

MOTHER INDIA

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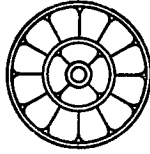
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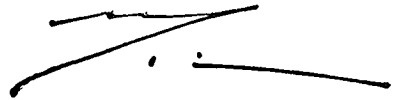


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XXVI

No. 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
O SILENT LOVE... (Poem)	<i>Amal Kiran</i>	... 835
SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER AND HER COMMENT ON THEIR THEME	<i>From M</i>	... 836
AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER ABOUT AN EXTRAORDINARY DEATH	<i>Amal Kiran</i>	... 838
A DREAM OF REALITY	<i>Huta</i>	... 839
✓ A CHILD OF THE ASHRAM	<i>Yvonne Artaud</i>	... 840
NOVEMBER 17, 1974 : A LOOK BACKWARD AND FORWARD	<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	... 844
LONGINGS FOR THE MOTHER	<i>Indra Sen</i>	... 856
THE DREAM (Poem)	<i>Vikas</i>	... 863
THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE : A SEARCH APROPOS OF R.C. ZAEBNER'S STUDY IN SRI AUROBINDO AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN	<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	... 864
LOTUS FLAME OR SURYAMAN (Poem)	<i>Romen</i>	... 871
THE SECRET SOURCE OF THE GANGES : A QUEST IN A STRANGE LAND (Transcreated by Gurudas Banerjee from the original Bengali)	<i>Promode K. Chatterjee</i>	... 873

EUROPE 1974:			
A TRAVELOGUE	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i>	...	877
SEVEN LIVES :			
A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL	<i>Bina Bragg</i>	...	882
“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL” :			
FUTURE EDUCATION AND LIFE’S EVOLUTION	<i>Narayan Prasad</i>	...	886
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE :			
SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE, Thirtieth Number, 1974	<i>Reviewed by Peter Heehs</i>	...	889

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O SILENT LOVE...

BECAUSE you never claimed of us a tear,
O Silent Love, how often we forget
The eyes of countless centuries were wet
 To bring your smile so near.

Forgive if I remembered not the blaze,
Imperishable, perfect, infinite,
Of far omnipotence from which you lit
 Your lamp of human face.

Make me a worship-vigil everywhere,
Slumber and wakefulness one memory
That you are God: O let each pore of me
 Become a mouth of prayer.

AMAL KIRAN

SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER AND HER COMMENT ON THEIR THEME

The Mother's Words

PATIENTLY you have to go round your whole being, exploring each nook and corner, facing all those anarchic elements in you which are waiting for their psychological moment to come up.

And it is only when you have made the entire round of your mental, vital and physical nature, persuaded everything to give itself to the Divine and thus achieve an absolute unified consecration that you put an end to your difficulties.

Words of the Mother (Third Series), p. 8.

The Mother's Comment

Yes, this is an excellent method. I advise you all to practise it. If you can, you will really benefit. And I can tell you that up to now I have not seen anybody who does not need to practise it. Some may think they do not need it, they are high above it. But that is only their idea and not at all true. It cannot be true. Suppose someone has made a complete surrender of his mind, life and body, and does nothing without the direction of the Divine; his case is obviously different and everything is directed in a different way. But even then, does he know how many germs of unhealthy influences he may be absorbing, for example, along with his food? He is living in this world, so naturally all the clashes and conflicts, all the actions and reactions of the adverse forces influence him and make him a tool for their games. Of course, the example I have given comes at a later stage. A lot of hostile elements are there hidden in the subconscious; they come up and create a disturbance whenever they get an opportunity. But if we do not mention all that now, if we leave it for the future, even then what we have read today is necessary for the present.

