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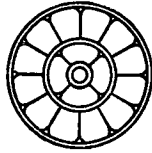
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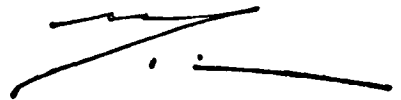


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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

No. 6

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*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail.”*

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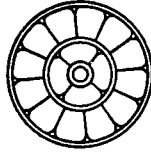
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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

L'homme et le mental ne sont pas le dernier terme de la création ; un être supramental est en préparation.

25-12-1972

Man and the mind are not the last terms of creation. A supramental being is in preparation.

25-12-1972

\*

Toute la vie tournée vers le Divin, offerte au Divin, au service du Divin, pour devenir petit à petit une expression du Divin.

30-1-1973

The whole life turned towards the Divine, offered to the Divine, at the service of the Divine, to become little by little an expression of the Divine.

30-1-1973

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Nothing is difficult for those who call sincerely the Divine.

28-1-1973

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of May, 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.)

AUGUST 29, 1956

I SUPPOSE most of you come on Fridays to listen to the reading of *Wu Wei*.<sup>1</sup> If you have listened well, you will remember that there's something there about being "spontaneous", and how the real way of living the true life is to live spontaneously.

What Lao Tse calls spontaneous is this: instead of being moved by a personal will (mental, vital or physical), one ought to stop all outer effort and let one self be guided and moved by what the Chinese call *Tao*, which they identify with the God-head (or God or the supreme Principle or the Origin of all things or the creative Truth, indeed all possible human notions of the Divine and the goal to be attained).

To be spontaneous means not to want with the personal will to think out, organise, decide and make an effort to realise.

I am going to give you two examples to make you understand what true spontaneity is. One, you all know it undoubtedly, dates from the time Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Arya*,<sup>2</sup> in 1914. It was neither a mental knowledge nor even a mental creation which he transcribed: he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, quite ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed. It was in this state of mental silence which allows the knowledge (and even the expression) from above to pass through that he wrote the whole *Arya*, with its sixty-four printed pages a month. This is why, besides, he could do it, for if it had been a mental work of construction it would have been quite impossible.

That is true mental spontaneity.

And if one pushes this a little further, one should never think and plan out beforehand what one ought to say or write. One should be able, simply, to make one's

<sup>1</sup> *Wu Wei*, a novel based on the philosophy of Lao Tse, by Henri Borel (Librairie Fischbacher, 33 rue de Seme, Paris).

<sup>2</sup> It was in the review *Arya*, within a period of six years (1914-1920) that Sri Aurobindo published at one go the greater part of his written work *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Future Poetry*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, to name only the principal works.

mind silent, to turn it like a receptacle towards the higher Consciousness and go on expressing in mental silence what comes from above. That would be true spontaneity.

Naturally, this is not easy, it asks for preparation.

And if one comes down into the sphere of action, it is still more difficult; for normally, if one wants to act with some kind of logic, generally one has to think out beforehand what one wants to do and plan it before doing it, otherwise one may be tossed about by all sorts of desires and impulses which would be very far from the inspiration spoken about in *Wu Wei*; these would quite simply be movements of the lower nature pushing you to act. Therefore, unless one has reached the state of wisdom and detachment of the Chinese sage which is mentioned in this story, it is better not to be spontaneous in one's daily actions, for one would risk being the toy of all the most disordered impulses and influences.

But once one enters the yoga and wants to do yoga, it is very necessary not to be the toy of one's own mental formations. If one wants to trust one's experiences, one must take great care not to construct within oneself the notion of the experiences one wants to have, the idea one forms about them, the form one expects or hopes to see. For, the mental formation, as I have told you very often, is a real formation, a real creation, and with your idea you create forms which are somewhat independent of you and return to you as though from outside and give you the impression of being experiences. But these experiences which are either willed or sought after or foreseen are not spontaneous experiences and risk being illusions — at times even dangerous illusions.

Hence, when one follows a mental discipline, one must be particularly careful not to imagine or want to have beforehand certain experiences, for you can thus create for yourself the illusion of these experiences. In the domain of yoga, this very strict and severe spontaneity is *altogether* indispensable.

For that, naturally, one must not have any ambition or desire, nor an excessive imagination nor what I call "spiritual romanticism", the taste for the miraculous — all that ought to be very carefully eliminated for one to be sure of advancing fearlessly.

Now, after this preliminary explanation, I am going to read to you what I have written and have been asked to comment upon. These are aphorisms which perhaps call for explanation. I wrote this, inspired perhaps by the reading I was just speaking to you about, but it was more than anything the expression of a personal experience:

*"One must be spontaneous in order to be divine."*

This is what I have just explained to you. Then the question arises: how to be spontaneous?

*"One must be perfectly simple in order to be spontaneous."*

And how to be perfectly simple?

*“One must be absolutely sincere in order to be perfectly simple.”*

And now, what does it mean to be absolutely sincere?

*“To be absolutely sincere is not to have any division, any contradiction in one’s being.”*

If you are made of pieces which are not only different but often quite contradictory, these pieces necessarily create a division in your being. For example, you have one part in yourself which aspires for the divine life, to know the Divine, to unite with Him, to live Him integrally, and then you have another part which has attachments, desires (which it calls “needs”) and which not only seeks these things but is quite upset when it does not have them. There are other contradictions, but this one is the most flagrant. There are others, for instance like that of wanting to surrender completely to the Divine, giving oneself up totally to His Will and His Guidance, and at the same time, when the experience comes (an experience common on the path when one tries sincerely to give oneself up to the Divine), the feeling that one is nothing, one can do nothing, that one does not even exist outside the Divine; that is to say, if He were not there, one would not exist and could not do anything, one would not be anything at all.... This experience comes naturally as an aid on the path of total self-giving, but there is a part of the being which, when the experience comes, goes into a terrible revolt and says, “But, excuse me! I insist on existing, I insist on being something, I want to do things myself, I want to have a personality.” And naturally, the second undoes all that the first had done.

These are not exceptional cases, this happens very frequently. I could give you innumerable examples of such contradictions in the being: when one part tries to take a step forward, the other comes and demolishes everything. So one has to begin again all the time, and every time it is demolished. That is why one must do this work of sincerity and when one perceives in one’s being a part that pulls the other way, take it up carefully, educate it as one educates a child and put it in harmony with the central part. That is the work of sincerity and it is indispensable.

And naturally, when there is a unity, an agreement, a harmony among all the wills of the being, one can have a being which is simple, candid and uniform in its action and tendencies. It is only when the whole being is grouped around a single central movement that one can be spontaneous. For if, within you, there is something which is turned towards the Divine and awaits the inspiration and impulse, and at the same time there is another part of the being which seeks its own ends and works to realise its own desires, one doesn’t know any longer where one stands, and one can no longer be sure of what may come, for, one part can not only undo but totally contradict what the other wants to do.

And surely, to be in harmony with what is said in *Wu Wei*, after having seen very clearly what is necessary and what ought to be done, it is recommended not to put



either violence or too much zest in the realisation of this programme, for an excess of zest is detrimental to the peace and tranquillity and calm necessary for the divine Consciousness to express itself through the individual. And all that comes to this:

Equilibrium is indispensable, the path that carefully avoids opposite extremes is indispensable, too much haste is dangerous, impatience prevents you from advancing; and at the same time, inertia puts a drag on your feet.

So for all things it is the middle path as the Buddha called it, which is best.

(*Silence*)

There are two other questions here which are corollaries. The first one is this:

*What do you mean by these words: "When you are in a difficulty, widen yourself?"*

I am speaking, naturally, of difficulties on the path of yoga, incomprehension, limitations, things like obstacles, which prevent you from advancing. And when I say "widen yourself", I mean widen your consciousness.

Difficulties always arise from the ego, that is, from your more or less egoistic personal reaction to circumstances, events and people around you, to the conditions of your life. They come also from that feeling of being closed up in a sort of shell, which prevents your consciousness from uniting with higher and vaster realities.

One may very well *think* that one wants to be vast, wants to be universal, that all is the expression of the Divine, that one must have no egoism — one may think all sorts of things — but that is not necessarily a cure, for very often one knows what one ought to do, and yet one does not do it, for one reason or another. But if, when you have to face anguish, suffering, revolt, pain or a feeling of helplessness — whatever it may be, all things that come to you on the path and are precisely your difficulties — if you can physically, that is to say, in your body consciousness, have the feeling of widening yourself, as one would say, of unfolding yourself (you feel as though all folded up, one fold on another like a piece of cloth which is folded and refolded and folded again), so if you have this feeling that what holds you and strangles you and makes you suffer or paralyses your movement is like a too closely, too tightly folded fabric or like a too well-tied, too well-packed parcel, and that slowly, gradually, you undo all the folds and stretch yourself out exactly as one unfolds a piece of cloth or a sheet of paper and spreads it out flat, so one lies flat and makes oneself very wide, as wide as possible, spreading oneself out as far as one can, opening oneself and stretching out in an attitude of complete passivity with what I might call "the face to the light": not curling back upon one's difficulty, doubling up on it; shutting it in, so to say, into one's person, but, on the contrary, unfurling yourself as much as you can, as perfectly as you can, putting the difficulty before the Light — the Light which comes from above — if you do that in all the domains, and even if mentally you don't succeed in doing it (for it is sometimes difficult), if you can imagine yourself doing this *physically*,

almost materially, well, when you have finished unfolding yourself and stretching yourself out, you will find that three-fourths of the difficulty is gone. And then just a little work of receptivity to the Light and the last quarter will disappear.

This is much easier than struggling against the difficulty with one's thought, for if you begin to discuss with yourself, you will find arguments for and against which are so convincing that it is quite impossible to get out of it without a higher light. There, you do not struggle against the difficulty, you do not try to convince yourself, ah! simply you stretch out in the light as though you lay stretched on the sands in the sun. And you let the light do its work. That's all.

(Silence)

And here is the other question:

*What is the easiest way of forgetting oneself?*

Naturally that depends on each one; everyone has his special way of forgetting himself, which is the best for him. But evidently there is a fairly general method which may be applied under various forms: this is to be occupied with something else. Instead of being occupied with oneself, one may be busy with someone else or with others or some work or an interesting activity asking for concentration.

And it is still the same thing: instead of doubling up on oneself and brooding over oneself or coddling oneself, as it were, like the most precious thing in the world, if one can unfold oneself and get busy with something else, something which is not quite one's own self, then that is the simplest and quickest way of self-forgetting.

There are many others but this one is within every one's reach. So there we are, my children.

Now, if you have nothing to say about this subject or any other, we may keep silent.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1956

*"A principle of dark and dull inertia is at its base; all are tied down by the body and its needs and desires to a trivial mind, petty desires and emotions, an insignificant repetition of small worthless functionings, needs, cares, occupations, pains, pleasures that lead to nothing beyond themselves and bear the stamp of an ignorance that knows not its own why and whither. This physical mind of inertia believes in no divinity other than its small earth-gods; it aspires perhaps to a greater comfort, order, pleasure, but asks for no uplifting and no spiritual deliverance. At the centre we meet a stronger Will of life with a greater gusto, but it is a blinded Daemon, a perverted spirit and exults in the very elements that make of life a striving turmoil and an*

*unhappy imbroglio. It is a soul of human or Titanic desire clinging to the garish colour, disordered poetry, violent tragedy or stirring melodrama of the mixed flux of good and evil, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heady rapture and bitter torture. It loves these things and would have more and more of them or, even when it suffers and cries out against them, can accept or joy in nothing else; it hates and revolts against higher things and in its fury would trample, tear or crucify any diviner Power that has the presumption to offer to make life pure, luminous and happy and snatch from its lips the fiery brew of that exciting mixture. Another Will-in-Life there is that is ready to follow the ameliorating ideal Mind and is allured by its offer to extract some harmony, beauty, light, nobler order out of life, but this is a smaller part of the vital nature and can be easily overpowered by its more violent or darker duller yoke-comrades; nor does it readily lend itself to a call higher than that of the Mind unless that call defeats itself, as Religion usually does, by lowering its demand to conditions more intelligible to our obscure vital nature. All these forces the spiritual seeker grows aware of in himself and finds all around him and has to struggle and combat incessantly to be rid of their grip and dislodge the long-entrenched mastery they have exercised over his own being as over the environing human existence. The difficulty is great; for their hold is so strong, so apparently invincible that it justifies the disdainful dictum which compares human nature to a dog's tail, — for, straighten it never so much by force of ethics, religion, reason or any other redemptive effort, it returns in the end always to the crooked curl of Nature. And so great is the vim, the clutch of that more agitated Life-Will, so immense the peril of its passions and errors, so subtly insistent or persistently invasive, so obstinate up to the very gates of Heaven the fury of its attack or the tedious obstruction of its obstacles that even the saint and the yogin cannot be sure of their liberated purity or their trained self-mastery against its intrigue or its violence.”*

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 160-1)

(*After a long silence*) It seems to me that when one begins to see things in this way, when they appear to you as they are described here, you are already close, very close to the solution.

The worst of it is that generally the whole material reality seems to be the only reality, and everything else which is not that seems altogether secondary. And the “right” of that material consciousness to rule, guide, organise life, to dominate all the rest, is justified to such an extent that if someone tries to touch this sacrosanct authority he is considered half-mad or a profoundly dangerous person.... It seems to me one must still go a very long way to consider life as Sri Aurobindo has described it here. And I am quite convinced that if one feels it like that, sees it like that, as he has described it, one is very very near the remedy.

It is only *élite* natures, those who have already had a contact with a higher reality, with something of the divine Consciousness, who feel earthly existence in that way. And when one can become so fully conscious of all these weaknesses and stupidities

of the outer consciousness, of all these falsehoods of the so-called material knowledge and so-called physical laws, the so-called necessities of the body, the "reality" of one's needs; if one begins to see how very false, stupid, illusory, obscure, imbecile all this is, one is truly very close to the solution.

That is the impression I had whilst reading this. In comparison with the ordinary atmosphere of people around me, I had the feeling that to see things in this way, one must have already climbed to a very high peak, and that one is at the gates of liberation. It was because I felt it so strongly that I wanted to tell you this.

If one can re-read this passage and be convinced of its reality and its absolute truth, well, that is already a great step.

(*Silence*)

Hasn't anyone a question to ask? ...I have some here (*Mother shows a packet of questions*), but they seem to belong almost to another world.

Somebody asked me some time ago this question:

*What will be the effect of the Supermind on the earth?*

Probably one of the first effects will be exactly to make men see things on earth in this way, as I have just read to you.

