undone. He did not court death, he did not wish for it and was not in love with its supposed "easeful" and "soothing" character, but he saluted it in one of his poems, nobly and chivalrously: he would drink when it was proffered the stirrup-cup, and ride on the journey and the larger quest that had taken all the great creators of the world before him. He would drink it down "right smilingly," the mysterious cup of death that was given not without reason in God's world.

So, ready and prepared for death at any time, he worked persistently until it came, and many high and glorious rays fell, if obliquely, upon him. He was a rare nature-poet, seeing more than most and seeing it with inspiration, and feeling the divine unity of things. Like Emerson, like Wordsworth at times, he could all but merge himself in the entirety and there sing, without loss but rather with enhancement of his unique self. And his nature, his ambience, was not "naturalistic" — rather indeed an expression, a nature of the greater God. All this is most clearly and directly expressed in these lines from his longish poem, "A Florida Sunday":

All riches, goods and braveries never told  
Of earth, sun, air and heaven — now I hold  
Your being in my being; I am ye,  
And ye myself, yea, lastly, Thee,  
God, whom my roads all reach, howe'er thy run,  
My Father, Friend, Beloved, dear All-One,  
Thee in my soul, my soul in Thee, I feel,  
Self of my self. Lo, through my sense doth steal

Clear cognizance of all selves and qualities,...  
 Thou, Father, without logic, tellest me..  
 — How *All's in each, yet every one of all*  
*Maintains his Self complete and several.*

It was not full *identity* in difference that he rose to, but it was union, and close relationship, more than the “natural” as apprehended by sensation and the logical mind.

Personality, the flowering and the power of the individual personal nature, became increasingly important to him, in such an environment and faced with such problems as he was “Conformity” was the order of the day, and having much of a strong personality, a distinct individual nature, was an embarrassment to the dim lights of serious and sober living. This, Lanier would not accept. He desiderated the expansion and full growth of personality in individual uniqueness, seeing that without it there could not be a true society of healthy, cultured men. Indeed *culture* is the cultivation of the individual nature, it is nothing *en masse*; and though Lanier admired Whitman’s power he could not accept his “wisdom”, that went apace with his lack of artistry. He wanted the poet himself to be a work of art, disciplined and raised, cultivated and rounded so that he could “wholly live his minstrelsy;” and to do this one must of course be an artist — like Milton — and not a sprawler — like so many one might name. He should sing God’s songs with discipline, and not lounge complacently in his own darkneses. Lanier was not Romantic in a fitful and wayward sense; to him inspiration implied greater personal stringency and control, and he rejected peremptorily and without patience the image of the poet as an aeolian harp, that gives out, as the wind shall come upon it, wholly passively a vagary and perhaps a medley of tones. Here in his poem “The Cloud” he states clearly his position:

*What the cloud doeth,  
 The Lord knoweth,  
 The cloud knoweth not.  
 What the artist doeth,  
 The Lord knoweth;  
 Knoweth the artist not?*

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. Well answered! O dear artists, ye  
 — Whether in forms of curve or hue  
 Or tone, your gospels be —  
 Say wrong, *This work is not of me,*  
*But God:* it is not true, it is not true.

Awful is Art, because 'tis free.  
 The artist trembles o'er his plan,  
     Where men his Self must see.  
 Who made a song or picture, he  
 Did it, and not another, God nor man.

My Lord is large, my Lord is strong:  
 Giving, He gave: my me is mine.  
     How poor, how strange, how wrong,  
 To dream He wrote the little song  
 I made to Him with love's unforced design! .

He is not irresponsible, like the cloud, only an instrument: he co-operates, and offers his work and himself back to God. He is not insensible and is not swallowed up, but enjoys an intimate personal relationship in many aspects, and lives a life of service, exaltation, glory and love.

There is no doubt a strong admixture of the ego-nature in Lanier's vision and protest. But given time he could have outgrown that, and he was on the right path. An artist who tries to be wholly passive will end like Jones Very, in being no artist at all. Lanier missed the beauty and grandeur of the clouds, in this instance, by too narrow and humanly personal an apprehension; and if his eyes had been sufficiently opened he might have seen that those portentous appearances in the heavens also give service, and not insentiently, and that even their destructiveness of rain and lightning is also from God. He might have been able fully to embrace the destruction of life in the larger creation. But certainly he was right, that to make oneself the passive instrument of every breeze and influence is not the way of art or of wisdom. It is rather the way of tamasic inertia, and dissolution. The greatest artists that we have had, and even the greatest yogin among artists, Sri Aurobindo, consciously worked in disciplined co-operation with the inspiring breath and gave something of their own, some personal expression of light, and contribution to the divine Lila, the play of existence. An artist is a divine instrument but not solely that: he is himself a particular expression of divinity, a facet and a focus, with his own nature to fulfill; and transcendence in the Impersonal, so far from swallowing him like a drop of water in the sea, can only make him larger and richer, here as he proceeds on the endless way of his and the world's unfolding.