Look within yourself carefully; something like an insignificant small insect is lying hidden in some corner, avoiding your observation. If there was only one, it would not matter much. But there are hundreds and thousands; in fact they are in millions, of microscopic size, and they have lodged themselves within you from your very embryonic stage. So how is one to avoid them? But if you tell this to people, they will never admit that there are innumerable germs of hostile forces in them. In certain fields of life, some may have made considerable progress, gained experience, developed the consciousness; they may even be showing signs of self-control and an amount of self-mastery. But that does not mean they have not to be careful about other sides of their life. They must keep constant watch over the minutest falsehoods and reject them from the beginning. If at one or two places there is some purity, some approach to perfection, people believe they have become masters of themselves. If

you point out to them that the cause of their confusions is concealed within their own selves, do you think they will admit or understand it? They will protest violently, or at best try to show plenty of reasons justifying what they do and the way in which they are acting. They assure you that their purpose is very noble and so there can be nothing wrong. They will always trace the cause of the conflict or confusion elsewhere. I see this going on all the time. When I give the slightest hint to somebody, a very grave face meets me in return. The tone of protest or justification is ever ready in self-defence. I have told you that I see this often, but none of you will agree. You will say, "I can never be like that, there is nothing contradictory inside me...." But I can't help speaking as I do, for I observe very clearly what is there, what reactions go on in you, what force of false excuse is secretly at work.

The Buddhists are very fine from this point of view. They look minutely and mercilessly within themselves. If you also make a habit of self-observation like them, you will be surprised to discover many extraordinary things. Just as a larva prepares a cocoon to hide itself in, innumerable dirty influences hide inside a man. Either they are not seen or they appear very innocent, but truly they are a man's enemies, they hinder the development of his consciousness. In the same way as one may throw his torch-light into a dark place and find out small things, you have to use an inner torch-light, discover the lurking nasty elements and pluck them away without mercy.

They say it generally takes thirty-five years to observe things in that way and remove them. But thirty-five years are, after all, not such a long period. It should take that much time. Even if you took another twenty years to remove the unhealthy germs one by one, I don't believe that all your defects and difficulties would be eliminated for good. After a time you will suddenly discover hermit-crabs which have kept themselves concealed very cleverly in unnoticed corners within you. It will be quite a job to sort them out and pull them off. At that time, if you get a little upset and stop this work of cleaning up, you have lost the game. Very, very quietly, with infinite patience, you have to continue the work of weeding out the dirty influences. This is called the *tapasya* of self-purification.

Almost at the start I spoke of absorbing germs of unhealthy influences at food-time. You don't know how many bits of hostile forces you are letting come into you with every mouthful of the food you are eating. So that will be another job to get rid of them. But there is one way out. You have to keep your consciousness alert, and apply a strong will and reject all that is false within you. If you can practise that while eating, the result will be very good. Although it is not easy to practise that, it will become possible by regular effort and later on become a natural habit.

Reported by M

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER ABOUT AN EXTRAORDINARY DEATH

I RETURNED to Pondicherry in the evening. Next morning I went to the daily Balcony Darshan. The Mother caught sight of me and smiled and kept looking at me for a long time. After this I went straight upstairs to see her. It was a lovely meeting, with the Mother looking deep and long into my eyes. I asked her if she would meet me for five or ten minutes alone in the course of the morning. She at once consented.

I had my interview at about 11:30. She was sitting in her chair with eyes half shut and I went and sat at her feet, placing my hands upon them. I asked her whether she had received the letter I had written after my Mamma's death, giving an account of what had happened and clearing up what I had considered as not quite understood. The Mother said:

"Yes, I got your letter, but it did not teach me anything I did not know. I had quite understood your earlier telegram and known exactly what had been happening. At the end of your letter you have asked me to tell you what took place on my side. I'll tell you.

"There was one thing of very special interest. When you first wrote to me about your Mamma, I put the decisive force which would make the soul's wish prevail. I found that your Mamma's condition began to improve. This showed that the soul had not wished to go. When I looked into the whole matter I found that she might linger on for a year or two, a long-drawn-out slow illness and not at all a pleasant period.