And then another question, which I believe I have already answered, for I told you immediately that before the effects of the supramental manifestation become visible and tangible, perceptible to everybody, perhaps thousands of years may go by; but still I suppose these ideas are annoying for the human consciousness with its sense of its short duration and the kind of impatience it brings. So I have been asked:

*Will it take long for the Supermind which is involved in material Nature to emerge into the outer consciousness and have visible results?*

That depends on the state of consciousness in which one answers, for... For human consciousness evidently I think it will take quite a long time. For another consciousness it will be quicker, relatively; and for still another consciousness, it is already accomplished. It is an accomplished fact. But in order to become aware of this, one must be able to enter into another state of consciousness than the ordinary physical consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo has spoken (I believe I have read it to you, I think it's in *The Synthesis of Yoga*) of the true mind, the true vital and the true physical or subtle physical and has said that they co-exist with the ordinary mind, vital and physical, and that in certain conditions one may enter into contact with them, and then one understands the difference between what really is and the appearances of things.

Well, for a developed consciousness, the Supermind is already realised some-

where in a field of the subtle physical, it already exists there, visible, concrete, and expresses itself in forms and in activities. And when one is in tune with this field, when one lives there, one has a very strong feeling that it would suffice to condense, so to say, this world, so that it could become visible for all. What would then be interesting would be to develop this inner perception which would put you into contact with the supramental truth which is already manifested, and is veiled for you only for want of proper organs for entering into relation with it.

It is possible that those who are conscious of their dreams may have dreams of a new kind which put them into contact with that world, for it is accessible to the subtle physical of all those who have the corresponding organs in them. And necessarily there is a subtle influence of this physical on outer matter, if one is ready to receive impressions from it and admit them into one's consciousness. That's all, then.

Now, if nobody has any questions to ask, well, we shall keep silent.

Something to say, down there? (*The Mother looks at a disciple*) Oh! he is already on live coals!

*Mother, after having realised all that, one goes back again to the lower mind to find the solution.*

After having understood, one falls back into the same old mistakes?... That's a pity!

*And daily.*

Daily! Why, more's the pity! And so, what remedy do you propose?

*I am asking for it.*

Oh! you are asking me! Why, to me it seems that when one has *seen* things in this way, well, if one has enough sensibility, one can no longer permit them to be what they are. One must be truly quite insensitive when, realising to what an extent all that is degrading, one continues to allow it.

Yes, this is one more thing I have noticed and one that has always astonished me. It has always seemed to me quite normal, easy, almost elementary to throw out from one's consciousness and nature things one considers as not acceptable. The moment one knows, the moment one sees them as they are and does not want them any longer, it seems to me to be quite, indeed almost childishly simple. But I have noted that in most cases — almost in all cases — when I describe to somebody things as they are, when I give him a true picture of the condition he is in or of the nature of a movement, of what it represents, and when I express that forcefully, so that, according to me, he would immediately have the reaction which I consider the normal one and say: "Ah! if it is like that, I don't want it any more!" and almost every time I find myself before

something which breaks down and tells me: "Ah! you are not encouraging!" I confess that this leaves me quite helpless. So, to see does not suffice? To know that certain things ought not to be there, that's not sufficient? That should give you that kind of inner stimulus, of dynamic force which makes you reject the error in such a way that it can't come back again!

But to fall back into an error which one *knows* to be an error, to make a mistake once again which one *knows* to be a mistake, that seems to me fantastic! It is a long time — well, at least relatively by human measures — it is a long time I have been on earth and I have not yet succeeded in understanding that. It seems to me — it seems to me impossible. Wrong thoughts, wrong impulses, inner and outer falsehoods, things which are ugly, base, so long as one does them or has them through ignorance — ignorance is there in the world — one understands, one is accustomed to do them; it is ignorance, one does not know that it ought to be otherwise. But the moment knowledge comes, light comes, the moment one has seen the thing as it is, how can one begin again? That I do not understand!

Then what is one made of? One is made of shreds? One is made of I don't know what, of gelatine?... It can't be explained. But there is no incentive, there is no will, there's nothing? There is no inner dynamism?

*One exploits the Grace !*

Ayo! like a mollusc!

But the Grace is there, It is always there, It only asks to be allowed to help — one doesn't let it work.

And nothing but this feeling: "Oh! I can't!"; there, that's enough to prevent It from working.

How to accept the idea that one can't? One does not know — that, yes, one may not know — but once one knows, it is finished!

Still...

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## THE SEEKERS OF PONDICHERRY

*(We are starting the serial publication of the complete article which in a shortened version has appeared in The Washington Post, Sunday, April 22, 1973, beginning on p. B1. The American paper introduced the author, H. Michael Zelnick, as follows: "The writer is an American who has lived at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram since 1968, teaching English in an Ashram School.")*

*For the already published portions of the article our acknowledgements are due to The Washington Post.)*

By 5 p.m. the worst of the day's heat is past and a crowd begins to gather in the usually empty street. By six the crowd below the third floor balcony of the large, freshly white washed French colonial house numbers perhaps five thousand. A less homogeneous group would be hard to imagine. Elegant Indian ladies in exquisite silk sarees and their heavy-set men in western business suits stand beside ragged villagers with blood-red betel-stained teeth and arms tattooed from shoulder to wrist. There are several hundred Westerners in the crowd; an Australian lady with watery blue eyes and pinched features, in a tailored blue dress she might have worn to the office in Sydney; a bearded young Frenchman in a psychedelically embroidered maroon robe; an American boy in a starched white pyjama suit; a pretty South African girl in a pink saree.

At exactly six-fifteen a door on the balcony opens and a diminutive, frail woman known simply as "The Mother" and looking all of her ninety-four years of age makes her way slowly to the railing. The crowd has fallen absolutely silent. Here and there, palms joined, hands are raised in the traditional Indian gesture of salutation. Most people simply stand immobile, eyes fixed on the woman. Both hands gripping the railing for support, she surveys the crowd below her. Slowly, as if each least movement, each slightest gesture were infinitely significant, she turns her head from side to side to sweep the street with her gaze. The thin hands grip the railing. A faint smile plays for a moment on the ancient face, disappears. Concentration: brows slightly knit, as if trying to memorize every line on each of the five thousand faces below.

Four minutes pass. Five. The smile. She leaves the railing and makes her way back through the door: carefully, one step at a time, the physical effort is obviously a strain. Darshan (literally, "showing" from the Sanskrit root "drish", to see) is over. The crowd slowly disperses: several thousand people resume their lives, convinced that they have seen God.

"The Mother" is the spiritual leader of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the largest yoga center in India and probably the world. Here under the Mother's guidance almost two thousand permanent members of the Ashram (including over one hundred Westerners) are attempting to follow a system called "Integral Yoga". Their modest

goal: to effect a fundamental transformation of the nature of life on earth, not only for themselves but for the whole of humanity.

Integral Yoga is the discovery of Sri Aurobindo, a Cambridge educated classics scholar, who left the fledgling Indian liberation movement which during the first decade of this century he had almost single-handedly galvanized into life, to retire to Pondicherry and devote himself exclusively to his spiritual development. It was around Sri Aurobindo that the first disciples of what was to become the Sri Aurobindo Ashram originally gathered. One of these early disciples was a young Frenchwoman by the name of Mira Alfassa whom, shortly before his complete retirement in 1926, Sri Aurobindo declared to be an incarnation of the Divine Mother and into whose hands, upon Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal, passed full charge of the Ashram and all its affairs.

There is an ancient tradition in India which remains very much alive today, that the Divine appears on earth in human form to guide mankind whenever it faces so grave a crisis as to require this most direct form of divine intervention. But unlike the Christian notion which holds the divine incarnation of Jesus Christ to be a perfectly unique, and decisive event in the history of the world, the Indian concept emphasizes the recurring nature of the phenomenon. Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and a number of other great world-teachers are thus widely believed, in India, to have been incarnations of God, or Avatars (Sanskrit *avatāra*, "to descend"). The devotees of the Ashram hold that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are also such beings.

Alan Miller believes this too, believes as he looks up to the balcony from the jammed street below that the tiny figure clutching the railing three floors above him is the very Word made flesh. Since 1962 the Mother has been in retirement and like most members of the Ashram, Alan sees her only five times a year: individually on his birthday and at the four public Darshans that the Mother gives annually. Apparently it is enough. He has been at the Ashram for four years and plans to remain permanently.

Alan Miller is a 29-year-old American from Boston. He is short, with medium length brown hair, dark brown eyes, and a tendency to lapse into hip jargon when he talks about his past. Alan graduated from the University of Chicago in 1965, Phi Beta Kappa with honors in Comparative Literature. Three years later he left the United States heading for Nepal where he hoped to find a Tibetan guru and study Buddhism. He flew from New York to Paris and hitchhiked the rest of the way. In Kabul he met a couple on their way back to America who had spent six months in Pondicherry and spoke of the Ashram and the Mother.

"It was very strange," he says, "the people themselves were not really very extraordinary and weren't even all that enthusiastic about the Ashram though they said it was a fascinating place. But it was like there was something coming *through* them, a peculiar vibration unlike anything I'd ever felt before, very strong and very beautiful. I don't think they were even aware of it. It evidently had something to do with



the Ashram they'd been at. I'd never heard of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother before, or of Pondicherry for that matter and until then had had very little interest in Indian yoga. But it was still cold up in Nepal so I decided to go down to Pondicherry first, just to see where it was.

Alan has been in Pondicherry ever since.

Alan's interest in yoga grew out of his experience with drugs. In his second year of college he got turned on to marijuana and within a year was smoking every day. Eventually he tried psychedelics and, in the course of the following three years, estimates that he used the drugs about one hundred times, acid, mescaline, peyote, psilocybin, ibogaine, DMT — virtually anything that came to hand. "I knew from the very first time I tripped that getting into and staying in an expanded state of consciousness was the only thing in the world that really interested me, and that I was eventually going to have to make it to an ashram someplace and do the thing seriously. But it took me three years before I was ready to actually make the move, three years to convince myself that though drugs had opened the door they couldn't take me much further, three years to convince myself that no amount of dope or balling or anything else but 'That' could really satisfy me for any length of time."

"I see now," says Alan, "that the Divine brought me to Him in absolutely the fastest way possible...by giving me everything I wanted. Really, I hit a stretch of about a year and a half before I left when anything I could even remotely imagine wanting simply fell into my lap: money, chicks, dope, jobs, everything. After a while the only limit seemed to be my imagination: I was reaching so far out for my kicks that I started to get scared. I made speed, coke and smack a couple of times, but fortunately didn't dig them too much. Anyway, as I said, I finally got to a point where I simply had to admit that there was only one thing that could satisfy me, and I set out to find it.

"The miracle is that when I finally got to Pondicherry I stayed long enough to see anything in the first place. My first impressions were quite negative. The pictures of Sri Aurobindo and Mother all over the place...it came on like just another religion. And then, like almost all Westerners, I had thought of yoga entirely in terms of certain practices — physical exercises, breath control, meditation, etc. and I couldn't find anyone who was doing any of that. And I couldn't see anyone who looked like what I thought a yogi was supposed to look like. Everyone was well-fed and well-dressed and seemed to be leading a perfectly ordinary life. I really don't know what made me stay around.

"But then an interesting thing started happening. On my way through Pakistan I'd picked up two kilos of very nice hash: I had it in my bag when I arrived in Pondicherry and I continued to turn-on after I got to the Ashram. I knew that sooner or later I was going to have to give it up, but I damned well wasn't going to until something clearly better came along. Well, after maybe a week or two I started to notice that I wasn't getting high when I smoked; in fact, it was getting to be a pretty heavy bringdown. Contrary to all my previous experience I was somehow feeling more tuned

in to things straight than stoned. I became aware that there was a very beautiful vibration in the atmosphere of the Ashram that 'turning on' blocked out. So, naturally I stopped smoking.

"It was about one month later that I had an experience which pretty well decided me that this was where I wanted to stay. I hadn't met the Mother yet — usually she'll see newcomers within a few weeks of their arrival, but she was ill when I arrived and wasn't seeing anyone. One evening I was sitting near the Samadhi (Sri Aurobindo's tomb) meditating, when suddenly the Mother was there, not physically, but as a Presence. It was as if she had come out for a walk and was passing by. I could 'see' the dress she was wearing, a shimmering, flowing white robe with a long train and great wide sleeves. And as she passed one of the sleeves brushed against my cheek. At the touch I was filled with such joy and love that it is impossible to describe: it made everything I'd previously called by those names seem tawdry and insignificant.

"I finally got to meet the Mother in person a few months later. I'd written to her asking if I could stay at the Ashram permanently and she'd replied that I should come to see her.

"There's not much I can say about what happened at that meeting.... You see, it's not just an abstraction or a figure of speech, though until then I'd thought it was: she is *the Mother*. I remember kneeling before her. She was smiling and looking into my eyes and it was like that moment was the only moment that had ever been or would ever be. Her eyes had always been gazing into mine, her smile had been filling me with delight forever. It was like coming home after a thousand years, but coming home to someplace I'd never left."

I asked Alan about his view of drugs after four years in the Ashram. Obviously, he said, evidence by his own experience and that of several other people he knew, drugs could be helpful in bringing one to the initial contact with other states of consciousness and awakening the desire to change the normal consciousness into something greater. In ordinary life in the West there is so little awareness of even the existence of other levels of consciousness, let alone of what they are or the means of contacting them, that some violent expedient like the psychedelic experience often seems the only way of awakening people to these possibilities. On the other hand, those who enter other realms of consciousness via drugs almost invariably do so with no real knowledge of what they are doing and are totally unable to deal with the forces to which they thus expose themselves, some of which are definitely hostile. Relatively few people, Alan felt, truly profit from the experience and even amongst those who do, it is seldom an unmixed blessing. In his own case, for example, while his experience with psychedelics was no doubt instrumental in turning him towards yoga, it also engendered certain difficulties. Even the most "spiritual" psychedelic experiences are not quite the same as the non-drug induced ones, and though obviously there can be considerable similarities, the differences are significant. Thus, he says, one coming to yoga through psychedelics may well find himself wasting much time initially, at least,

seeking experiences which are really of a fairly low order because he has wrongly identified the psychedelic experience with the true spiritual experience.