JESSE ROARKE

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## THE GREAT ON THE GREAT

BERNARD Shaw wrote: "With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Sir Walter Scott, whom I can despise so entirely as I despise Shakespeare when I measure my mind against his."

Then there is Goethe who is reported to have told an Italian that he thought the *Inferno* of Dante abominable, the *Purgatorio* dubious and the *Paradiso* tiresome. Landor thought that perhaps one-seventieth part of Dante was good, but that the *Inferno* was "the most impious and immoral work that ever was written".

Landor also told Crabbe Robinson that most of Homer was trash. Bentham thought it was worse. And in our own day, after translating the *Odyssey* Lawrence of Arabia decided that it was a poor poem after all — "Bother the *Odyssey* and all manufactured writing! Only the necessary, the inevitable, the high-pressure stuff is worth having" — "The *Odyssey* is a creeping work".

Wordsworth thought Goethe an immoral and artificial writer. Coleridge agreed and he held him far inferior to Schiller; de Quincey foretold the decline of his reputation to its just level; Landor put him below Madame de Genlis!

Wordsworth said Byron's poetry was "not English"; Byron thought Wordsworth "the blind monarch of the one-eyed". De Quincey accused Keats of trampling on the English language "with the hoofs of a buffalo".

Shelley considered Michaelangelo lacking in "moral dignity" and felt the paintings in the Sistine Chapel to be "deficient in majesty".

Blake wrote of Titian, Rubens, Correggio and Rembrandt: "If all the Princes in Europe like Louis XIV and Charles I were to patronize such blockheads, I, William Blake, a mental Prince, should decollate and hang their souls as guilty of mental high treason".

Malherbe regarded Ronsard's style as not even French. Chapelain pronounced that he lacked art; de Fontaine that he was harsh and without taste; Arnaud that his poetry was pitiable; Voltaire that he was unreadable; Marmontel that the Graces took to their heels at the sight of him. Even the Romantic Michelet called him a deaf maniac.

Robert Bridges could see nothing in the poetry of Hardy; and Lionel Johnson accused Francis Thompson of doing "more to defile the English language than the worst American newspapers".

(Adapted from F. L. Lucas)

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# SEVEN LIVES

## A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

*(Continued from the issue of September, 1973)*

### CHAPTER V

#### PART 5

MORE years passed in the struggle until Hiranyamaya reached a point where he found that his nature had entrenched itself and refused to recoil further before the lion, while the lion too had ceased to advance and expand his influence. Instead a sadness had begun to invade the beautiful creature's heart, tears seemed at any moment about to spill from his dark, translucent eyes, and a misty cloak of sorrow hung about his body so that its outlines no longer seemed distinct. In the quandary of this situation, an overpowering despair descended upon Hiranyamaya and the tears that he saw lingering unwept in his divine guest's eyes he poured forth from his own. Alone in his cell, bent before the statue during his afternoon meditation, he felt his pain fall in warm drops onto his knees and hands. Never before had he known such agony and he abandoned himself to it unreservedly. At that moment he sensed something near him and, opening his eyes, he saw through a mirage of tears that his guru had come to sit beside him.

"So we have come back to the same place," Shukratma said softly. Bewildered, Hiranyamaya continued to look at the older man, his flow of tears staunched by his curiosity. His guru spoke on: "Yes, my child. It was for this moment that we have had to re-traverse the once-travelled path, remember and relive what has already passed before. The first time also the Divine One came to you and the white lion, custodian of the supreme's wisdom, passed from his being to yours. Then too you struggled as you have struggled and are struggling now to make yourself fit to house your third and greatest boon. But at this instant the fateful slip occurred and you were compelled to plant the seeds of your own undoing. Look well into yourself now and see the flaw."