"Several days later, on getting news from you, I again did some working. Then I went to my room and while I was walking up and down a very extraordinary event happened. Suddenly the Supreme Will came down. You see, this Will does not always intervene. One puts forth consciousness but the Will does not act. It is rarely that the Will descends like this. It is a direct action from the Highest. Well, it came down with a view to take your Mamma's soul. And your Mamma's soul, instead of making any kind of reaction, most readily consented. Most willingly it offered itself to the Supreme Will. I would say that it was a very pretty gesture. Connected with the soul's movement, there was a human movement, a movement of love which said that she had troubled and bothered people enough with the illness and now wished not to trouble and bother them any more.

Then the end came, and the soul at once, at a single sweep, jumped into my heart and passed into the Soul-World for rest. There was no passage at all through the intermediate worlds, no difficulty or halting anywhere. This was because the soul had so spontaneously and gladly responded to the Supreme Will. The Supreme Will took it straight to its destination."

I said: "Mamma was remembering you all the time. There was no name on her lips except yours. Whenever asked what she was thinking of, she said she was thinking of Mother darling. Even to the doctors she kept speaking of you, and your picture

and Sri Aurobindo's were mostly on her chest."

"It must be because of this that her soul so readily gave itself to the Supreme."

"What about the open-eyed vision my sister Minnie saw?"

The Mother smiled, nodded and said: "One may say that it was in the right line. I remember reading of it in your letter. She saw my body transparent, didn't she?"

"Yes. I'm very glad at the beautiful thing that happened to Mamma at the end. What a fine end!"

AMAL KIRAN

A DREAM OF REALITY

In a dream on August 15, 1974, early in the morning, I saw The Mother lying on a bed. Her body was immobile. I questioned myself: "If the Mother's body was put in a casket, how is it that it is here?" Then I saw Her hands moving and Her eyes open.

Suddenly, while I was wondering, I found Her standing near me. She embraced me and I had the same feeling as when She used to embrace me in the old days. I was still in amazement. She then became invisible but I distinctly heard Her parting words:

"I am coming..."

HUTA

A COMMENT

She showed to you her living presence still continues.

NOLINI

A CHILD OF THE ASHRAM

WE all know stories about Mother and the cat, about Mother and the crow, about Mother and the bullock. But perhaps you don't know the story of Mother and Thoth. It is an old story. It started in ancient Egypt with Queen Hatshepsut and the Egyptian form of the divine companion Hanuman, or Thoth, and it culminated in Pondicherry on 27 April 1964. It was exactly one year after Thoth had arrived in the Ashram. But how did he come?

One day in 1962 I was reading *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, and a huge door opened quite suddenly in me and in front of me. I found myself admitted into the animal kingdom. As Sri Aurobindo puts it in one of his letters: "Yes, to watch the animals with the right perception of their consciousness helps to get out of the human mental limitations and see the cosmic consciousness on earth individualising itself in all forms — plant, animal, man — and growing towards what is beyond man." (*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 501). In the kingdom I had entered I was looking at its inhabitants and they were looking at me intently. Far from being oppressed, I felt a weightlessness there, compared to our human condition, and a vast quietness, aspiration and fire. An animal was near me, a representative of them all. But I could not see its features or its size. It simply announced to me its coming. Whether it was a bird, a fish, a dog or a cat, I did not know. The following weeks and months I started examining all the animals I met and questioning each of them: "Is it you?" No answer. Finally it came, in the form of a one-year-old monkey who had led his master, a beggar, to my door. I asked the monkey: "Is it you?" He took my hand and put it on his head.

When I spoke to Mother about Thoth, she looked at him through me and then she said: "He is conscious of his divinity." Some months later she told me: "I have to see him." I proposed the anniversary of his arrival in the Ashram for this meeting and Mother agreed, adding: "You will accompany him of course, but it is he I want to see." In the beginning of 1964 Mother was receiving very few people and many old sadhaks could not see her even for their birthdays. So they were a little surprised: "How is it that she receives a monkey and does not receive us?"