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The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo begins from the premise common to virtually all Indian metaphysics that behind the appearances of the world of our normal perceptions exists a Reality, a fundamental Being and Truth-Conscious Self of all things, one and eternal. Though all exists in union with and as a part of this Consciousness, a separative ignorance inherent in our ordinary mental being creates a false identification with the limited ego, and bars us from awareness of our true Self and the self-existent conscious bliss which is its nature. Through any of the multiple disciplines known collectively as "yoga", it is possible for man to go beyond the ignorance of his ego-consciousness and enter into the consciousness of the true Self. And as the ego-consciousness is one of falsehood, suffering, impotence and death, while that of the Self is of truth, bliss, force and immortality, it is man's highest good to effect this passage.

Sri Aurobindo's teaching departs rather radically from the more traditional Indian systems, however, in its view of the meaning and purpose of material existence. The tendency of the latter has been to reject life and the whole cosmic manifestation as, if not completely a baseless illusion or the Fall, the original Sin, then at least an essentially purposeless play of the Divine. In either case, it has been held, the only issue, so far as man is concerned, is the quickest possible escape into some pure, static, unmanifest Being, free of all relations with the temporal becoming. No doubt, admits Sri Aurobindo, there are powerful, often overwhelming experiences which seem to validate this view and among seekers its adherents have always been in the majority. But is it not possible, he asks, that this may be the view of a partial knowledge? May not the evil, the imperfection, the suffering be a besetting circumstance or a dolorous passage, but not the very condition of manifestation, not the very essence of birth in Nature?

Such, Sri Aurobindo holds, is indeed the case. The material world is not a nightmare illusion, but the very body of the Divine who has involved Himself in matter neither by accident nor by macabre whimsy, but for the supreme adventure of attempting to manifest His Light, Truth, Force, Love under conditions which seem totally antithetic to these qualities.

The process by which this self-revelation progressively unfolds is evolution. Thus we observe in the natural history of the world a gradual and purposeful (if not always visibly direct) movement in the direction of increasing consciousness. Out of the inconscience of apparently dead matter emerges the life of plant and animal. Out of the apparently mindless life of plant and animal emerges the first rudimentary, then gradually enriching mental life of man. Nor, says Sri Aurobindo, is man the final term of evolution, for above the mental are the supramental planes of consciousness which

must in the very nature of things eventually enter into manifestation.

But while man is a transitional being and not the final term, his place in the evolutionary movement is crucial and unique. For it is only with the emergence in man of the mental principle that there arises the possibility of conscious cooperation with the evolutionary force and hence the possibility of drastically reducing the time ordinarily involved in effecting significant evolutionary progress. And this conscious cooperation with and acceleration of the evolutionary process is, in the final analysis, the real sense of the term "yoga". For in yoga the individual seeks, by one means or another, to attain in a limited period of time the very aim towards which all of Nature is driving at an infinitely slower rate, *i.e.*, the development of a supramental consciousness.

Hence, Sri Aurobindo ultimately has little use for those systems which postulate an irreconcilable duality between matter and spirit and declare the rejection of material existence the *sine qua non* of spiritual realisation. On the contrary, the realisation envisaged in Sri Aurobindo's yoga is not an escape from, but a victorious conquest and radical transformation of, life in Nature. For just as matter was taken up and animated, not dispensed with when the life principle manifested, and physical life was taken up and mentalised when the mental principle evolved, so the physical-vital-mental complex which constitutes the present status of man and his world will be taken up and supramentalized, not abandoned, in the next evolutionary stage. And as this transformation will abolish the separative tendency of our present consciousness in which the mental principle is dominant, the world of the next evolutionary stage will be one of conscious contact with the true Self or Divine.

The moment of this new development, Sri Aurobindo declares, has arrived. The new consciousness is, as it were, in the air, ready to manifest. What is needed to "bring it down" is simply the availability of a number of individuals sufficiently purified and plastic to allow the new consciousness to express itself through them. Such individuals would not then go out to spread the word, but, through an occult process, act as seed crystals in a super-saturated solution enabling the supramental consciousness to precipitate itself throughout the world. It is towards this goal of becoming seed crystals of the supramental that the inmates of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram are striving.

It is a good deal more difficult to speak of the method or practical side of Sri Aurobindo's yoga than to set forth its philosophical premises. For there really is no method to the Integral Yoga if by "method" is meant a more or less fixed system of practice or discipline. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother hold that each individual is absolutely unique and must discover and live the deepest truth of his own nature by means which will necessarily be appropriate to his own case and to it alone. When Sri Aurobindo or the Mother speaks, therefore, of the practice of the yoga, it is usually in only the most general terms or, if dealing with specifics, they will invariably emphasize that they are referring to a particular case and that their statements must not be generalized.

Indeed, if there is a single idea absolutely fundamental to the practical side of the yoga, it is this, that *anything* can be a means of reaching the Divine if it is done in the proper consciousness. Behind this idea lies Sri Aurobindo's teaching that the Divine is ultimately a Conscious Being with a Conscious Will to manifest Himself to, in and through the individual, and that given *any* opportunity to do so, He will do so. This is a concept particularly difficult for Westerners to accept. Most Westerners rebelling against the personal God of exoteric Christianity, Blake's "old Nobodaddy", if not turned-off to religion entirely, tend to seek an impersonal Divine, a pure Absolute Being or Nirvana, which simply *is*. To speak of such a Divine having a will, entering into personal relations with the seeker, and consciously accommodating Himself to the individual's need or demand, is patently absurd. Thus, as Alan observed, most Westerners think of yoga as a set of more or less mechanical practices which, properly and patiently performed, will allow one to become conscious of a Divine which is Itself a more or less mechanical principle of being.

Sri Aurobindo's view, which accepts the impersonal as one aspect or self-formulation of the Divine but holds that in His highest status the Divine is what he calls a "Person", makes for an entirely different set of affairs. In Sri Aurobindo's yoga there simply are no particular practices which are incumbent upon the seeker. Essentially all that is required of him is a pure and burning aspiration to realize the Divine. Given that, the Divine Himself will gradually take up the seeker's life and make of each smallest activity a consecration and a rite through which the aspirant may meet Him. Making a bed or milking a cow or cooking a meal thus may be quite as effective yogically as sitting for hours in meditation: not the activity itself, but the consciousness in which the thing is done, determines its value in the yoga.

"The sadhana\* of this yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, Mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come."<sup>1</sup>

The place of the Mother in all of this is somewhat mystifying to the uninitiated. On the one hand, she is the guru in the literal sense of the word, the "Teacher", one who has the knowledge. Thus, a good deal of her time is spent in answering more or less practical questions (since her retirement this is done primarily via letters received and answered through her secretaries), posed by devotees on subjects which range from the subtlest problems of spiritual endeavour to the most mundane matters and include everything in between:

*Letter:* My one hope is to progress as much as I can, so that my next birth may not be useless like this one.

\* *sadhana* = spiritual discipline.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Letters*.

*The Mother's Reply:* "This is all nonsense; we have not to busy ourselves with the next life, but with this one which offers us, *till our very last breath*, all its possibilities. To put off for the next birth what one can do in this life is like putting off for tomorrow what one can do this very day; it is laziness. It is only with death that the possibility of integral realisation ceases; so long as one is alive, nothing is impossible."

*Letter:* The students talk so much in class that I have to scold them often.

*The Mother's reply:* "It is not with severity but with *self-mastery* that children are controlled."

*Letter:* I have caught a cold. Should I take my bath as usual?

*The Mother's reply:* "Do as you like, this is not of much importance; but what is important is to cast off fear. It is fear which makes one fall ill and it is fear which makes healing so difficult. All fear must be overcome, and replaced by a complete trust in the divine Grace."

But the Mother is more than just an infinitely patient teacher. The Mother, say her devotees, is an incarnation of the Divine Grace itself.

*Letter:* 'I am with you.' What does it exactly mean? When we pray or struggle with a problem within ourselves, are we really heard, always, in spite of our clumsiness and imperfection, in spite even of our bad will and our errors? And who hears? You who are with us?

And is it you in your supreme consciousness, an impersonal divine force, the force of yoga, or you, the Mother in a body with your physical consciousness? A personal presence that knows our each thought and each act and not some anonymous force? Can you tell us how and in what way you are present with us?

*The Mother's reply:* "I am with you because I am you and you are me.

"I am with you, that signifies a world of things because I am with you at every level, on all planes from the supreme consciousness down to my most physical consciousness. Here, in Pondicherry, you cannot breathe without breathing my consciousness. It saturates the atmosphere almost materially in the subtle physical and extends to the lake, ten kilometers from here. Farther, my consciousness can be felt in the material vital, then on the mental plane and other higher planes, everywhere. When I came here for the first time, I felt the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo, felt it materially, at a distance of ten miles, ten nautical miles, not kilometers. It was a very sudden, very concrete atmosphere, pure, luminous, light, light that lifts you up.

"It is now a long time since Sri Aurobindo had this reminder with which you are all familiar put up everywhere in the Ashram: 'Always behave as if the Mother were looking at you, for She is indeed always present.' This is not a mere phrase, not simply words, it is a fact. I am with you in a very concrete manner and those who have subtle vision can see me.

"In a general way my Force is there, constantly at work, constantly shifting

the psychological elements of your being to put them in new relations, defining to yourself the different facets of your nature so that you may see what should be changed, developed, rejected.

“But apart from that there is a special personal tie between you and me, between all who have turned to Sri Aurobindo’s and my teaching — it is well understood, distance does not count here, you may be in France, you may be at the other end of the world or in Pondicherry, the tie is always true and living. And each time there comes a call, each time there is a need for me to know so that I may send out a force, an inspiration, protection or any other thing, a sort of message comes to me all of a sudden and I do the needful. These communications reach me at any moment obviously, and you must have seen me more than once stop suddenly in the middle of a sentence or work; it is because something comes to me, a communication, and I concentrate.

“With those whom I have accepted as disciples, to whom I have said ‘Yes’, there is more than a tie, there is an emanation of myself. This emanation warns me whenever it is necessary and tells me what is happening. Indeed, I receive intimations constantly, but all are not stored in my active memory. I would be flooded; the physical consciousness acts like a filter. Things are recorded on a subtle plane; they are there in a latent state, something like a piece of music that is recorded without being played. When I need to know with my physical consciousness, I make the contact with the subtle plane and the disc begins to turn. Then I see how things are, their development in time, the actual result.

“And if for some reason or other you write to me asking my help and I answer, ‘I am with you’, it means that the communication with you becomes active, you come into my active consciousness for a time, the time necessary.

“And this tie between you and me is never cut. There are people who have long ago left the Ashram, in a state of revolt, and yet I keep myself informed of them, I attend to them. You are never abandoned.

“In fact I hold myself responsible for everyone, even for those whom I have met for only one second in my life.”

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The formerly French colony of Pondicherry lies some seventy-five miles south of Madras on India’s eastern coast. For about fifteen dollars you can make the trip by taxi in three hours. After the first hour or so your terror (the roads are narrow, winding, poorly marked; the drivers daring) will probably have subsided sufficiently to allow you to enjoy the scenery. India’s teeming masses are in evidence only in the towns, and between Madras and Pondicherry these are few and quickly traversed. The flatness of the land stretches unbroken to the horizon save for an occasional hill, a huge pile of bare rock, which juts starkly from the plain. Most of the land is sown in rice, paddy, as it is called locally: mile after mile of incredibly rich emerald green sea dotted here and there by a distant farmer walking slowly behind a pair of languid bul-

locks, or a small casuarina grove seemingly floating on the gently undulating waves. The feeling is of an ancient land at peace with time, a land that has watched the ages pass with placid eyes and seems to say, "This too shall pass."

Entering Pondicherry the teeming masses are in evidence again, but the car continues on past the "canal", which is in the ten dry months of the year a trickling open sewer that divides the town into "good" and "bad" sides as neatly as any American city's railroad tracks. Here the houses are larger and well-maintained, many freshly white-washed; the streets wider, clean and uncluttered. Men in starched white pyjama suits, women in sarees, move quietly along the streets. Children, boys and girls of all ages in shorts and T-shirts, are everywhere. (There is no marriage in the Ashram, but many of its members brought their families with them when they came to Pondicherry and Indian families tend to be rather large.) The car stops before a large gate over which hangs a plaque inscribed with two concentric circles, the smaller divided into four quadrants, the larger into twelve: the Mother's symbol.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is not, at least physically, a single entity but consists of nearly four hundred buildings, apartments, shops, farms and other facilities scattered over Pondicherry and the surrounding area. It is an ashram in the traditional sense of a community of seekers gathered about a guru, united only in their common aspiration and devotion to the guru, but otherwise leading quite different existences as determined by the need of each individual: a community rather than a commune.

The compound known as "the Ashram" includes the building in which Sri Aurobindo lived until his death in 1950, as well as the apartment in which the Mother presently stays. Other apartments in the compound house a small number of devotees, or sadhaks, as they are called, who have been at the ashram for many years, and some of the ashram offices. In the center of the central courtyard is Sri Aurobindo's tomb, the Samadhi, its gleaming white marble surface covered day and night by exquisite arrangements of freshly cut flowers.

As one approaches the Samadhi, the stillness which seems to envelop the entire compound grows almost concrete. It is mid-afternoon and the courtyard is almost empty. An Indian woman in white saree with a printed border of the Mother's symbol moves silently about the tomb wiping the white marble with a damp cloth, then sprinkles the flowers from a gleaming bronze watering can. A beautiful Indian girl of about eighteen, white bell-bottoms, a green Nehru-collared punjabi, long thick braid of shiny jet-black hair hanging down her back, kneels beside the tomb, eyes closed, brows slightly furrowed, palms pressed flat on the flowers. She stands, gazes silently up towards the Mother's apartment for a few moments, touches clasped hands to her forehead with a slight nod, walks slowly towards the gate. A small intense-looking European man of about 45, close-cropped white hair, blue shorts, white T-shirt, kneels by the end of the Samadhi, his forehead pressed to the white stone. His lips move silently. He raises his head. The forehead is creased where it has pressed the corner of the tomb. He stands up and walks quickly away. Her back against a nearby wall, a tiny Indian woman of indeterminable age sits, arms around her knees, abso-



lutely motionless except for her eyes which occasionally dart a quick glance about the compound. The smell of sandalwood from the dozens of incense sticks, which continually smoke around the tomb, pervades the atmosphere.

*(To be continued)*

H. MICHAEL ZELNICK

## ON BEAUTY

I FIND you  
in the roses...  
rose buds  
leafy blooms  
colors through a prism  
continuums  
of light...

I find you  
on the petals  
as subtle  
as a song  
your softness  
silken velvet  
only roses know....