Hiranyamaya immediately closed his eyes and a scene appeared before his inner vision. He found himself standing at the head of a great stair that descended into some infinitely deep and lightless chasm. He knew he had just climbed from its depths, for the slime from its rock-hewn steps was still rank and sticky upon the soles of his feet. Before him lay a beautiful limpid landscape that swept in the three remaining directions to an encircling chain of blue mountains. An ancient river wound in wide loops through the verdant plain, and dark clusters of vegetation offered relief from the balmy warmth of a noon-time sun. Yet in all the fresh beauty of the scene Hiranyamaya could find no living creature. Puzzled, he looked back. The cries of men called to him from the lower reaches of the stair. He could even discern the barking

of dogs, the lowing of cattle and the twitter of caged birds he had seen some people carrying whom he had passed during his ascent. Arguments came to him as distinctly as though the disputants were standing by his shoulder, as also the pleadings of lovers in agony — for the realms of Hades were not hospitable to such — the urgent outpourings of ministers in the councils of kings, and the simple banter of peasants as they bent over their wooden plows. But the landscape before him was empty until a great keening roar came to him from a distant cave in the mountains — the suppliant cry of a great beast mourning an absent companion. The sound seemed to electrify the denizens of the abyss. For an instant all the voices fell silent. Then amidst the furious onrush of a whirlwind, a black form with a vast black cloak came hurtling up the stair in a chariot drawn by four ink-black horses and skidded to a halt before Hiranyamaya.

“Go to the white lion of your doom and be banished from life and all its sparkling, many-hued world, or return with me,” the Dark One pronounced in the same earnest and chilling voice with which he had first addressed Silent Daughter. “Remember only that no worship of any god can save you from me, your true overlord, and even your ascetic and god-bent practices you do at my indulgence. Your new pet that cries to you from afar — even him will I allow you, but only as a passing fancy. Visit him from time to time, and I shall transport you to and from him in my own chariot. But to turn from me altogether — that you cannot do, mortal one. The roots of your being are buried too deeply in my soil. Come now and leave this childish wavering. The gods you worship know nothing of a mortal’s lot and maliciously try to intervene where they have neither authority nor dominion.”

At that moment, Hiranyamaya suddenly realized what had happened the first time. His memory leapt instantaneously forward and he recalled that upon these words he had hesitated. With that slightest of delays, he had given his adversary the time to throw a portion of the black cloak over his head and eyes. At its touch some poisonous magic had rushed into his veins and compelled him to say — “Take me, then, and return me to the world of men.” The black form had then snatched him up while a violent pain, like that of some unspeakable betrayal, had cloven Hiranyamaya’s heart in two — ah, what pain! Was there any eternity long enough to erase the agony of that remorse? And all had gone lightless before the eyes of his being, even his memory flickering out like a suffocated candle.

But now a fourth boon was tangibly being delivered into his hands. He was being given a chance to relive and correct the mistake, and this time he did not hesitate. A reflex nurtured through long and careful training drove him to leap back as the Dark One’s cloak began to rise above his head. At the same instant the lion emitted another beckoning roar, and Hiranyamaya suddenly felt a surging fountain of white energy rush through all his limbs. With the speed of a deer he dashed away across the plain — invulnerable, for it belonged to no mortal sphere — while crying out to the black form standing helplessly at the stairhead: “Return alone, cursed spectre. The next time I descend your stair, I shall do so with heaven’s lion by my side!”

He was even able to laugh as he ran for a great joy and lightness buoyed up his being and every burden had fallen from him like sacks of stones from the back of an overladen pack horse. On he fled over the smooth, still grass of the plain, under the clumps of dark cool trees and over a natural bridge in the sparkling river formed by a high-swelling sand-bank, until he was within sight of the great rocks that lay at the foot of the mountains. Now a cool breeze wafted down upon him from the heights and he felt as though the goddess of the snows herself had breathed upon his cheeks.

He would have run on to the point from which he remembered the roar had come had he not looked up to the crest of a gargantuan boulder and seen the marvellous beast standing there waiting for him. But as he approached their mutual impatience was too great and the majestic white form flowed down from its lookout in ripples of muscular leonine power to leap forward and meet the eagerly running figure.

At last as though after some bitter separation, Hiranyamaya was able to fling himself upon his friend, and bury himself in his soft, copious mane, while with an infinite paternal tenderness the lion placed a massive forepaw over the man's shoulder, for he by far surpassed any mortal lion in size, standing over his human ward as a stag over a fawn.

Then followed inseparable hours for the two, or perhaps even days or weeks — Hiranyamaya could not tell for he had lost all count of time. All he knew was that when he returned to external consciousness from his vision, he would sooner have parted from his own soul than from the god-gifted splendour of his white lion. Upon opening his eyes, he found himself alone in the evening dark, yet all pain had flown from him and a wide security of peace embraced him from every side. No conflict could touch him now for no split allegiance clove his being, and all the demons that haunt mortal men seemed to have scuttled as far from him as the deepest pits of the nether worlds would allow.