27 April 1964, the great day arrived. Thoth took his bath as every morning and ate very little. I had made for him a new girdle covered with golden silk for this occasion. I fixed it around his waist. We were attached to each other by a strong cord as we always had been when going for a walk, each one guiding the other. We arrived at the Ashram and waited, on the small terrace covered by the samadhi tree, for Mother's call. A busy bee-hive was humming there. Thoth tested the strength of several branches of the tree and danced upon them. He chased away everybody who intended to visit us there. When Champaklal called us, Thoth came into my arms, gathering himself instantaneously for the greatest hour of his life. I carried him motionless to the upper floor where Mother was expecting us. According to the fixed ceremonial we were imprisoned for a few seconds in the two-metres-square passage

leading to Mother's reception room. Then solemnly Champaklal opened the door. The same expression burst on Mother's face and on Thoth's, and both extended their arms in love and joy. "Mon petit!" said Mother, and they met. For half an hour Thoth remained in Mother's lap, Mother's head against his. They spoke silently together. Sometimes Mother was caressing him, sometimes they looked at each other. Four times their mystical union was interrupted for some special play to take place. Champaklal was waiting, with a handful of the flowers named 'Sri Aurobindo's Compassion'. He gave them one by one to Mother who gave them to Thoth who ate them religiously. Later Mother offered him a bunch of the most enormous bananas I have ever seen. Thoth took the bunch, deposited it softly on Mother's knees and plunged to her lap again. A moment later, Mother chose one of the bananas, peeled it partly and offered it to Thoth, who tasted it delicately then took the whole fruit and put it on Mother's knees again, signifying clearly that he had come exclusively to meet Mother and not to eat bananas, though he was extremely fond of them. Again he was resting in Mother's lap.

The fourth game was initiated by Thoth. Did he fear that Champaklal might feel abandoned or did he want him to partake of his ecstasy? He left Mother for a short moment and climbed on Champaklal's shoulders. Mother admired his movement and told me later: "Ah! if we had such a physical body!" Mother was going to say that it might be time to retire, but she had not uttered the first syllable when Thoth was already back on her or rather immersed in her, with Mother bent towards him and answering lovingly his total gift of himself. Yet the time to take our leave had come. Thoth understood it, as each had given all. He came back into my arms. Mother blessed me and blessed him. As she put her hand on his head, he put both his hands on it, pressing it on his head in a great gesture of surrender, aspiration and gratitude. And it was on Champaklal's shoulders that Thoth triumphantly descended the staircase, both utterly happy and drunk with joy. Champaklal declared: "Ah! If I had been told about that meeting, I could not have believed it!" A later comment of Mother was: "The way he came to me was remarkable and he told me many interesting things" When I arrived at home with Thoth, on the stairway he opened my bag and took the bananas and flowers he had received from Mother. He wanted to show his human family all his treasures. Then he put them beside him in his cage, ate two bananas, and closed his eyes and meditated for several hours.

Each time I saw Mother after that, she inquired about Thoth. I expressed to her my concern about the fact that he was confined to a cage — with a nice view of the sea but nevertheless a cage. "Why?" she answered, showing the walls around her, "I too live in a cage!" When there was some decision to be taken about him, Mother inwardly consulted Sri Aurobindo. She also sent flowers and bananas to Thoth on his anniversary, accompanied by a huge birthday card. On the occasion of one of the birthdays I made for Mother two drawings representing the lines in Thoth's hands that I copied with the greatest care. When Mother saw them, she looked at them for a long time and said something in French that nobody understood. Amrita was there, and

all he heard was the word: 'Supramental.' Trying to make her repeat what she had said, he asked: "Mother, will it be possible for an animal to become supramental?" Mother answered: "Ask Medhananda, he knows about it."