I find you  
in the perfume  
only roses give

sweet  
like wine and sugar  
pure  
like falling snow....

I hear you  
silent  
speaking  
soft whispers  
with the breeze....

and  
I wonder  
as I find you  
if you  
are finding me....

WILLIAM T. NETTER

## I AM THERE

*(A copy of this poem was left on the Moon by Apollo 15 Astronaut James Irwin.)*

Do you need Me?

I am there.

You cannot see Me, yet I am the light you see by.

You cannot hear Me, yet I speak through your voice

You cannot feel Me, yet I am the power at work in your hands.

I am at work, though you do not understand My ways.

I am at work, though you do not recognise My works.

I am not strange visions, I am not mysteries.

Only in absolute stillness, beyond self, can you

know Me as I am, and then but as a feeling and a faith.

Yet I am there. Yet I hear. Yet I answer

When you need Me, I am there.

Even if you deny Me, I am there.

Even when you feel most alone, I am there.

Even in your fears, I am there.

Even in your pain, I am there.

I am there when you pray and when you do not pray.

I am in you and you are in Me.

Only in your mind can you feel separate from Me

for only in your mind are the mists of 'yours' and 'mine'.

Yet only with your mind can you know Me and experience Me.

Empty your heart of empty fears.

When you get yourself out of the way, I am there.

You can of yourself do nothing, but I can do all.

And I am in all.

Though you may not see the good, the good is there, for I am there.

I am there because I have to be, because I am.

Only in Me does the world have meaning; only out of Me

does the world take form; only because of Me does the world go forward.

I am the law on which the movement of the stars and the growth of living cells are founded.

I am the love that is the law's fulfilling.

I am assurance.

I am peace.

I am oneness.

I am the law that you can live by.

I am the love that you can cling to.

I am your assurance.  
 I am your peace.  
 I am one with you.  
 I am.  
 Though you fail to find Me, I do not fail you.  
 Though your faith in Me is unsure, My faith in you never wavers,  
     because I know you, because I love you.  
 Beloved, I am there.

JAMES DILLET FREEMAN

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## SRI AUROBINDO APPEARS

I WEEP as I behold his glowing form  
 That rises like a cloud of golden rain  
 And pours down a stream of living fire  
 That overflows in tears of godlike pain.

A sun ablaze on his majestic throne,  
 A tranquil earth beneath his gaze at noon,  
 Rays of compassion pouring from his eyes,  
 A moment of unbearable bliss his boon.

The star upon my brow melts into fire  
 And I plunge into seas of bright oblivion;  
 The lotus in my breast is ravished by love  
 And I perish in an agony of vision.

Overwhelmed by his sudden manifestation,  
 My soul adores in anguish and submission.

ROD

# 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 May, 1973)*

5 (Contd).

### ZAEHNER'S INTERPRETATION OF TEILHARD, THE QUESTION OF TEILHARD'S PANTHEISM

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THE main cause of Maloney's failure to see that Teilhardism is not truly descended from St. Paul, St. John and the Greek Fathers lies in his misconstruing their mysticism.

This mysticism is rooted in the vision which Maloney<sup>1</sup> states: "Christ is not to be separated from material reality. All reality is already christologically structured by the incarnation whereby God inserted himself into his creation." The inner movement set up by such a vision was a powerful one: God's presence and activity everywhere through Christ were vividly figured and felt. Christ was the Logos, the Divine Word, that bore an Image of the unseen Transcendence and brought it into direct relationship with a material universe whose centre was man. Man's intellect and will fitted him to be God's immediate instrument: they constituted the seeds of his likeness to God and of his claim to be a son of God, a co-heir with Christ. But the rest of creation too had a claim to transformation. The whole cosmos has its source in the Logos that holds the exemplary Idea, the supreme End or Finality of all things. All things were created for a divine consummation, and this purpose constitutes their logos, the reason for each thing's particular existence. But the sin of Adam, the first man, spoiled the original design, and disorder entered the universe. The Incarnation of Christ is God's gesture to save man and, with his salvation, restore harmony in the cosmos. Assuming a body like that of all humanity, Christ linked divinity to earth and established for ever God's communication with and infusion of the world. He is the Second Adam come to undo the sin of the First Adam. "Faith shows us Christ immanently working to transform and complete God's creation. Instead of fleeing the material world we are to encounter Christ there."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Cosmic Christ From Paul to Teilhard* (Sheed and Ward, New York, 1968), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

Thus to encounter Christ and restore God's original design by self-discipline and love and the proper approach to our earthly environment was the mysticism of the Greek Fathers trying to follow the trail blazed by St. Paul. "St. Paul," continues Maloney,<sup>1</sup> "more than any other early sacred writer beheld Christ immersed in and energizing the created, material world."

The Pauline mysticism of the Greek Fathers may be called that of realising the Cosmic Christ in the sense that a universal harmony was the aim through a moral-religious development of the individual Christian. But basically it is a mysticism of the transcendent Christ. There was no inherent divinity perceived in material existence. Maloney himself points this out when, before throwing into relief the characteristics of the new religion, he contrasts with Christianity the attitude of the pagans among whom it first grew up:

"...for the pagan Greeks, the world was inhabited by numinous beings. Because God was not conceived by the Greeks as transcendent, he became the immanent director of the entire cosmos. The world of God and the world of men became one. God became many Gods with a small *g*, while man became Man with a capital *M*. Judaeo-Christianity, aware of its true mission, exalted the other-ness of God, his absolute transcendence. Creatures are absolutely worldly because in no sense are they God. For this reason early Christians were considered by the pagan Greeks as atheists (*atheoi*) because they denied the existence of immanent Gods.... The God of the Old and New Testaments...was utterly distinct from creatures, as Being is distinct from Becoming, as Allness is distinct from Nothingness.

"Still, early Christian thinkers did not despise the world but recognized it ontologically for what it truly is. It is not God. It possesses by its nature nothing of God's inner life....<sup>2</sup> In the historical person of Jesus Christ, God and human beings communicate in a relationship hitherto unknown.... Through Christ, he communicates his being to something other than himself....<sup>3</sup> God has given himself to us through other finite creatures by giving extrinsically of his perfections in a finite, imperfect, participated mode of existence. But the incarnation reveals God's *intrinsic* giving of himself, the gift of his very inner life to mankind in a visible, human form, an autonomous human consciousness, that can never be reversed or extinguished...<sup>4</sup>

"Not only is [Christ] the exemplar, the Divine Logos according to whom, as St. John tells us in his Prologue, God created all things and in whom all things have their being, but also he is this Body-Person who has become the working agent to effect the fulfillment of God's plan of creation. The [Greek] Fathers' vision reveals the structure of cosmic Christology: Christ, the God-man, is the redeeming and fulfilling centre of the total created universe...<sup>5</sup>

"It is necessary to establish an intimate relationship between ourselves and Christ, first, in order to bring about within us the 'new creation', ... and secondly, to effect the transformation of the total cosmos under Christ's actual dominion...<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.    <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

“Man has the power through his free will to use, rule, dominate and direct the entire universe; but this power has been given so that through the proper exercise of it he can subordinate his will to that of the Supreme Ruler. This is what many of the Eastern Fathers, such as St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. John Damascene, affirmed: it is in the fact that God has bestowed on man power and dominion over the non-human cosmos that we see in man the ‘image and likeness’ of God. As co-creator with the immanent divine Logos present in the cosmos, man is to achieve the fullness of his being.”<sup>1</sup>

What are we to make of the term “immanence” as used by Maloney? The “divine Logos” of the Eastern Fathers is not immanent in the Greek sense of directing the universe from within it. That is the first point. Next: only after Christ’s incarnation is the Logos irreversibly present in the universe as a force restorative of all things through man. Before Christ, it can be said to be immanent just in so far as there is implicit in all things the divine destiny envisaged for them in the exemplary Idea, the End or Finality of them, conceived by the transcendent Logos. What can be defined as immanence, therefore, is the potency which the transcendent Logos, as the extrinsic creator of a world other than God, has put in all things to follow its guiding plan. This potency, this implicit destiny in all things is their *logoi*, their varied *raison d’être*. But they have no living divine dweller within them, any more than the fitting parts of a machine, each meant for a certain co-operative function, have any in-dweller. The parts represent a purpose operating from outside them. So, before Christ’s life in the world, the Logos, with its *logoi*, has its workings here in an extrinsic manner. These workings may be termed its immanent functions, but the extrinsic manner renders the alleged immanence indirect. After Christ, there is a dynamic presence and activity of God commingled with the stuff of the universe. This may be more validly described as “Christ immanently working” or “the immanent divine Logos present in the cosmos”. Yet, even after Christ’s coming, it is the transcendent Logos with whom the universe’s stuff is commingled. The Christic Logos is the transcendent Second Person of the Trinity, the extrinsic “Son of God”, in two states: one utterly separate from the world though having the world’s destiny in its operative vision — and the other inseparably associated with the world and acting as a power of achieving the world’s destiny. In between there is the transcendent Logos giving itself not intrinsically as in Christ but extrinsically in imperfect instruments, none of whom is its incarnation. Here we have an association with the world, but no question of any immanence arises.

Can we really compare with the Teilhardian kind of immanence whatever immanent presence and activity the early Pauline school of mysticism offers us? Maloney, surveying both the ancient and the modern interpreters of Paul, singles out Teilhard as the greatest among the latter in reviving earlier Christianity’s vision of the Cosmic Christ. With reference to all the moderns and to him in particular, Maloney<sup>2</sup> writes:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

“The ‘immanence’ thinkers, although they recognize a clear distinction between the natural and the supernatural orders, the secular and the sacred, the world and the Church, do not seek to separate them in their concrete reality but to unite them through the finality of God’s continuous creative act that is vitally related to God’s redemptive and sanctifying activity.

“In his unpublished work, *Comment je vois* (1948), Teilhard de Chardin speaks the mind of these thinkers in complaining of the various distinct acts in the drama of human salvation conceived as independent of each other. He rather binds them together by his vision of the creative union. For Teilhard there is no creation without an incarnation and no incarnation without redemption. These fundamental mysteries of Christianity are but three ‘faces’ of the one great mystery, the divine process of pleromization, the fulfillment or perfecting through the unifying reduction of the multiple.”

What Maloney appears to suggest here is as follows. “Pleromization”, the final gathering-together and divinising of the cosmos in Christ at the end of history, is the cardinal truth of our existence. All history organically serves this cosmic Christification so that we must take Creation, Incarnation and Redemption to be one indivisible process. Each of the three “acts” necessarily involves the other two. And all of them are successive phases of what Teilhard often calls “Christogenesis”, one ever-increasing formation of, in Maloney’s phrase,<sup>1</sup> “a Christ-in-the-cosmos”, rather than of a Christ-realisation bearing us moment by moment away from cosmic reality into another world. Maloney’s suggestion, on the strength of Teilhard’s vision, is valid—but it does not do full justice to the specific quality of the vision.

By this vision Teilhard is not merely expressing in a modern style what was “articulated by the leading theologians of the ancient Church”<sup>2</sup> — namely, “Christ’s dynamic presence and activity in this world”.<sup>3</sup> Teilhard goes much further, and Maloney misses the heart of Teilhardism by not realising the meaning of the term he employs in writing of the key-phenomenon discerned by Teilhard: “creative union”, with its “unifying reduction of the multiple”. “Creative union” is the way Teilhard conceives the creative act of God. This act, which in traditional theology produces the universe from nothingness, is to Teilhard God’s totally unified Trinity brought into intimate relation with a totally dissociated multiplicity. To unify that pure Multiple, one aspect of God’s triune being joins itself to it, and thus creation begins. But creation does not complete by an instantaneous act the unification of multiplicity. It is a continuous movement resulting in more and more amount of creative union until the pleroma is achieved. For, the world that is created is “evolutive”. And to be evolutive does not mean simply that there is progressive unification: it means also that the world is a single whole extending breaklessly in all directions of time and space so that one and the same process is always and everywhere going on in a greater and greater degree. The creative act thus is continuous in the most literal sense. What happened at the start is in one form or another what has been happening ever since.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

That is why Incarnation and Redemption are Creation itself appearing in different shades. Conversely, the creative act which took place at the start is Incarnation and Redemption themselves in an initial modality. And such a way of seeing things brings out clearly the significance of the Teilhardian truth that at creation God, without being drawn out in His entirety, joins Himself to the Multiple. By creation God in some measure incarnates in the universe. The uniquely spotlighted Christian Incarnation is only a visible crystallised sign of God's immersion in the cosmos, of God's direct omnipresent immanence in the universe from the very commencement of space-time reality.

In the two preceding chapters we have culled several texts from Teilhard about this theme. To clinch our contention that Maloney's is a watered-down version, we may briefly refer to them again and add one more as an introduction. Teilhard<sup>1</sup> writes: "[Christianity's] three fundamental personalist mysteries are in reality the three aspects of one and the same process (Christogenesis) considered either in its motive principle (creation), or in its unifying mechanism (incarnation), or in its ascensional work (redemption)." Elsewhere Teilhard takes up the "unifying-mechanism" idea, which involves the operation of the divine Unity upon the absolute multiplicity which is for Teilhard the sole form of nothingness from which God can create. He<sup>2</sup> tells us: "to create is for God to unite himself to his work, that is to say in one way or another to involve himself in the world by incarnation. And is not 'to be incarnate' *ipso facto* to share in the sufferings and evils inherent in the painfully concentrating multiple?" Teilhard<sup>3</sup> also speaks of "creation (*because* it is unifying) entailing a certain immersion of the creator in his work and at the same time (*because* it is necessarily productive of evil as a secondary statistical effect) entailing a certain redemptive compensation". A sort of shock-tactics summing-up in the most straightforward fashion is in Teilhard's statement:<sup>4</sup> "The first act of the Incarnation, the first appearance of the Cross [= Redemption] is marked by the plunging of the divine Unity into the ultimate depths of the Multiple...."

An incarnation on a universal scale, effectuating an immanence of God with a concrete, physical, organic, "definable basis", is, for Teilhard, the starting-point of the evolutive universe. Maloney hardly provides for such an incarnation — and yet this is precisely the Cosmic Christ of Teilhard. The cosmicity which Christ assumes after his historical birth, death and resurrection is just the intensified or glorified play of an immanent divine cosmicity which was there before the appearance of God's Son upon earth. And this immanent cosmicity of Christ in a pantheist sense is something Christianity, whether of the Greek Fathers or of a later day, can never accept, no matter if Teilhard<sup>5</sup> himself asks with optimistic wishful thinking: "Is there anything in what I have said that is not both extremely Christian and extremely consistent?" What he has said does have extreme consistency, but it drives an uncompromising wedge between his Cosmic Christ and the one acceptable to orthodoxy.