Emerging from his cell, he found Shukratma seated in the gallery. Immediately the old sage looked up. "Twelve days I have waited here for you, my son," he said. "But now I am filled with gladness for I see that you are at last free and the error has passed from you as a cloud from the face of the moon. This stage of your journey, then, is almost done, but take all the time, even the years, you need to consolidate your gain. You are no longer bound to pursue this memory to its end, for you have already surpassed it with your soul's will and re-decision, but there is also no need for undue haste."

"Beloved Guruji, the indulgence of some years yet I beg from you. I pray that I may be allowed to wait until that day when I shall feel the fusion of my boons into my being to be so perfect that not even the darkest of countenances will be able to sunder them from me. I wish to feel above all that I can descend the rocky stair to the lower worlds with my love, my joy, and my lion of divine wisdom within and about me, driving the darkness before them, keeping the serpents of falsehood from my heart and shielding my soul from the poisoned touch of death."

“Remain, my child, remain, and practice your lessons well. Walk for a century if need be with your royal leonine guest, and feel the essence of him spread outward from you like an expanding sea. Let it flow beyond the most distant ranges. Allow it to percolate still further into the lands of men with its enormous, invisible touch. For the wisdom the lion brings is no gurgling rivulet but an ocean of infinity. And the manner of its spreading is no headlong movement but the stately tread of a sublime and majestic monarch. Go then about your work and take no heed of time.”

Hiranyamaya had reached the age of eighty when he at last felt sure of his life's lesson. The lion now sat within his being like a white and timeless rock that commanded all the earth about it by its eminence and quietly magical, all-encompassing emanation. No breath of air in his inner world moved that did not have the essence of the divine boon within it; no thought stirred that did not have wisdom's purity for its base, and no human pride dared enter the sacred circle where the godly beast held sway.

The end occurred as simply as the beginning had sixty-eight years earlier. It was daybreak when Hiranyamaya went to his guru and stated, “Master, at last I feel within myself that the work is complete.”

“Then we shall return forthwith, my son. Silent Daughter has waited for this moment long enough — but first we have a farewell to make.” The venerable rishi, who had visibly aged barely fifteen years in three quarters of a century, beckoned, and led the way into Hiranyamaya's cell. As he came to the bas-relief once again illumined by the rising sun, he went on, “In this place and in this form the Divine One came to you. And indeed you are destined to see him so again. But in the meantime he shall remain here embodied in this stone till these mountains crumble and he takes the image back into his own bosom.”

Then with one spontaneous motion the two knelt before the statue and touched their heads to its feet, while in one passionate rush of feeling tears flooded into the aging Hiranyamaya's eyes and he sobbed like a boy with his face against the stone. His whole life's work, its pain, its ecstatic joys, and its labour poured out in his tears as his offering to the One he had striven and been taught to serve through all his long and disciplined existence in the hermit valley. As he cried a great and golden peace enwrapped him for all the world as though the arms of the statue had taken life and embraced him. At the same time he found himself transported into a dreamlike, floating state in which his head through which his torrent of tears had rushed, had miraculously melted, the tears too had dispersed in drifting droplets, and all physical consciousness of cell and mountain and rock had disappeared. Instead, he found himself being buoyed upward into some immaterial stratosphere. He now felt all sense of age falling away from him and a strange, unaccustomed rapture fill all his being. It was then that he felt the touch — the touch of a luminous hand upon his forehead and he awoke as though from some indescribable, trance-like dream.

Opening his eyes, he found he was half-lying on the floor of yet another cave with

his head in Silent Daughter's lap. Her left hand rested lightly on his brow, while her right remained on his shoulder where it had stayed for his sixty-eight years of earth life. A few steps away from them, Shukratma sat on his seat facing the cave opening as he had been sitting when Silent Daughter and her son had first seen him. Then the one who had been Hiranyamaya knew for a certainty that he had returned full circle, to the peerless mountain world where his guru had his immortal abode.

"This time, with your constant vigilance, he has truly done well, dear friend," Silent Daughter was saying to the rishi.

"Yes. This time there was an urgency to the task we had missed in the blithe lives of our youth when it seemed there was an eternity to mend each error and omission, and repeat each unsure choice. Then, even in our disciplines, there had been the sense that the Divine would be lenient with us and our aberrations of immaturity. But in the re-living, we grew old and cautious in our single-mindedness. The sense came as it had never come before that if our feet slipped on the cliff-face the driver of the black chariot would be waiting for us beneath. The sole method of finding the bright way was not to slip on the cliff and not to heed the black taunts that came to us from the bottom of it. And your child has not slipped, Silent One. He returns to you with the prize of his three divine boons intact, and he is ready for the next stage of his journey."