Three years later Mother explained to me that since the day of her meeting with Thoth she had remained in close contact with him. "It is much more interesting," she remarked, "to communicate with him than with most human beings." He had a highly developed capacity for non-verbal communication which he used with the precision of a great violinist on the cords of his consciousness. He was equally exact and faithful in receiving a message, as he enjoyed a total absence of rigid verbal formulas which normally prevent the direct perception of truth. Mother marvelled at how instantaneously he was present and answered her each time she turned her consciousness towards him. Thoth was indeed a model of vigilance, alertness and courage. During the ten years I lived in close proximity with him, it did not happen a single time that I moved in my bed at night, either slightly or fully awake from my sleep, without his noticing it. His vigilance and love scintillating as a star, he always showed from his cage that he was aware that I was awake. Once I was ill for nearly three months, and during all that time he refused to lie down on his sleeping board, but remained sitting the whole night.

When I had to stay for a week in the hospital in Vellore, Mother sent him every day a tray covered with bananas and red hibiscus flowers named 'Power' — to keep him alive.

Thoth was also a model of transparency. As he had appeared to me at first as a representative of the animal kingdom, he now appeared as a representative of manifestation itself. One could see in him all the different levels of consciousness — from the subconscious where his ancestors lived, to the overmind where the gods live; and I could even take photos of the levels and show them to Mother. Also, because of his transparency, Mother was often visible in him. Of course everything in return was transparent to him. He contemplated the sea and the sky for hours, looking through them at the infinity which contains and supports them. He read human beings like an open book. He expressed his opinion on all the people he met, indicating to me their weaknesses and their strengths. He started his inquiry at the feet and his penetrative look mounted along the body up to above the head. All the time his face and his whole attitude reflected what he was seeing. He could also look inside the eyes of someone with warmth and joy.

He felt responsible for everything in his surroundings, even the passing cars and cycles on the street below his veranda. He signalled any risk of accident or contagious disease. He also fought any negative or wrong movement in the vital and the mental being. Even stumbling was forcefully reprovved. He did not accept the slightest imperfection from any side. "Be skilful, right and true or perish," was the motto of his race. He knew also how to bless and how to thank, how to bless a visiting monkey, how to thank for the slightest gift of love.

In spite of the transcending quality of his consciousness, he was still what we call

a wild animal. He was tamed but not domesticated like a dog or a cow with their long history of cohabitation and collaboration with man and a continuous selection by man for man's purpose. All his reactions had the lightning rapidity which only a wild animal possesses. His wild ancestors in his psychological make-up were not in the habit of responding to his aspiring soul, and sometimes burst the barriers he was building against their aggressiveness, which had become superfluous in him. His high-spirited vital force could be subdued by his psychic being only with the help of a long domestication process, through generations or centuries of adaptation and transformation. Thus he could get very angry for a few seconds. Mother excused once and for all his aggressiveness by saying: "It is not he who bites." She added in 1967: "Sri Aurobindo has given the assurance that he will not bite you again."

What I learned from Thoth is prodigious. The most tremendous feat was his carrying within him in a very tangible way something of the future. It was he who showed me the Golden Child of tomorrow. Mother revealed to me a discovery she had made through Thoth about a big change in the animal world. "It is no longer necessary," she said, "for animals to go through the human stage in order to evolve further. They have their own way open to them." This was cosmic news, the sign, as Sri Aurobindo had foreseen it, that evolution was evolving and that not only men, but the animals, the plants and even matter were entering into the new age.

One morning in February 1972 Mother called me, with Medhananda. She did not speak. The following night at 1:20 Thoth — yogi and warrior that he was — met his death fearlessly and fully aware, with the ear-splitting war-cry of the chief, the leader of the tribe. With Mother's permission he was buried in the library garden at the foot of a beautiful medieval statue of Bhairava. So disappeared from the Ashram stage the little South Indian Bonnet Macaque named Thoth, who in Mother's lap had dreamed about his future and the future of terrestrial life, and who had been the first to put his feet on the new path open to animals towards the supramental kingdom.