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 155.   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 182-83.   <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> *Science and Christ* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 64.   <sup>5</sup> *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 183.



## (3)

The feature Teilhard has in common with his predecessors is that God, for him, remains transcendent in the Christian sense even while being cosmic in the pantheist sense. Inasmuch as God does so, Teilhard cannot be called a sheer pantheist, but inasmuch as his Christ is universally immanent in a direct manner Teilhard cannot be labelled a sheer Christian. His point of resemblance to the Greek Fathers and to their successors can scarcely be brought home by saying that his Christology, like theirs, is dynamic, this-worldly and in consequence that their Christology, like his, is cosmic. The dynamism he shares with them has an entirely different background and basis of theology. Theologically the transcendent Christ and not the Cosmic Christ is what runs from their outlook to his. The Cosmic Christ proper to him is founded on a Christ-coloured Vedanta — for Vedanta alone combines Transcendence and Pantheos.

How Vedantic Teilhard is can be judged perhaps most comprehensively from a very succinct passage<sup>1</sup> of his, as late as 1945,<sup>2</sup> about the “two phases” of what he designates “theogenesis”. Theogenesis means God-origination, God-formation, God’s self-making. Teilhard pictures Christianity’s “Holy Trinity” as God positing his own “trinitarian structure” by reflecting himself on his own being and achieving a “trinitization” — the eternal union of three Persons as one. In his trinitarian structure he has a self-sufficient existence. “Trinitization” is the primary phase of theogenesis. The secondary phase concerns not his self-sufficient existence where his activity is turned inward, but what Christian theology dubs “participated being” where his activity is turned outward. Participated being does not exist in its own right : it is real by means of Another, it exists by participation in God’s existence, God’s reality. Here Teilhard has the words: “He envelops himself in participated being, by evolutive unification of pure multiple (‘positive non-being’) born (in a state of absolute potency) by antithesis to pre-positing trinitarian unity: *Creation*.” Here two points stand out.

One is God’s envelopment in the universe he creates: that is to say, his universal incarnation. The other is that the *mhl*, the “non-being”, from which God creates is not only defined as “multiple”, and characterised as “positive” but also described as an “antithesis” to God’s triune being. Surely a shadowy existence is posited as necessarily counterpointing the trinity-in-unity. “Born”, even if in a state of absolute potency, as an opposite balance to God’s plenary actuality, it is his antipodal reflection of himself. So God makes his own reality on the one hand by an eternally perfect self-vision and on the other by an evolutive self-vision by which he is incarnated in his antipodal self and gradually grows perfect in space-time. Thus Teilhard, in however veiled a fashion, conjures up Pantheos no less than Transcendence.

It is in the light, caught from various directions, of a Christ-coloured Vedanta

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 178, fn 4.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

that we have to look at the Logos of the Greek Fathers and the Logos of Teilhard. Their Logos does not suffice for the Teilhardian stance in Christology. The Teilhardian stance demands a new one. Christianity is asked not simply to adapt the ancient Logos to a novel purpose but to add a new dimension to its Logos-vision. In the same essay which contains the succinct passage we have discussed above, he<sup>1</sup> writes: "In the first century of the Church, Christianity made its definitive entry into human thought by boldly identifying the Christ of the gospel with the Alexandrian Logos. The logical culmination of the same tactics and the prelude to the same success must be found in the instinct which is now urging the faithful, after two thousand years, to return to the same policy; but this time it must not be with the ordinating principle of the stable Greek kosmos but with the neo-Logos of modern philosophy — the evolutive principle of a universe in movement."

Here Teilhard is trying to persuade orthodox Christianity to modernise itself; so he employs expressions like "the logical culmination of the same tactics" and "to return to the same policy". But actually what he is urging is a revolutionisation of the immanence-concept. And in this revolutionisation what is wanted is that Christianity should rectify the error it committed in the course of assimilating the Alexandrian Logos — the error of dropping out the pantheist immanence of "the ordinating principle of the stable Greek kosmos". Now not only is the stable character of the ordained universe to be revised and movement introduced: the mode of ordination also has to be revised. For when the ordinating principle was Christianised, its true Greek spirit underwent a change. How it did so may be gathered from Glen R. Morrow's account of the Logos-doctrine in early times. After defining the term "Logos" in its philosophical sense as "a cosmic reason which gives order and intelligibility to the world" and after touching on its first appearance in Heraclitus he comes to the period when Christianity was in its infancy. He<sup>2</sup> tells us:

"The conception is developed more fully by the Stoics who conceive of the world as a unity, perfect in the adaptation of its parts to one another and to the whole and animated by an immanent and purposive reason. As the creative source of this cosmic unity and perfection, the world-reason is called the seminal reason (*logos spermatikos*) and is conceived as containing within itself a multitude of *logoi spermatikoi*, or intelligible and purposive forms operating in the world. As regulating all things, the Logos is identified with Fate (*heimarmene*); as directing all things toward the good, with Providence (*pronoia*) and as the ordered course of events, with Nature (*physis*). In Philo of Alexandria, in whom Hebrew modes of thought mingled with Greek concepts, the Logos becomes the immaterial instrument, and even at times the personal agency, through which the creative activity of the transcendent God is exerted upon the world. In Christian philosophy the Logos becomes the second person of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-1.

<sup>2</sup> *The Dictionary of Philosophy*, Edited by Dagobert D. Runes (Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1957), pp 183-84.

Trinity and its functions are identified with the creative, illuminating and redemptive work of Jesus Christ."

We can see that the Christian Logos, in consonance with the Christian God's continuity with the Judaic Jehovah, was adapted from the Alexandrian school of mystic Judaism which had already lost the essential pantheist element of the Stoic Logos. Teilhard's Christified neo-Logos of evolution, while retaining the transcendent element received by Christianity from the Philonian version, involves a come-back of the Stoic immanence with Teilhard's "generalization of Christ-the-Redeemer in a true Christ-the-Evolver (he who, with the sins, bears the whole weight of the world in progress)".<sup>1</sup> The come-back is inevitable in "this elevation of the historic Christ to a universal physical function", "this final identification of cosmogenesis with a Christogenesis".<sup>2</sup> The inevitability strikes us all the more forcibly when Teilhard discusses the new mystical orientation to which his suggestions for a new theology gives rise. He<sup>3</sup> paints the cosmic picture that would serve as the background of that orientation:

"Supposing...the universal-Christ assumes the place and fulfils the function of Omega-point: we shall then find that a warm light spreads from top to bottom and over the whole cross-section of the cosmic layers, rising up from the nethermost depths of things. With cosmogenesis being transformed...into Christogenesis, it is the stuff, the main stream, the very being of the world which is now *being personalized*. *Someone*, and no longer something, is in gestation in the universe."

The Universal or Cosmic Christ is evidently at the same time an already existent fullness and a fullness in the making, "in gestation". In his evolving aspect he is "the stuff, the main stream, the very being of the world". Hence Teilhard has spoken not only of Christ the Evolver but also of the Evolutive Christ,<sup>4</sup> and it is both in unison that constitute the Cosmic Christ. The Christ already "full" is the transcendent acting as the immanent, as the cosmically immersed and incarnate, the divine Unity plunged into the multiple. The Christ in the process of fullness is the multiple getting more and more reduced to divine Unity, the incarnate and the immersed and the immanent growing one on a cosmic scale with the transcendent to make the Pleroma. On the long road to "Pleromization" the universal incarnation attains an individual incarnation in which the transcendent acting as the immanent shows forth, concentratedly uplifting "the whole weight of a world in progress". Subsequent to the "epiphany", the Cosmic Christ has an increased "diaphany", an intensified shining through universal matter in order to divinise all things into the Mystical Body whose completion or, if we like, total manifestation will be the Pleroma.

Such is Teilhard's vision of the Cosmic Christ. It has no real parallel in any of the Greek Fathers expounded by Maloney. And Teilhard<sup>5</sup> himself points to the non-parallelism when he writes of the new orientation of mysticism which results from

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

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

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> As in the passage from *Le Cœur de la matière*, quoted by de Lubac in *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning* (A Mentor-Omega Book, New York, 1967), p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184

Christianity's acceptance of the neo-Logos, the principle of evolution:

"To believe and to serve was not enough: we now find that it is becoming not only possible but also *imperative* literally to love evolution.

"Analysed from the Christian point of view, as spontaneously and necessarily born from contact between faith in Christ and faith in the world, love of evolution is not a mere extension of love of God to one further object. It corresponds to a radical reinterpretation (one might almost say it emerges from a recasting) of the notion of charity. 'Thou shalt love God.' 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour for the love of God.' In its new form, 'Thou shalt love God in and through the genesis of the universe and of mankind', this twofold gospel commandment is synthesized into a single meaningful act, with an as yet unparalleled field of application and power to make new. Indeed, as a result of this transposition (still only made *possible* today by a decisive advance in human reflection) Christian charity is forthwith both dynamised, universalized and (if I may be allowed the word, taken in its most legitimate meaning), 'pantheized'.

"a. *Dynamized*: no longer merely to ease the suffering, to bind up the wounds, to succour the weakness, of mankind; but, through every form of effort and discovery, to urge its powers, by love, right up to the higher term.

"b. *Universalized*: no longer merely to concentrate our attention and our concern on souls adrift in a neutral or hostile universe; but, with passionate drive, to accept and urge on the complete and total operation of the cosmic forces in which the universal-Christ is born and fulfilled in each one of us.

"c. '*Pantheized*': no longer to adhere vitally to God through some central and specially favoured point of our being; but to communicate, to 'super-communicate', with him (without fusion or confusion — for as love unites its terms, so it differentiates and personalizes them) through all the height, the breadth, the depth and the multiplicity of the organic powers of space and time."

It should be obvious that if the mystical orientation from the Teilhardian vision of the Cosmic Christ has "a radical reinterpretation", almost "a recasting", and not "a mere extension" of the idea of Godward love, the vision itself must be worlds away from that of the Greek Fathers and the moderns who walk in their footsteps.

We may well end on the word "pantheized". Teilhard tries to guard against its essential sense by saying: "taken in its most legitimate meaning". The illegitimate meaning, to his mind, would involve an exclusion of divine transcendence and of persistent individual "souls". But the language in which he couches "love of evolution" demands that somehow — along lines like those of the original Vedanta — he should reconcile pantheism with transcendentalism, and identity of divine substance with diversity or "differentiation" of souls. When he asks us "to love God in and through the genesis of the universe and of mankind" or when he afterwards frames the formula: "Love God in and through the universe in evolution"<sup>1</sup>, we cannot help the impression that he takes the cosmos — where the multiple is being unified —

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 185

to be fundamentally an antithetical projection of God in an evolving form whose consummation will be an emerged Godhead, the divine "someone" whose gestation in space-time is cosmogenesis. Teilhard, across all his struggles to keep within orthodox Christianity, issues with a Christianity genuinely "pantheized" no less than with a pantheism genuinely Christianised.

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

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## GREAT BIRDS

WHERE are the great birds that fly all night into the night?

Why do they cry? who are they?

Why do the birds cry in my sleep?

Sleep, child, sleep.

These are the carriers of the deep thoughts.

These are the carriers of the dream,

over the ocean of dark they fly into the dark

to weave the light into the night,

delight into sorrow,

to shed the tender flame,

to wed yesterday to tomorrow.

They remember the sunken beginning

and with cries of victory pluck

jewels from the forgotten rock

and carry rubies of life to feed the end of death.

With the dip of their wings

they signal the message of the

Friend to the friend.

While we sleep they beat

their hard wings within us

and fly over the deserts of our fears

to spread their radiance in the core of midnight

and draw forever

in their great bills the golden thread

of the secret curtain that drains the world of tears.

MAGGI

## PEGASUS AND "THE WHITE HORSE" OF G. K. CHESTERTON

(Continued from the issue of May, 1973)

2

MOST poetry confines itself to forceful figurative sight and beautifully suggested thought, but when these combine with a sense of the inward significance of life's happenings the three together render a very satisfying greatness possible. G. K. C. is not by any means a great poet; still, that wondrous possibility he did have, though in a rather uncertain manner, with a rather fitful and sporadic brilliance. For his sudden flashes, lyric or quasi-epic, have that rare third virtue — a delicate or a strong grasp of meanings behind the surface, an out-look thrown from a depth of idea and emotion to understand and interpret the spectacle of events, an attempt to feel the pulse of the wider instincts, impulses, destinies, powers at work in the universe. In poetry this virtue has no indispensable affinity to the occult exquisiteness of Yeats or the mystic opulence that is Sri Aurobindo's. Occult or mystic it may be, yet its fundamental connotation is not thus limited: it can also be moral or philosophical, provided there is no dull morality or dry philosophy. Just as Arnold could not read Macaulay's

To all the men upon this earth  
Death cometh soon or late

without a cry of pain at its ring of false metal, one cannot refrain from laughter at the goody-goody sentimentalism tagged on to the *Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge:

He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

It cannot be arraigned on the score of simplicity or even a childlike naiveté: the mariner has a mentality primitive enough; the point is that the simplicity everywhere else has a delicate strangeness, a touch of ether and fire, while here a commonplace diction narrows down as well as superficialises the large interpretative vision this ballad brings — the keen consciousness of profound impulses and powers of being which deepens the general poetic pleasure, adding a new facet to the rich quality of the word-music. Chesterton also brings a large interpretative vision, marred here and there by a too obvious moral and pro-Christian colour, but often resplendent with a true Christian idealism and a vivid if partial understanding of alien ardours. In addition, his sparks of "high seriousness" bear a cryptic tinge, so that the super-

natural is never far away, although its nearness is unlike the atmosphere created in Coleridge's poem. In Coleridge the inspiration is more weirdly cryptic — the ancient mariner is a creature haunted by supernatural life-forms whose touch is almost directly felt by us; Chesterton's verse is haunted by supernatural idea-forms — that is, a peculiar nuance in the language and a certain imaginative glimpse suggest presences beyond the mind, without opening a door almost in the senses to feel them. The very first two stanzas set the cryptic tone:

Before the gods that made the gods  
Had seen their sunrise pass,  
The White Horse of the White Horse Vale  
Was cut out of the grass.  
Before the gods that made the gods  
Had drunk at dawn their fill,  
The White Horse of the White Horse Vale  
Was hoary on the hill.