"Ah, Shukratma — beloved counsellor and guide — I shall choose now that life and time in my child's memory when he shall have cause to use every gift he has acquired. It is a life little remembered save by the grasses of the field or the rocks of an aged promontory, or perhaps recorded but obscurely in a few unused books of an earth library. But it is the life of a legend that lives in the Divine One's heart as it does in my own and in my child's, and we will re-live it as a consecration to love, joy, and wisdom, and to a reality more poignant than any overtly known to men."

"I hail the legend of which you speak, dear friend. Throughout its enactment my presence shall not leave you."

"Divine Rishi, send us on our way with your blessings then, while I bow to you in gratitude for the favour of your white presence. Indeed I had feared that our child could scarcely bear to part with you, but now he can leave knowing that no parting is necessary. May your touch continue to rest upon him in all that is to come."

"Have no fear on that account, Silent One. Be assured that I can no more be separated from him than he from me. For the Divine himself has cemented our bond."

Now at last Silent Daughter's son, transformed after his re-appearance in Shukratma's cave to a young man of godly build and demeanor, with a golden glow upon his skin that more than ever fully justified his name — "The Golden One" — moved forward and knelt before Shukratma for his blessings. Two firm hands came down and rested on his bowed head, then slowly withdrew, but the sensation of their impact remained. Profoundly grateful, the Golden One drew aside while Silent Daughter and the rishi looked fondly at each other in silence for a considerable time.

Then when the voiceless farewell was over, she turned and followed her son out of the cave.

Once more they passed back through the realms of immaterial existence till they came to that region from which all souls depart for the earth life. Here was a place of soft and delicate tenderness where the very air sang of hope, and all eyes were bright and clear and wistful with dreams and prayers for the life to come. Yet even here Silent Daughter did not altogether stop. She merely remarked as she moved slowly on, "If we were on our way to a new birth we too would wait our turn among these whom we see gathered about us. But we return once again to a life already lived that you may know it in the new light of your being's conscious inner manhood. So let us still travel back a while in time and space, then when we come to a secluded and protected spot, sink down into our human moulds to play out only that part of our human roles as shall be needed."

They moved on into areas where no form existed, until finally in the distance a single mountain peak appeared soaring into the sky like an emerald obelisk. Half-way up its almost vertical slope a fine white cascade of water gushed from an opening in the rock and fell gracefully into a pool at the mountain's base as deep and translucent as a great, heaven-turned eye. Beside the point at which the fall poured out of the mountainside jutted a small ledge in front of yet another opening in the mountain, one so narrow that it seemed to be more of a crevice than a cave. At that moment, as they approached, the denizen of the place emerged to meet them. It was Unicorn in all its glossy perfection of silvery coat and golden horn. Only Mélisande was missing. Effortlessly, Silent Daughter and the Golden One arrived on the ledge and the goddess enquired after her friend. For answer, Unicorn tossed its mane, and she understood that its mistress had gone wandering as she so often did in dream or trance.

"Then, beautiful creature," Silent Daughter said, "perhaps I may place my request before you. I seek the haven of your mountain for just a short while — not even the barest breath of eternity, for the time shall measure barely one mortal year on earth. Yet it shall be a perilous year and the Dark One may visit us often. I wish only that he should not approach us subtly through our inner beings while our consciousness is absorbed in bodies that can perish. How often he has crept upon my children while they slept and robbed them of their souls' maturity. But in this sacred place I know we shall be safe —"

Unicorn refused to let her speak further. It placed its velvet lips against her neck and rubbed her cheek with its own. It then arched its neck and touched the ground of the ledge with the tip of its horn. Immediately the cloak of flowers that Silent Daughter had given it so long ago reappeared spread out upon the ground. The cloth was as fresh and bright as it had been on the day when it had first appeared on Unicorn's back. Now Unicorn was urging them to sit upon it, shaking its head and pawing at the ground with its delicate feet.

Silent Daughter beamed, threw her arms around its neck and kissed it on the forehead. Then she and the Golden One seated themselves on the cloak, while Uni-

corn stood guard to one side with his body half in and half out of the mouth of the cave, his jewel-like eyes alert, his horn held vertically in the air. On the other side of them, the waterfall whispered, flinging silent rainbows across the pool through the airy light of its diamond spray.