The message he left is simple: "Be vigilant, O Man! Become a warrior! Life is Yoga! Yoga is a fight! A single moment of oblivion and everything is lost. He who is all-conscious is also all-divine, be he an eagle, a wolf, an elephant, Hanuman, or Rama."

YVONNE ARTAUD

NOVEMBER 17, 1974

A LOOK BACKWARD AND FORWARD

I

ON November 17, 1974, it will be a full year since the Mother left her body. Along with the understandable human reaction to the passing away of a most cherished presence, there has been a deep sense of something unimaginably great done by the withdrawal from the immediate visible scene, there has been the conviction of a *reculer pour mieux sauter*, a “drawing back in order to make a spring”.

Not only amongst those who have been around the Mother for decades but also amongst people far away an urge has arisen to cleave closer to her light and love. From distant Europe and still more from farther America, men and women have poured into Pondicherry in large numbers even after knowing they could not have the Mother’s darshan. The joy they have shown on entering the Ashram’s precinct or the open spaces of Auroville, the regret of some who had to return to their countries for a time, the enthusiasm of many who have resolved to make Pondicherry their home for good — all these psychological expressions testify to the Mother’s continuing impact on the world.

The disciples resident for years in the Ashram or Auroville have grown increasingly rooted in the Ideal of Sri Aurobindo that the Mother strove during her life to make an inalienable part of earth’s being and consciousness. They are not unaware of difficulties to be faced and problems to be solved in the physical absence of their Leader. But there is a calm light in their eyes, for the Mother is always within their hearts, inspiring and guiding, and their eyes carry even a secret vision of the future in which she herself is again an embodied glory.

Her grace is seen constantly at work — in private situations, in public confrontations, in the very midst of the powers that rule this country which gave birth to Sri Aurobindo and which the Mother, recognising it ever as her soul’s native land, made her own for fifty-three years out of her ninety-five.

By her grace — and by it alone — the Ashram, India and the world will emerge, despite all opposing influences and after whatever delays, into a new Golden Age.

2

Yes, a faith and a force are present everywhere and at all hours. There is also an attempt to comprehend more and more the exact nature and the precise implication of the event that took place at 7.25 p.m. on November 17, 1973. In the course of the twelve months after it, various questions have been asked about the Why and How of the Mother’s departure as well as the How and When of her hoped-for return by occult means. The latter theme, though kept in sight, has not been much pressed,

but upon the former the minds of the Mother's followers have continued to be exercised.

Perhaps the most impressive presentation by a fellow-disciple was of a viewpoint completely differing from the one adopted by the editor of *Mother India*. He also prepared a large selection from the Mother's talks at diverse times to bear him out. Incorporating some quotations meant to be in most direct support of him, we may set forth his viewpoint in his own words thus:

Several explanations have appeared as to what may have made our beloved Mother give up Her body in which most of us, if not all were hopefully waiting to see the transformation so that She might live among us physically present forever. But, in view of what has happened, it is obvious that our hoping lacked true perception and understanding of all that She had been trying to do and to tell us. Perhaps we are among those who become wiser after the event.

I have searched everywhere in all the available writings but nowhere the Mother seems to have promised or given us even a remote hint that in the immediate present, at the present stage of evolution, in Her present body She was going to achieve the transformation of the entire physical being, including that of the external structure. What She has unmistakably said is:

"If you want to do the work all alone, it is absolutely impossible to do it in a total way, for the entire physical being, however complete it may be, even if it is of an altogether higher quality, even if it has been created for a very special work, can never be but partial and limited. It represents only one Truth, one law of the world, it may be a very complex law, but it is only one law — what is called Dharma in India — and the totality of transformation cannot be done through that alone, through one single body ... a minimum number of persons are required."¹

"I do not think that a single individual (on the earth as it is now), a single individual, however great he is, however eternal his consciousness and origin, can alone by himself change and realise — change the world, change the creation as it is, and realise this Higher Truth that will be a new world — a world more true, if not absolutely true. It seems a certain number of individuals (till now it appears to be rather in time as a succession, but it may be also in space, a collectivity) is indispensable so that this Truth may concretise and realise itself. Practically, I am sure of it.