If the ballad-swing and jaunt had not interfered, the thought and the cast of phrase would have reached a unique perfection. As it is, too, it is worth while marking the poetic device whereby the antiquity of the White Horse is increasingly hinted: the passing of the sunrise is mentioned before the actual dawn. Then, the word "hoary" is an absolutely felicitous pun with its double meaning of "white" and "old": Chesterton must have written it with a whoop of delight. But the surest stroke to express the immemorial is the phrase: "the gods that made the gods" — a cryptic turn in which is summarised the Norse feeling that there was vista on inscrutable vista of the supernatural, there were powers behind mysterious powers, there were strange successions of divine dynasties. In another stanza, Elf the blue-eyed minstrel of the Rhine-land first sings how the gods forgot the mistletoe,

And soundless as an arrow of snow  
The arrow of anguish fell

killing Balder the beautiful. Then he conjures up an uncanny Fate dogging the world's steps:

The thing on the blind side of the heart,  
The wrong side of the door,  
The green plant groweth, menacing  
Almighty lovers in the spring,  
There is always a forgotten thing,  
And love is not secure.

Every line here is fine cryptic poetry and high seriousness; and what a verbal gem is

that “almighty” with its rare suggestion of the elated joy and flush and godlike power felt by young love. An equally fine passage of interpretative vision, with a couple of exceedingly magical moments — the end of the third verse and that of the fourth — is about Colan and the Celtic twilight ever in his thought:

He kept the Roman order,  
 He made the Christian sign:  
 But his eyes grew often blind and bright,  
 And the sea that rose in the rocks at night  
 Rose to his head like wine.

He made the sign of the Cross of God,  
 He knew the Roman prayer,  
 But he had unreason in his heart  
 Because of the gods that were.

Even they that walked on the high cliffs,  
 High as the clouds were then,  
 Gods of unbearable beauty  
 That broke the hearts of men.

And whether in seat or saddle,  
 Whether with frown or smile,  
 Whether at feast or fight was he,  
 He heard the noise of a nameless sea  
 On an undiscovered isle.

Christian idealism finds often a memorable expression in the course of Chesterton’s narrative: not so often as it should, though, considering that almost the entire poem strains to be such an expression. Alfred goes gathering comrades after his vision of the Virgin, and to each of them he conveys its compulsive inspiration, for he is fired by a reality greater than his personal self:

Out of the mouth of the Mother of God,  
 Like a little word come I.

She has not spoken to him about the end of his enterprise, she has left him to “go gaily in the dark”, but

Her face was like an open word  
 Where brave men speak and choose;  
 The very colours of her coat  
 Were better than good news.



So he brings with him a convinced prophecy that what seems impossible shall be done — the Danes' tyranny shall be trod down, their heathen creed destroyed, and the English live to see, with the Virgin's help,

A tale where a man looks down on the sky  
That has long looked down on him.

Here we have the cryptic at its most audacious, as also when Alfred during his incognito reconnoitre in the Danish camp as a poor harper sings to them the Christian idea of man and the first fall and how, since it was due to the divine freedom with which God had gifted him and not to some ineluctable or blind Fate, even Adam's transgression was a glory — though it brought human nature most dangerously near perdition. That dangerous nearness, that dreadful proclivity, is caught in a figure:

He brake Him and betrayed Him,  
And fast and far he fell,  
Till you and I may stretch our necks  
And burn our beards in hell.

It may be that the figure gains a doubly delectable point for those who boast a hirsute chin. Lovers of poetic elegance may demur that its language is almost like a blow in the face. But the refusal altogether to enjoy it argues a defect in the artistic gusto. For this blow is not crude extravagance: it is shot out at the mund's eye, the imaginative vision, and its impact makes one "see stars" somewhat in the sense in which out of two sounds Browning's *Abt Vogler* makes not a third but a star. It is not the grotesque running riot: the grotesque has been illumined and sublimated, even if the "star" Chesterton gives us is an asteroid and not quite a planet. Aeschylus who called Helen "a lion's whelp" would have relished it; Marlowe who spoke of "Cassandra sprawling in the streets" would have gloried in it.... Chesterton, however, has more than one string to his bow: his style can be Elizabethan in effects other than the Gothic — a quieter force and a gentler vividness. Perhaps the lines that sum up best the Christian courage and the Christian mystic tendency that are his main theme are those already quoted:

That they cast their hearts out of their ken  
To get their heart's desire;

while the most beautiful picture of the mystic truth which is believed to be evoking and guiding that courage through the ages is drawn in that reappearance of the Virgin on the battlefield just as the last rally of the broken English troops is made and the last charge to victory commanded by Alfred:

The King looked up and what he saw  
 Was a great light like death,  
 For our Lady stood on the standards rent,  
 As lonely and as innocent  
 As when between white walls she went  
 And the lilies of Nazareth.

...I have quoted enough to show Chesterton's merit. His ballad — minus the last section — has eminences which will not let it sink out of memory. *In toto* it is more a promise than a performance, rhetoric and rant or popular sentimentalism thrust themselves again and again between the sheer poetic cries, and we are compelled to accept the entire piece with a certain reserve; but there is no questioning that the root of great poetry was in Chesterton. He remains a might-have-been, yet with moments of inspiration that are noteworthy for a special reason. I hold that distinct lines of poetic consciousness run behind the world's outer life and mind, sending out shoots, so to speak, into the latter; and when these are received in abundance we have an Elizabethan, an Augustan, a Victorian or any other age of poetry with ruling characteristic notes. G.K.C., as I have already hinted, belongs in his defects as well as merits to the Elizabethan, though with a subtle difference from its general temperament since he is one of its stray shoots. He has poetically the mental turn of Chapman and Marlowe, and he has their tendency of life-impetus, too; but in them the latter royally disported itself in its own authentic vigour or, otherwise, seized on the mind to attain a more ingenious effectivity, while in Chesterton it is rather the mind using the recrudescence life-impetus for his most telling strokes. All the same, his affinity with the "spacious days", with an inner poetic world of greater power and possibility than at present manifest in purely English letters makes his finer qualities more interesting than those exercised by several living poets. He has a resilient boldness and even his delicacy is dynamic. And he has behind him a splendid enthusiasm: the White Horse stands like a dominating symbol of valorous Faith ready to rush towards death, death which to its eyes is "a great light" leading unto the beatific vision. No doubt he fails to appreciate the old Norse religion in its full relation to life, unlike Morris who gave a puissant reflection of it in his *Sigurd the Volsung*. That was to be expected, so steeped is he in the Christian ideology; and I for one find no reason to complain against this bias, since it is blown towards us in gusts of genuine poetic ecstasy. But that there should be no more than gusts when the ecstasy is so peculiarly brave renders Chesterton's journalistic triumphs an inexcusable self-dissipation.

(Concluded)

AMAL KIRAN

## GOPALPUR-ON-SEA

I WAS standing on the shores of Gopalpur — the events of the last thirty years swept by me in a torrential stream like legends from the remote and dateless past returning with the iridescence of many-splendoured secrets long lost.

It was twilight. The fishermen had put away their nets and were returning home. The waves exhausted with another long day's laborious task were ebbing back to the ocean, slowly and hesitantly. Now and again, with a final agonising effort, a wave flung its welter of gritty sand and creamy foam upon the beach, at my feet — a last dying call to hear its message before it plunged back into its fathomless home. With it perished another epic — the untold chapters lost forever. The surge declined as if never to return with its phenomenal burden, but the morrow would find it marching forward once more with jubilant strides to the world. Is there none to hear its yearning call? Such an unquenchable determination to give, such a long pilgrimage to the shores—waiting, forever waiting, waiting aeons for a passer-by to stop and attend to its story. But there is no one who stops, no one to lighten its burden. Yet the ocean remains undefiled, returning each day with fresh hope, with renewed ardour, to fling itself passionately on the beach at the feet of passers-by.

I picked up a tiny shell that lay at my feet, awaiting recognition. I observed closely, lovingly, its mazy cavernous depths enclosing within their confines the legends of past years. I held it to my ear and heard a divine music, softly unfolding its secrets. Now a rumble, now a sigh, then the sounds of a lute quivering in delight, or the tender whisperings of a lover! Could I but peer into the depths of this mysterious minstrel, I would come across my own dearly beloved tale as a part of its gigantic saga, the saga of over a decade. It babbles incessantly and then, when I put it down, returns without a word of thanks or praise to the unexplorable profundities of its home. There, where no diver can reach, where no one can exhume it, it gets lost forever.

I sat with the shell in my hand and was lost in another beautiful world which seemed to have no link with the present and would vanish as suddenly as it had come if I was not aware of its ethereal presence. I recaptured those days and dwelt in their memory, the days which changed me so completely and suddenly, the days he spent in Gopalpur. I still recall in minutest detail the day he arrived in my secluded world.

He came in a cycle rickshaw, looking for accomodation. The local fishermen scrimmaged to direct him to the aristocratic "Palm Beach". I stood at a distance and scrutinised this new intruder. Every time one such arrived, our little seaside home would be sullied by an alien touch.

He finally approved of "Ocean House" and decided to put up in this more homely and comfortable cottage. I did not follow him as did the rest — they would probably all get a few coins for their services and these would be squandered on a glass or two of toddy.

I returned to the beach to collect shells and starfish and other unusual curios left behind by the ebbing evening tide. I would make a fancy ash-tray with them and display it with my other wares before him tomorrow.

I went to my unkempt rag-covered bamboo-walled home that stood on the shore. I had seen days of terror when the furious waves had leapt up uninhibited to engulf all that hampered the ocean's triumphant sweep. Could I ever erase from my memory that dreadful stormy night when our home was swept from its frail moorings and little Maina taken unawares to her trackless grave? Our life had always been a constant struggle with a callous, malicious sea and we had no way to escape to a better and safer life. This had been the home of my ancestors for years immemorial — how could I break away and start afresh all on my own?

I retired to my corner and grew busy with the shells before I got lost in another trance of living in a different world, beautiful and safe. I had the daintiest shells with me to make an ash-tray for him. I finished it with the sea-green and aster-red shells and made the stand of corals. I hurried to "Ocean House" before the other fishermen reached there with their assorted curios. He was the only tourist there. I arranged my wares before him and he was instantly fascinated by the ash-tray. I saw him looking at me with curious eyes and felt very conscious of my untidy shocking pink sari which was tied around my waist and clung tightly to my breasts, for I did not have a blouse to wear. My hair was twisted and coiled up on my head and kept in place with a few pins with a rose-bud on the right side. I felt terribly self-conscious of my dark, dusky complexion and my very black eyes. He said that he found my name "Elaya" very unusual. He said that he found me as mysterious and enchanting as my name and was sure he would find me one night on a rock amidst the silvery waves combing my hair in the moonlight. He bought the ash-tray saying, "I shall keep this with my other memories of the lovely mermaid of Gopalpur."

After that I met him very often and, though he spoke a strange exotic language, I found him very kind and friendly — a wonderful companion to have. We spent more and more time together — in the beginning they were accidental meetings on the beach or in the dining room where I served all the meals. Later he would seek me out and spend hours in my company.

He dwelt more and more in my thoughts. The relationship was one of a devotee and her lord. I returned to my shrine each day with fresh reverence to give myself up completely to serving and adoring my idol. I treasured every moment I was with him. I had never known love and the rapturous awakening of divine ecstasy it brought. My whole world was transformed. No human love could attain such violent yet pure devotion — it would satiate and weary, but mine kept expanding to dizzy rapturous dimensions day by day.

He would tell me of the places he had visited and how he had learned to discover beauty and perfection in everything he saw. He said that was what he saw in me the day I first came to him in Gopalpur. He established a perfect sympathy with me and was ever willing to clarify anything I did not understand in his musings. Thus rip-

ened the seeds of an everlasting friendship. At such times my constant struggle with the savage sea was forgotten and gave place to my land of dreams where I built my castle to soaring heights, shingled with glittering joy and happiness. Everything then was vibrant with life, every object shimmered with a glorious ambiance of delight.

One day, he confessed to have discovered life anew through my eyes, my "large, gloriously deep and black eyes", as he said, which had captivated him from the very beginning. I was taken unawares at this confession: how could my Lord be enchanted by an ordinary mortal, a fisherman's daughter who had nothing to offer except a selfless devotion to her Master! But he said he saw a beautiful world of eternal happiness in the depths of my eyes and wanted me to share that wonderful beauty and joy with him. And I who had never found beauty in my drab monotonous life found my outlook changing under his gently guiding influence.

Often I would sit by the seashore and watch the greedy waves lap the sandy beach; every form, every movement, every colour, every sound of the ocean now began to have a message for me. The superficial admiration for the sea's manifold beauties gave way to a deeper understanding and all my senses were vibrantly alive to grasp its ineffable messages.

The exquisite shell with a multitude of imprints had a galaxy of tales to unfold. The deep blue impressions brought enriching experiences from the ocean depths, telling of the mysterious life of another world. The minute pits and scars on it spoke of the tussle the frail shell had to wage with the furious waves in an attempt to survive their hostility. Such an indomitable will and perseverance to conquer! And when it emerged victorious, it had an ageless, profound, vital impression on it which now laid bare before my eager eyes all that it had to tell. I turned my eyes to the sea and watched in silence with a devotee's love and adoration and I saw days of imperialism, days of wreckage, chaos and adversity — it narrated all before it lost itself in the sea forever.

Each little creation had something to impart to me. I heard the rumbling of the ocean and the low harmonious octaves — all repeating their own stories. This new world of mine seemed a place of dreams and magic. In everything I plumbed deeper and discovered Truth and Beauty. Each revelation was delightful, each experience rewarding. Every object was to be admired and loved — all moulded beautifully with Divine dexterity, nothing imperfect, nothing grotesque to mar my limpid happiness. I would repeat to myself what he had once told me: "Beauty is Life when Life unveils her holy face. But you are Life and you are the veil. Beauty is Eternity gazing at itself in a mirror. But you are Eternity and you are the mirror."

I lifted my gaze from the sea's iridescent surface to the horizon — and beyond. And there I heard the sovereign voice of the Divine commanding and using the ocean-expanse as an instrument of his inscrutable design — using it now to encircle me with a happiness and contentment I had never known till I learnt from him to seize every message brought to me; to probe the depths and extract all that there was to be found from the mysterious Master.