*(To be continued)*

BINA BRAGG

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## THE CLIMBERS

IMMODERATE in their aims  
 they scale steep cliffs  
 that rise forever  
 one beyond the other;  
 from time to time there looms,  
 in which they rest, an inn

Their hearts are stilled ...  
 awhile  
 and then again they climb.  
 Horizons are displaced  
 and rise anew.  
 Immoderate in their aims  
 they climb  
 and in the climbing are immoderately blessed.

MAGGI



# “LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of September, 1973)

## YOGA AND EDUCATION HUMAN SUFFERING AND YOGA

WHY, despite astounding intellectual achievements, economic affluence, scientific and technological developments, social and political emancipation, is life full to the brim with poison? Can Yoga provide an answer? Will its power for ever remain confined to the few? Will its influence never touch the heart of mankind? Has Yogic education a part to play here?

All human sufferings are due to the hold of ignorance on us. So long as the ego is the ruler of life, there can be no end to suffering.

Can Yoga show a way out?

Allow “the ego to be replaced by the psychic”.<sup>1</sup> At least let this one line of the Mother’s writings be implemented and then see how life undergoes a change, as said earlier.

“The proper function of the psychic prana is pure possession and enjoyment, *bhoga*”<sup>2</sup> But we do not know how to enjoy life and so we suffer. Running headlong for happiness we fall into hell-fire.

Why?

It is the work of evil forces. We are swept off our feet by their adverse suggestions. Our difficulties are their opportunities. Yoga demands life-long education and perhaps “the most difficult of all is the education of the vital.”<sup>3</sup> Unless the vital consents to change there can be no change in life. Hence “it is of prime importance that the child’s education of the vital should begin as early as possible.”<sup>4</sup>

“The vital<sup>5</sup> in man’s nature is a despotic and exacting tyrant. It is a master that is satisfied by nothing.” There are such crudities in the vital that it takes pleasure even in its own suffering.

“...each part of us,” says Sri Aurobindo, in *The Life Divine*<sup>6</sup> “...clings to...a way of darkness and sorrow and pain and suffering, for that too has acquired its own perverse and opposite taste, *rasa*, its pleasure of darkness and sorrow...”

The Divine does not bring suffering to one and pleasure to another. As there are laws governing the physical world so there are laws governing the inner world.

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, November 1972

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p 613

<sup>3</sup> *The Education of the Vital*, The Mother

<sup>4</sup> *The Education of the Vital*, The Mother

<sup>5</sup> “Teach your vital being not to complain but to put up with all conditions necessary for great achievement” — The Mother

<sup>6</sup> *American Edition*, p 831

If you put your finger in fire it will burn. The Divine will not come to save you. Of course if you raise a cry, His Grace will act but it depends upon the opening in you. If your finger allows the Grace to work, you will be cured in a moment or else you will feel only a glow. If you do not care to call, you must suffer. Why should the Divine intervene?

In Sri Aurobindo's view: "The difficulty of the difficulties is self-created, a knot of the Ignorance; when a certain inner perception loosens the knot, the worst of the difficulty is over." This is open to experience by all.

One must find some meaning to the complexities and dilemmas of life. The immense pleasure we draw from the lower life is a weakness which we must conquer. We unconsciously form habits which after a time become hard to eradicate. Take the case of smoking.

X smoked 100 cigarettes a day. His nervous system suffered the consequences and he was advised to stop. He managed to reduce the number to ten a day, but could not make the final break even though he made a pledge before the Mother that he would stop. Without a cigarette he became unbearably uneasy. The only relief was to smoke. Chain-smoking and other bad habits brought about a nervous break-down. The later part of his life was full of suffering.

Another pathetic instance is of a distant relative — a handsome middle-aged man. He loved to always be up-to-date, well-shaved and well-dressed. He would come home late at night because of the company of those who added fuel to the fire of his passion. Smoking and drinking were his common luxuries. All he had he spent in buying joy in the market with money. His health weakened and day by day he began to fade. He was reduced to such a pitiable condition that he had to ask for cigarettes or a cup of tea as favours from people. One night, with a cigarette between his lips, he went to bed and the mosquito curtain caught fire. He was burnt alive.

These instances indicate how we cripple ourselves with unnecessary burdens in life. Hence the education of the vital is one of the cardinal aspects of a happy and contented life. Yoga is an attempt to conquer the savage in us.

"Most people when they feel bored, instead of making an endeavour to rise one step higher in their consciousness, come down one step lower: they come down even below the level where they were and they do most stupid things. They make themselves vulgar in the hope of amusing themselves. That is how men take to drink, spoil their health, deaden their brain. If they had risen instead of falling they would have profited by the occasion in making a progress." (The Mother)

Now a word about how yogic education differs from man-making education.