"That is to say, however great, however conscious, however powerful an Avatar may be, he cannot, all alone realise the supramental life on earth. It is either a group in time, arranged in a file in time or a group spread over a space — perhaps both — that are indispensable for this Realisation. I am convinced of it. The individual can give the impulse, indicate the way — walk on the path himself, that is to say, show the way by himself realising it — but cannot fulfil it.

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, February 1960, p 63

The fulfilment obeys certain group laws which are the expression of some aspect of Eternity and Infinity — naturally ...”¹

“Is it possible to obtain a total personal transformation unless there is something at least corresponding in the collectivity? ... It seems to me that it is not possible. Is it possible to bring about a total transformation of one’s being so long as the collectivity has not attained some degree at least of transformation? I do not believe it.... The total conquest, matter’s transformation, depends certainly a great deal upon a certain degree of progress in the collectivity.”²

Repeatedly and clearly the Mother has expressed the central fact to be kept in mind. As long as the collectivity, consisting of a minimum number of persons, which the Truth demands, is not ready, a single body born in the human way cannot be so transformed as not to die; its death is inevitable. The cause is not of much importance, whether it is heart-failure or the unbearable pressure of the transforming Power or the Divine’s Will.

And then there was the age-old resistance of the defeatist subconscious which too had to be overcome; there too the certitude of transformation had to be achieved. After that, after passing through many intermediary stages when the substance that constitutes man’s body will have undergone sufficient change, we can surely hope to see the transformed body and the superman. How long that will take, the Mother said She did not know; or perhaps She knew but would not disclose.

This also implies that no single human body at present can escape dying.

But this is for sure that to help us realise our dream She has prepared and opened for all time the Way to transformation. Before She left Her body She had achieved all that She had set out to achieve, all that Sri Aurobindo had wanted Her to achieve. Sri Aurobindo had wanted the manifestation of the transforming Power — the Supramental Power — upon earth and She announced its accomplishment in 1956. Sri Aurobindo had wanted his disciples to become the race of Supermen, the Intermediary Race, which would find the means and discover the secret of direct supramental creation, the advent of supramental beings formed in a supramental way (the type in which Sri Aurobindo has promised to return) and She announced in 1969 the certitude of its accomplishment, 1969 being the year at the end of which the Superman Consciousness came to earth and went out in search of those few who might be ready. Sri Aurobindo had wanted to build a bridge between earth and heaven, that is to say, the transformation of the bodily mind or the mind of Matter, as the Mother has called it, which was indispensable for the Supramental to manifest permanently upon earth and She announced its accomplishment in 1972. This transformed bodily mind has survived the death of Her body, and if the collectivity had been ready it would have naturally led to the transformation of Her most external being.

Before She left Her body the Mother told us that She had already lived for

¹ *Ibid*, August 1962, p 73

² *Ibid.*, November 1966, p. 61.

a while in a new subtle body (sexless, etc.). Whether it was a supramental body or a body in transition She did not clarify, but since its origin was not human it might as well have been the supramental. She has also told us that mostly among the children will those that can begin the new race be found — men are crusted over. So, if we wish to belong to the new race, the new creation, we must in all simplicity and sincerity follow the path of Sri Aurobindo shown to us by the Mother: the manifestation of the new race is not a freak, there is a method in it, and if we submit to it we too, in all probability, shall be there among those fortunate children —

“The sun-eyed children of the marvellous dawn.”