He left Gopalpur after a month's stay, leaving behind an immortal gift for me — the gift which helped me to rise once more and yearn to enjoy life and feel grateful for every blessing bestowed on me. He left with a promise to return one day, to hear all the exquisite tales from my lips — tales from far and near swept to the shore.

Ever since he left, I have lived alert and vibrant to let not a single message go back unheard, unseen. Today I welcome an infinitesimal grain of sand, a formless jelly fish, or a gleaming shell with equal joy. They all have their secrets to share with me — the hidden wealth of an eternal sweetness. I sit and watch the kaleidoscope of nature and rejoice at the ever-changing patterns life holds for me. I patiently wait for the day when he will return to share with me the details of the magnificent epic that is sung to me every day, and go through this glorious journey with me.

'Farewell to you and the youth I have spent with you.

It was just yesterday we met in a dream.

You have sung to me in my aloneness — and I of your longings have built a tower in the sky.

The noontide is upon us and our half-awakening has turned to fuller day, and we must part.

If in the twilight of memory we should meet once more — we shall again speak together, and you shall sing to me a deeper song.

And if our hands should meet in another dream, we shall build another tower in the sky...<sup>1</sup>

NANDITA BHATTACHARYA

<sup>1</sup> The quotations are from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and *The Voice of the Master*

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## SOAR, O SOUL

SOAR, O soul, to the nude laughing skies,  
 To Time-spirit's clear clarion call,  
 To realms of unrevealed delight —  
 Then pierce into the dazzling deep  
 of creative calm —  
 A blazing breath of prayer  
 Mounting white peaks of peace...

A witness of the immaculate endeavour,  
 The trance-gripped whirling worlds  
 Mirror the splendour-goal of self-perfection.

VINAY

# SEVEN LIVES

## A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

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

### CHAPTER V

#### PART I

FINALLY, Silent Daughter reached the cliff face of a mountain so enormous in height and breadth that it fairly throbbed with the solidity and mass of its deep-buried spirit. Here, once more, the two started to rise, billowing upward vaporously in front of the almost perpendicular ice face, till they had ascended to a body's length beneath the summit. They now stepped forward onto a ledge so narrow that it was all but imperceptible, and followed it around to the other side of the peak where a cave stood that had the cap of the mountaintop itself for its roof. A sun of sublime yet intense white brilliance shone from the horizon directly into the cave's mouth, though it did not appear to be a sun formed of, or emanating, the energy of heat. It seemed to have coagulated, rather, from the intensity of some god-bent concentration, so pure and single-pointed was its fire.

"Come," Silent Daughter said. "We are here."

They passed through the entrance of the cave, she preceding the boy, and found its sole inhabitant seated against the back wall with his face to the sun that blazed outside. A sudden flash illuminated Silent Daughter's body, so great was her delight as she approached the serene figure. Before him she bowed while her son sank to his knees with the ease of an alighting bird. The ageless rishi, for such a one was he — none knowing how long he had sat in his cave nor how long it had taken him to project the sun that shone outside from the aspiration of his white-flamed heart — stretched forward his arms and received his guests with deep pleasure. For, despite the isolation of his abode and the undoubted rigours of his ascetic disciplines, he appeared thoroughly relaxed and unperturbed, with not a taut muscle in his body, or a crease in his tranquilly glowing face.

"Welcome, dear friend, I see you have brought one of our children," he said as he motioned Silent Daughter to sit by his side, while the boy automatically took his place at their feet.

"Yes," she answered. She looked at him for some time, then went on. "But you have changed since I last came, Shukratma — no longer do I find your outward form locked in meditation as it so often was; instead you seem to have expanded in every direction like a young and joyous sky alive with winging birds, where no enforced quietude is necessary."

“You observe correctly, dearest daughter. Since we last met, all has changed. The millennial concentration in which I had been engaged at last achieved its basic end. It succeeded in propelling every last atom of atavistic inertia within my consciousness into ethereal space, until now after skies have been cleared and suns flung forth, worlds traversed, and my substance rendered to light, all proceeds of itself, carried forward on the irresistible momentum of past effort.”

“Shukratma, my heart is full of gratification to find you thus. For where before I saw you carrying a great burden, I now discover that the burden has turned into the heavenly eagle that himself bears you through the heavens between his regal wings. May your release be a portent of what is to follow.”

“Portent it must surely be, dear goddess. The Divine One performs no miracle that does not affect the whole.... But I see that you come to me with some unspoken need —”

“Yes, ancient friend. I am called at last to bring one of my offspring fully conscious into the world. For strange intimations of awakening stir in the earth atmosphere and much that was buried and secret in our heart’s knowledge is urged to reveal itself. That which has lain dormant in our memory must now find its moment and live in all its time-honoured brilliance. All must be relearned that man may cease to be a pawn of his own mortality. Already my child, previously rendered to a state of helplessness — despite his aeons of life — by the Dark One’s malevolent curse, has struggled back to supple adolescence by his soul’s reliving of its own divinely inspired existence. All his inner self’s thoughts and feelings, vision and observation during that re-living flow again within him as the sap that supports the growing tree.

“But most critical now is the memory that belongs to both of you, for it is only that which can turn the boy into a man — a man that can defy mortality’s curse and endure through every vicissitude.”

A smile of a beauty only seen in dreams spread over Shukratma’s face, as he answered, “Lovely goddess, no request have you ever brought me that has not filled me with the passion of its joy. Yet this request inspires me with the profoundest delight of all. How well I remember my golden boy, Hiranyamaya — god-gift that was delivered into my hands by the Great One himself to bring up not merely as a son, but as some rare prince of a realm not yet discovered by the vulgar curiosity of men. So it is that you ask me to relive my sweetest moments of earthly life — though even then, that first time, a corner of my heart was heavy with the knowledge that his destiny lay far and long before him, and that somewhere on the road barbarians and thieves would rob him of his priceless treasures and leave him a beggar on his god-bent way.”

“Ah, Shukratma, I pray that we may now redress the damage.”

“Your words fill me with a young Kshatriya’s strength and ardour, and the years fall from me like droplets from the plumes of a fledgling duck, so dear is this mission you entrust to me and for which my heart sings. Come to me that I may touch you, child soul of my soul, and that you may remember the one you embraced once as your



beloved guru and father in the jungles and valleys without name of our immemorial earthly land.”

Sparkling tears fell down the boy's cheeks as he knelt by the rishi's knee and sank into his embrace. An ecstasy of remembrance flooded over him as he closed his brimming eyes, and instantaneously he passed into a trance so overpowering that cave, mountains and streaming sun vanished from his consciousness. Instead, still locked in the rishi's powerful arms, he found himself sinking downward through great, bottomless bowls of space. At the same time, some instinct told him that the mother to whom he had been tied by an umbilical bond of nearness, had been separated from him, but that her touch still lingered on his body. It was as though her hand continued to rest on his shoulder, and as he drew further and further away from her, her arm lengthened and lengthened so that her hand never moved from its place. Nor for one moment in the days and years to come was he to lose the sense of that gentle touch, for never was Silent Daughter to withdraw it so long as her son was parted from her by physical life.

When Shukratma and the boy arrived at their destination — for the seemingly infinite fall did eventually come to an end — the earthly sun was rising red and torrid over the treetops of a jungle in ancient Bharat. The two found themselves seated in a clearing of dew-flecked grass by a dirt path which wound across it and into the trees beyond. The older man had obviously slept the night with his back against a large boulder that stood in the middle of the open space while the boy lay curled on a cloth spread on the ground with his head in his mentor's lap. It was an auspicious moment for the two souls to rejoin their lives' memory — for the sunrise was a resplendent one, and the first that boy and man were witnessing in each other's company.

Only yesterday the child had been brought to the journeying rishi by the tearful parents who had seen in a dream the night before that their son would die an early death were he not given immediately into the hands of this god-graced soul. But their sorrow was not shared by the rishi, for he had discerned instantly that the young one was a gift of heaven such as he would hardly find again. Therefore, with much gratitude and what blessings and boons had been in his power to bestow, he had comforted the grieving father and mother, and assured them that he would look after their child as the golden offering without price that he truly was. Cheered beyond their most extravagant hopes, the parents had exchanged their tears for smiles, touched the holy man's feet and departed, strangely happy despite their numbing loss.

Now as the sun finally lifted its great orange orb above the rim of trees, Shukratma addressed his little companion — “See, my child, we are beginning from the beginning, our first dawn together.”

“Yes,” he whispered. “I remember even the first time that it was just like this. You and I were the same too, happy and sad at once, for my parents had cried so before they left, and my short, short days with them had been the sweetest a child could ever know. Why was the Great One so cruel, Guruji, to give me such a father and mother when I was to spend no more than twelve lightning years by their side?”

“Precisely because you were so favoured, child. The All-Spirit aspired for and granted you only the very best. He wanted you to remember each moment of your life as a gem gifted by his Grace, with one as beautiful and perfectly cut as any other. So you must bear proudly the touch of favour he has destined you to carry, for through you the earth shall remember more and more in the years to come some portion of its native divinity and splendour.”

“The earth, Guruji? But are we not leaving that behind us? Are you not taking me to that part of the mountains where none but your disciples have ever followed you, and no ordinary man can ever dare to go?”

“Yes, Hiranyamaya, my golden one. But you are wrong to think that ‘the earth’ signifies only that part of the world that is dominated and inhabited by men. Man and his works form but a portion, and perhaps even the least portion of it. For the rest, there is the sky and all its currents. There are the heavenly bodies, the spirits and deities of jungle and ocean, of the beasts and birds, the deserts and roads, plains and mountain peaks, and of the snow and hail, not to speak of the hidden, all-pervading consciousness of men and gods that bear no relation to their bodily presence, but encircle and permeate the globe like an inescapable ether. Then too there are other planes of being without number, each as universal as the last, not to speak of the nether worlds where the Dark Lord, the Rakshasas, and the Asuras have their kingdoms and their play. None of these shall you escape in your retreat with me, child, nor shall your influence diminish one whit by your isolation. Indeed the rare beauty entrusted to you by the Great One shall be heightened and burnished in the safety of the mountains where none will be able to despoil it. Thus in purity your quality shall flow out into the earth consciousness from its guarded source forever unrevealed to other men, and illumine human life with its subtle and invisible influence.”

He stopped speaking and little Hiranyamaya looked up at him bewildered. The older man nodded and laughed indulgently. “Of course, my little one,” he went on, “You would like to know how it is all to be done? It all sounds so fantastic and incomprehensible, does it not — especially to a small boy on his first day of ... of new birth?”

Solemnly, Hiranyamaya nodded. He was not in the least surprised that his guru had so facilely read his thought and doubts, but he was impressed by the immensity of the way that lay before him, and momentarily his eyes did express the grave, wide-open surprise so often to be detected in the eyes of the new-born.

“Ah, but let us stop speaking of things that are beyond the moment. Here — this is more timely,” Shukratma concluded.

He unwrapped a small package of food and they shared its frugal contents. Having eaten in silence they started out upon the path that almost immediately plunged them into deep jungle. Beneath its vaulting green darkness, parrots screamed above them as they walked. Monkeys and squirrels chattered on branches and tree trunks, while the occasional snake rustled in the undergrowth. The two moved steadily on even through the heat of the afternoon for the shelter of the forest cover was

sufficient to shield them from the noonday sun. The path, however, became narrower and narrower, until, by the time the day had begun to wane, it had vanished altogether. The terrain, too, had become hilly and boulder-strewn, but the rishi always found his way expertly between all the obstacles and obstructions of his unmarked route. By nightfall having reached the base of a steep, rocky ascent, they sought out a small dry nook at the bottom of a rock-fall. Here they settled down for their second night, the boy lying for warmth and comfort against the body of his master. They spoke little, for the child especially was tired, and the last words he remembered before dropping off to sleep were those of his guru assuring him that they would complete their journey tomorrow.

Yet the last day of travel which seemed so soon in coming turned out to be the most arduous. Hiranyamaya, however, was keen to prove himself, and like a stoic he scaled escarpment after escarpment, slope after slope — always higher and still higher in the footsteps of the tireless one who led him. At last a final cliff appeared above them, so elevated that it stood alone against the sky, and Shukratma pointing triumphantly up to it said, “Do you recognize our ancient home?”

But Hiranyamaya was so breathless from the climb that no answering sound came out of his mouth except a choking gasp, and the rishi realised with sudden dismay that he had overtaxed the child. Once again he gathered the now grimy and mudstained figure in his arms, and the strength seemed to flow from the stronger body to the weaker one till its breath came more freely. Seating his charge on the ground, Shukratma then walked a short distance to one side beneath the cliff and returned with a bagful of clear spring water. This he made Hiranyamaya drink, and immediately his radiance returned as though he had been resting in a feather-bed for two days, instead of marching barefoot through jungles or scaling mountains.

“But, Guruji, what is it?” he cried as he drained the bag. “Surely it isn’t water, but some kind of honey unknown to men of villages and cities?”

“Water the gods have bathed in, my dearest child,” Shukratma answered. “For this is a favoured spot of theirs and each rock and cranny of it is rich with their essence.”

“And perhaps because you live here too, Guruji?”

“Perhaps all things in this life are interrelated,” Shukratma replied enigmatically, as he smiled and stroked the child’s close-cropped head. “Are you ready now for the final climb?”

Hiranyamaya nodded his assent with an almost dream-like bliss, and the two began the seemingly impossible climb up the cliff face. Yet always a foothold appeared where none had seemed possible. Always a just-adequate crevice presented itself where no way could be seen, and then miraculously seemed to melt away after they had passed so that no one could ever follow them. Indeed all seemed magical in that haunted clime, where the trickery of a bewitched nature outstripped any strategem devised by man to render Shukratma’s cliff retreat impregnable.

At last, two thirds of the way up the massive face the two came to a wide ledge

that ran virtually from one side of the cliff to the other. At its narrowest, it was a comfortable ten feet in width, but, where it cut into the cliff at several points, fifteen feet or more. Also at regular intervals along the ledge's course could be seen the mouths of caves, not purely natural in formation for the openings had been cut and chiselled into rectangular shapes. Still, there was no sign of life at that late afternoon hour. Shukratma looked about him and breathed deeply.

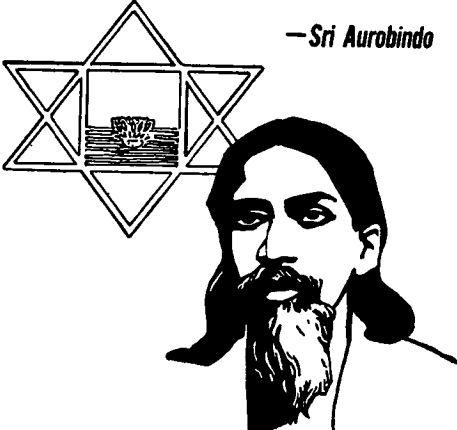
"Come," he whispered. "We have just enough time to prepare for the evening meditation. Your cell shall be the one next to mine."