Man-making education means implanting in the child the desire to stand on his own legs and if possible rise in the estimation of others. Here the eyes are fixed on money to the exclusion of everything. The great incentives are degrees and diplomas. Consequently this education is spiritually a zero. It is not even concerned with the qualities of the heart.

We do not reject modern education, it has much to teach us. It has admittedly

opened up a new world of ideas for us. Nor do we reject the past. Our aim is to be worthy of our great heritage and at the same time to take a leap towards the world of a greater future.

The field of modern education is the mind. We live in the universe created by the mind. But the mind gives power, not peace.

The mind must engage itself in something: be it wandering with the wind, seeing a movie or reading a novel. How great will be the gain if a fraction of this energy is employed in preparing the mind to realise an ideal!

It is to this end that Yogic education seeks to direct the energies of the student. The whole emphasis of yoga is on the quality of education and the building of the inner man. It releases unthought of qualities in the child and reveals many facets of his personality. It is the duty of the State to arouse in the students confidence in their glorious future.

Dr. D. Jaganath Reddy, Vice-Chancellor of Sri Venkateswar University, writes in his book *Challenges in Higher Education*:

“It must be the endeavour of every educational institution to show that all efforts are being made to infuse confidence in the young that utmost care is being bestowed on promoting their intellectual, physical, social and cultural activities and that the sole aim of the institution is to take pride in seeing that the pupils entrusted to its care receive the maximum benefit in the field of education, so that they will emerge out of it as ideal citizens of the nation.”

This is not enough. We are not to remain content with being ideal national citizens. India must produce world citizens. Our ancient motto is: “The whole world is my family.”

It is only by a spiritual revolution through Yoga that the new nation-building process can be accelerated. The sooner the Government recognises the value of yogic discipline in the field of education, the better.

“Dare greatly and thou shall be great,” counsels Sri Aurobindo.

Discussing the case of Japan as a prime example of the effect of education Akio Morita, President of the Sony Corporation, Japan, wrote:

“After almost three centuries of isolation from the outside world, Japan embarked upon modernisation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the Meiji Era no one dreamt that Japan, with so few natural resources and so little arable land, would be able to achieve industrialization within such a short period. This success in part was due to the great respect for education on the part of the Japanese people. Popular education had spread throughout Japan during the Edo period and Meiji leaders correctly assumed that, based upon the educational foundation..., they could achieve the industrialization of the nation and the prosperity of the people.”

Time demands that India embark on the same venture for the spread of education on Yogic principles.

Our Rishis recognised the utility of combining *Vidyabala* with *Yogabala*. It is by

adopting Yoga, as a way of life, combining Yogic education with mental education, that we can produce students who would not only be the pride of the State but can also bring in a new order. One Vivekananda shook the whole of the Western world. Let our universities produce giants of his calibre.

Science seeks to discover happiness in the world of pain. Yoga promises to transform it to a world of bliss. Don't we see the very image of God in the person of Sri Aurobindo?

New India, true India can be built only by those who are men of high spiritual genius and intuitive power. Says a saint scholar, "India built by politicians rises today and falls tomorrow."

We claim ours to be a welfare state but this is in name only. Our democracy has been rightly called vote-catching democracy. True democracy will be born when men who have the capacity to live in Divine Consciousness will direct the destiny of the nation. How can one who is in darkness bring light to others! Only those who have learnt to live in the Divine can give birth to a divine society. Till then what Plato envisaged must remain enshrined in his *Republic*. It cannot be written on the pages of life.

*(To be continued)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

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## A RUSTLE

A THRILLING rustle passed through  
 The many-leaved branches of the being,  
 Fleeting through bewildered voids of Immobility,  
 Ever scaling the hushed heights of harmonies,  
 Orbited the unfathomed depths of delight  
 And in a growing clasp of intimacy  
 Roused the yet brighter dawns to come.

VINAY

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**The Lal-Baugh;** Journal of the Mysore Horticulture Society, (Lal-Baugh, Bangalore-560004) Sri Aurobindo Centenary Number

NOT only the innumerable spiritual, cultural and educational institutions or the Central and the State Governments and the universities and the Sahitya Akademi or the public bodies formed for the occasion celebrated the birth centenary of Sri Aurobindo and published commemorative volumes. Here is a special number of the journal of the Mysore Horticultural Society (with the Governor and the Chief Minister of Mysore as the patron and the president respectively), published to mark the occasion.