*(To be continued)*

BINA BRAGG

**The future belongs  
to the young.** It is a  
young and new world which is  
now under process of  
development and it is the  
young who must create it.

— Sri Aurobindo



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**FIREX LEADS TO SAFETY  
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# “LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of May, 1973)

## SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

### EXPERIMENTS IN NEW EDUCATION

“THE period of study required for predominantly Arts and Science students is three years, and that of Engineering students six years. In order to have completed his Course a student should have shown regularity of sustained effort, development of capacities, understanding of his subjects and the power of answering relevant questions orally and in writing with sufficient clarity and precision.”<sup>1</sup>

One may ask: if history, geography, philosophy, sociology, science, mathematics and engineering, all the subjects taught here, are the same as in other Schools and University Centres then where does the difference lie?

The first and foremost difference lies in the attitude, aim and object of life — the desire of having an education in the Ashram atmosphere. The incentive here is not a degree, diploma or certificate.<sup>2</sup>

Students are not supposed to pass examinations somehow. “Ours is not repetitions of the traditional ways,” observed a Professor, “we are not here to make the students scholars or introduce them to the modern way of life. A quiet mind is not only conducive to spiritual endeavour but goes a long way to remove tension from every branch of life. Thus education is for us Yoga. How to make the teenagers feel inspired and act intuitively? This is our problem.”

“Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature. So also all perfection of which the outer man is capable is only a realising of the eternal perfection....”

“All teaching is revealing, all becoming is unfolding. Self-attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process.”<sup>3</sup>

This passage has been adopted as an ideal by a French Professor who has spent twenty years of his life in the Ashram. He is trying to put it in the daily round of his routine work. “We do all in our power,” he assures us, “to fire the enthusiasm of the growing child and make him feel the need of a new life.”

<sup>1</sup> *The International Centre of Education booklet* p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> “It is necessary to reiterate that our aim is to work for the manifestation of the Divine Consciousness in the physical life. Our education is so organised that the students can receive the necessary training to participate by their voluntary decision in the realisation of this aim.

“The pursuit of a degree, diploma or certificate is inconsistent with the aim that is placed before us, and so we expect our students to train themselves in such a way that they will have enough capacity and courage to face the problems of life on their own intrinsic merit.

“Therefore, henceforth no certificates will be issued to the students of our Centre of Education.” (An extract from the circular dated 16-6-1971)

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 45-6.

Just after appearing in the B.A. examination a girl came from Calcutta to see her brother who has been in our school from a very young age. I asked her, "Do you find any marked progress in him?"

"There is an all-round progress in him. The great advantage here is that weakness in one subject does not hamper the progress in the others. Outside also we are given a choice but once we have made a choice we are not allowed to make a change. We are not mature, so we do not know what will suit us; and we have to drag on. Such is not the case here."

Let us note the experience of one of our Professors. "Some of the students, when we give them freedom, the choice to formulate their own programme, are at a loss, they don't know what to do. For others it is not a problem, rather it gives them an impetus to progress by leaps and bounds. At times their writing makes moving reading.

Once I spoke to a Swiss who has been here for the last ten years, "What difference do you find between your education here and at your place?"

"I had my education in Switzerland," said he, "still I joined the Higher Course on coming here. Swiss education is oriented towards the successful career of the child, here the stress is on inner building."

The same question put to a fresh-looking, fit and slim teenage girl brought a calm answer.

"Well, here there is a desire, an eagerness to know, to learn, to acquire and achieve something. Outside few have a set ideal. Their going to college is a part of their routine work."

The girl comes from an enlightened family. Her father was the Principal of a college. Her sister is an M.A. in Sanskrit and her brother, who is here, topped the list in the Higher Course in 1971. After appearing for the M.A. in Varanasi University, the girl came over here.

She was here when she received a wire breaking the news that she had won first place in philosophy. With the wire in hand she went to her father, who had been here for more than a year, and expressed her desire to join the Ashram. She didn't attend the convocation, but received the Gold Medal by post.

A criticism was made on *The Life Divine*. When a journalist of the *London Times* was to visit India, Marquess Zetland wished him to see Norman Dowsett. Norman had met him at the time of his departure from London in 1953.

After the journalist had gone round all the activities of the Ashram children, Norman asked him, "Did you find any difference between the children here and those outside?"

The answer can be found in the following question and answer:

On Wednesday the Mother took the Green group class and on Friday the Red group. One day a child of the Red group put this question to the Mother:

"It had been declared that education in our school and our University Centre would be given in accordance with the ideals of Sri Aurobindo. But so far the education is as it is outside, one follows the same programme."

The Mother: “Yes, my child. And for years I have been fighting for it to be otherwise. When you — you children, here — when you are old enough and ready to become professors, then you will be entrusted with teaching the newcomers the right thing in the right way...”

“It is true that apart from a few rare exceptions the teaching is given on the most ordinary principles; I know it.

“When one sees children brought up here beside those who come from outside, there is truly a great difference (perhaps not outwardly in the mechanical part of the training, but in the understanding, the intelligence, in the inner awakening), there is a considerable difference, and the new ones need some time to come up to the same level. It is something beyond books, don’t you see? It is like the difference between living in a pure atmosphere, filling the lungs with pure air every time one breathes and living in an infected atmosphere and poisoning oneself every time one breathes. From the point of view of consciousness it is the same phenomenon and it is essentially the most important thing. You are plunged in a sea of consciousness full of light, aspiration, true understanding, essential purity, and whether you want it or not it enters...”

“I have seen people who had come altogether from outside, who knew nothing (only they had spent their life taking interest in children), well, the impression of these people — visitors, people just passing by, they are all quite bewildered: ‘But you have children here as I have never seen elsewhere!’”

This “impression” is identical to the illuminating remark of the journalist.

On his visit to the Ashram in January 1973 the Dalai Lama went round the Centre of Education. A set of Sri Aurobindo’s books was presented to him. About twenty-two Tibetan children are being coached at the Centre and at Auroville.

He was with the Mother for ten minutes. “May India and Tibet have close friendship to move to the Divine.” This was the message given by the Mother to the Dalai Lama.

Addressing the students later, the Dalai Lama said he found that the entire atmosphere prevailing in the Centre was free, most joyous and congenial to the development of human qualities. He said such qualities were of immense importance and in order to lead a good, honest, sincere life they should be built up right from childhood. He expressed the hope that at least children would set an example in this connection.

He also visited the Sri Aurobindo Library where he was received by Medhananda, to the accompaniment of Tibetan welcome music. The Dalai Lama was shown various Tibetan scripts and also ancient icons preserved in the library.<sup>1</sup>

*(To be continued)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

<sup>1</sup> There are four libraries to serve the needs of the Ashram students. One is attached to the school itself. Another is connected with the Physical Education. The third is in the Ashram building, more properly describable as a small Reading Room. The fourth has a building of its own containing 55,000 books in twenty-five different languages. It is a children’s paradise. The atmosphere there is so pleasing and enchanting that one passes hours without realising it — it is very quiet, very suitable for deep study.

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Sri Aurobindo Circle** (Sri Aurobindo Society Annual)

Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Special Number, 1972. Rs. 6.00

SRI Aurobindo was twenty-eight when the twentieth century was born. *Sri Aurobindo Circle* is twenty-eight years of age now that a new century — the century after the first birth centenary of Sri Aurobindo — begins.

Many contributors have grown up — in that sense of the growth that really matters, where growing up in fact means growing young — along with the *Circle*. It is a delight to see, for example, Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, one of the earliest contributors to the *Circle* (his first contribution appeared in the very first number), present in this special number with his ever-green style — but present in company of his worthy daughter Dr. Prema Nandakumar of whose growth into a brilliant essayist on Sri Aurobindo's poetry and drama the *Circle* has been a steady recorder.

Of the 173 pages (excluding six art plates) of the valuable content of this special number marking the birth centenary of Sri Aurobindo, the first 40 are devoted to reproducing short articles, messages and answers from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the last 43 to extracts from the works of Sri Aurobindo. While the first group of selections covers a wide range of topics like "Avatarhood of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother" and "Sadhana and War", the latter group is made up of picks which mostly concern problems and experiences on the path of the Integral Yoga. In choosing pieces and extracts for both the selections the editor has proved his insight into the quests and demands of the seekers. There is a sequence in presenting the Mother's words on Sri Aurobindo, culminating in those given on the occasion of the Centenary and ending with Sri Aurobindo's own answer to the question: "I have a strong faith that you are the Divine Incarnation; am I right?" — the answer being "Follow your faith — it is not likely to mislead you." The series is revealing.

On the merit of the thoughtful selections from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the volume, no doubt, should become a permanent handbook on the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

Contributions included are from K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Sisirkumar Ghose, S. S. Jhunjhunwala, Rud Lohman, K. D. Sethna, Prema Nandakumar, Jugal Kishore Mukherjee, Gabriel Germain and Romen.

In his essay which, its lasting value aside, should be of topical significance too, Dr. Iyengar discusses the secular and non-secular elements in Sri Aurobindo's life and thought. It is comforting to learn that the essay had been earlier submitted to the Seminar on "Secular and Non-Secular Forces in Indian Society" held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, for it was high-time for our leaders and people to penetrate the superficiality which surrounds the issue and — in Sri Aurobindo's words — know:

"I should love my neighbour not because he is neighbourhood, — for what is there in neighbourhood and distance? nor because the religions tell me he is my



brother, — for where is the root of that brotherhood? but because he is myself. Neighbourhood and distance affect the body, the heart goes beyond them. Brotherhood is of blood or country or religion or humanity, but when self-interest clamours what becomes of this brotherhood? It is only by living in God and turning mind and heart and body into the image of his universal unity that that deep, disinterested and unassailable love becomes possible.”

In “Redeeming the Times” Dr. Ghose forwards a cardinal question: “Every age, culture or individual lives by some idea or image, which sums up its efforts and guides its achievements. What may be that ruling idea or image for modern times — except science, more science, aided by a network of social manipulation?” But the author leads us to the convincing answer. Any true effort at redeeming the times has to be an inward effort at changing our own consciousness.

“If Spirit is liberty, fate cannot be inflexible for those great souls who have completed the transition from the present mental consciousness into the higher and superior consciousness, the spiritual, the Divine. Indeed nothing less than that enables man to transcend his fate,” concludes S.S. Jhunjhunwala after a careful study of the treatment of fate in *Savitri*.

“Sri Aurobindo is ready for the West,” is Rud Lohman’s interesting answer to his own question “Is the West Ready for Sri Aurobindo?”

The 10th instalment of K. D. Sethna’s “The Inspiration of ‘Paradise Lost’ ” gives us yet another glimpse of the significant assessment of Milton’s great epic, done from vantage-grounds of light which are new to the world of Miltonic criticism.

This volume begins the serialisation of a new work by Dr Nandakumar, “The Divine Comedy and Savitri.” The introductory part speaks adequately of a work of thorough study and — greater still — of a mind with a creative approach to criticism.

The problem of harmony between the individual and the society is the subject of Prof. Mukherji’s “Man, the Individual and Social Being.” How can an individual, himself a ‘multiperson’, become an unjarring and ideal part of the collective being? This vexing but irresistible issue has been discussed with a commendable clarity.

Gabriel Germain’s “Contemporary Nihilism and Sri Aurobindo’s Teaching” presents, as the title suggests, a stimulating review of the reason-oriented mind’s reaction to the vision of Sri Aurobindo. Here is an interesting observation by the author:

“One of the evident causes of the disaffection felt towards the word ‘truth’ is that one confuses the truth with some intellectual statement obtained by reasoning, and thus one can challenge it in the same manner. All that was held as true in philosophy and theology in the past was often presented as the conclusion of reasonings. Actually the great thinkers have always framed their vision of the world by intuition before developing it by reason; but the aesthetic aspect of their works, their search for a higher beauty that illumines their venture, is hardly ever pointed out by their disciples. As though beauty was not a face of truth!”

The section ends with four fine short poems by Romen — mystic and lyrical.

# *Students' Section*

## **EYE EDUCATION**

### **WHY HAVE THE OPHTHALMOLOGISTS FAILED TO PREVENT VISUAL DEFECTS?**

It is because theories of about two hundred years back have been taken as facts and this has served to obscure the truth and to stop further investigation. When visual defects cannot even be prevented, this is an indication of some great imperfection in the science. However, in the light of truth the problem of loss of eyesight and increased blindness is simple and the solution is quite easy and practical. It has been proved in numerous cases treated at the School for Perfect Eyesight, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, that errors of refraction are easily preventable and curable by the methods of Relax and See. Many cases of early cataract, glaucoma, optic atrophy and macular degeneration etc. have derived great benefit.

### **HINTS FOR THE PREVENTION AND CURE OF VISUAL DEFECTS:**

1. Some Ophthalmologists of good will may be appointed by the Government to repeat the experiments of Dr. Bates. For practical study they may be sent to the School for Perfect Eyesight, Pondicherry.

2. When truth is discovered scientifically, it ought to be introduced in the medical curriculum.

3. For successful working it may be necessary to establish an International Institute of Ophthalmology where the teaching would be based on the synthesis of all the systems of medicine.

4. The scheme to prevent visual defects may be soon started in the schools.

5. The public may be educated about the simple methods of eye education through books, pamphlets, periodicals, the movies, etc.

If the work is sincerely adopted without prejudice and perversity, then the Indian doctors will have an important and honourable place in the world.

We aim to create a new type of doctor who will bring perfection in eyesight. His knowledge will be based on the synthesis. He will be more concerned with the health than with the pathology. To achieve this aim the School for Perfect Eyesight provides a course in Ophthalmic Science.

Such a synthesis is most practical and beneficial: Again and again we observe its wonderful working. For example, a German lady having a squint in her eyes was cured in about two weeks. A case of total night blindness from Orissa was cured

in about a month's time. Two girl students, semi-blind, were cured in fifteen minutes by being taught the art of seeing. An American girl having high myopia cured herself in a few days.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL

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### 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 and inner vision — Rs. 12/-
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4. **Care of Eyes** — A nut-shell brochure for the preservation of good eyesight — Rs. 2.50/-

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