The souvenir breathes elegance and imaginativeness, apart from dedication. The multi-coloured art cover shows four beautiful plants, two hibiscus and two crotons, all specially bred seedlings. One hibiscus and one croton are named "Sri Aurobindo" and the other two are named "The Mother."

We quote lines from the acknowledgements made by the publishers which will speak of the sincere efforts made by them and the cooperation received from Pondicherry that have gone to make such a unique souvenir: "The contributions except one are from the inmates of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville, Pondicherry. We offer our obeisance to the Divine Mother who has given the 'Blessings' to bring out this number. We are highly thankful to Sri Dyuman, trustee of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Sri Navajata, Secretary, Auroville, and Smt. Anjani Dayanand (then the Chief Secretary, Govt. of Pondicherry) for all their courtesies and cooperation."

The souvenir includes revealing answers by the Mother to questions on flowers and what they symbolise, extracts from *Savitri* and *Prayers and Meditations* and other writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Besides, there are articles by Jatindranath Das, Parichand, L.J. Allen, Abhay Singh, Manindra Pal, Narad and Vikash, giving glimpses of the growth of the Ashram gardens and estates. There are more than sixty pictures.

The souvenir is a projection of the light and love which the horticulturists of Lal-Baugh possess in their hearts. Let us remember the Mother's words : "Life must blossom like a flower offering itself to the Divine."

MANOJ DAS

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# *Students' Section*

## **EYE EDUCATION**

### DISEASES OF THE RETINA

It is a common belief that optic neuritis or optic atrophy is mostly due to syphilitic or some other infection in the system or to bad teeth. The following facts are to be considered:

1. Many people suffer from syphilis or some other infection but very few suffer from optic neuritis, and those who suffer from optic neuritis are usually not benefited by anti-syphilitic treatment or anti-toxin treatment or by extraction of teeth.

2. Some cases of optic neuritis do not give any indication, by tests or otherwise, of syphilis or toxin or bad teeth.

3. Some cases of optic neuritis whether they suffer from any infection or not recover partially or completely by themselves by rest without any specific treatment.

How can these facts be reconciled with each other if syphilis or some other infection is the cause of optic neuritis?

A patient had developed optic neuritis in the left eye and all the possible tests were made to find out the source of infection but the result was negative. He could hardly see the top letter of the chart from one foot and could not perceive colours. The expression of the face indicated that the eye was under a great strain. By eye education and relaxation he was completely cured.

### **Facts Reconciled**

The primary cause of optic neuritis is eye strain and mental strain. If the strain already exists syphilis or any other infection may exaggerate the strain and consequently may cause more damage, but they themselves can hardly cause optic neuritis or optic atrophy when there is proper relaxation of the mind and eyes. It is why patients suffering from syphilis or other infection may remain free from optic neuritis, and anti-syphilitic or anti-toxin treatment in positive cases may do no good. Cases who recover themselves without any specific treatment or by some specific treatment indicate that somehow the strain was relieved from the eyes and mind. Treatment of strain, side by side, with other treatments of any infection will prove really beneficial; but drastic treatment should be avoided as far as possible.

*Q: If the trouble is due to strain, then how is it that one eye may be affected and the other remains free, as in the above case?*

*A: This is because one has two separate eyes — one may function under a strain and not the other.*

*Q: Why do not all persons suffering from mental strain suffer from optic neuritis or some such eye trouble?*

A: If the mind is under a strain, but if the eyes do not make an effort to see, the person will remain free from all such eye troubles; but if the mind is under a strain and the eye also stares, imperfect sight will be the result. The habitual strain may cause diseases of the eye — functional as well as organic.

*Q: Then why does anti-syphilitic or anti-toxin treatment help considerably in certain cases, if the strain is the main cause?*

A: Syphilis or any other infection might be increasing the strain of the mind and eyes, hence anti-syphilitic treatment or anti-toxin treatment helped such cases. Or these cases might be recovering in a natural course of relaxation and anti-toxin treatment got the credit.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL

#### SOME NEW PUBLICATIONS :

1. **Mind and Vision** — A handbook for the cure of imperfect sight without glasses, with numerous illustrations. New edition — Rs. 16/-
2. **Yoga of Perfect Sight** — A guide to develop perfect eyesight by methods conducive to spiritual vision — Rs. 12/-
3. **Secrets of Indian Medicine** — A guide to a practical synthesis of different systems for eye troubles — new enlarged edition — Rs. 12/- De luxe. Rs. 16/-
4. **Care of Eyes** — A brochure for the preservation of good eyesight — Rs. 2.50

*Available from:* **Pondicherry-2** 1. School for Perfect Eyesight.

2. Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency 3. Publication Department.