3

When we read this many-sided exposition of the Mother's aims and achievements we cannot help marking the absence of one aim which the Mother was most bent on achieving. The exposition principally sets out to deny that aim — namely, the transformation of the entire physical being at the present stage of evolution, in her present body itself.

It is extremely improbable, if not absolutely impossible, that those who lived in close contact with the Mother from 24 November 1926 onward should have hopefully but erroneously waited to see the Mother's body completely transformed and that yet the Mother, knowing their minds, should not have unequivocally corrected their error but left it to them to discover it by studying her talks after she had left her body on 17 November 1973!

There is not the slightest doubt that she allowed those in close contact with her for forty-seven years to believe that she was striving with all her spiritual might to achieve a complete transformation of her body. Surely, she would not have thus striven if, knowing that the collectivity with whom she was in contact was poor in response, she had not felt that she could succeed in her work in spite of this collectivity's insufficient co-operation. If anything leaps out of Pranab's talk about her on 5 December 1973, it is her dauntless unremitting effort to transform her body.

He¹ says: “She fought and tried up to the end. She had a tremendous will and She was a great fighter and She fought and tried to do what She had taken upon Herself. She suffered a lot ... if She had yielded to what we call natural law, that is, decay, disintegration and death, there would not have been so much suffering for Her, but that She did not want....” Then, citing her conversation with Dr. Bisht, to whom she said “She was undergoing a process of transformation”, Pranab² concludes after recording the details of the talk: “So from that we can understand how eager She was to continue Her work of physical Transformation.” And there is also Pranab's statement:³ “I am absolutely sure that if She had not the conviction that She would bring the Supramental Transformation in Her present body, She would not have been able

¹ Supplement to *Mother India*, 5 December 1973, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

to do all the Great Work that She has done.”

In addition to all this, we must remember what she told Dr. Sanyal at the end of 1950 — namely, that Sri Aurobindo had asked her to fulfil their Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation.¹

It is not the believers in the Mother's complete transformation, who lacked true perception and understanding. Those who now refuse to believe after the event of her passing seem anxious to avoid the haunting sense of “failure” on her part. We must resolutely face the appearance of “failure” and, holding fast to our belief in her attempt at complete transformation, seek the conditions that made her change her course. There was no real failure. As with Sri Aurobindo's departure from his body on 5 December 1950, we have to see here again a strategic sacrifice and not a surrender to a “death” which was “inevitable”. In the talk² which Dr. Sanyal has reported, with her approval, as having taken place between her and Sri Aurobindo some months before he passed away, it is distinctly said that one of them would have to leave the body in the interest of their work. There is no indication at all that both would have to do it. Quite the contrary. And when the Mother offered to make the sacrifice Sri Aurobindo refused and took the work upon himself. His going was considered a final sufficient gesture and the implication was certainly that she would “live among us physically present forever”.

It is incorrect to speak of the inevitability of her death and the impossibility of her totally transforming her body because the fulfilment obeys certain group laws which are an expression of some aspects of Eternity and Infinity so that the totality of transformation depends largely upon a certain degree of transformation in the collectivity. There are two issues involved here. We must carefully distinguish them. They are: first, the establishment of a divine life on earth and, second, personal divinisation.

Evidently, if one individual got divinised, it would not mean that a divine life had been terrestrially established. Unless a certain group undergoes the physical transformation, a group which represents the several sides of the earth's nature as contrasted to an individual representing, however richly, one side of it, the establishment of a divinised earth-existence cannot take place. This does not rule out a total personal transformation. The Mother actually speaks of an individual showing “the way by himself realising it”. Of course, his realisation cannot change the creation into a new world, but it can change his own physical existence into a new being. The full supramentalisation of others is not indispensable for it and an individual's change into a new being is suggested also when the Mother speaks of “a group in time arranged in a file in time” as one of the possibilities by which a divine life on earth may be established. Does not this imply one individual realising that life before others who repeat his realisation in the succeeding years?

Here, too, however, we must note that an individual's full supramentalisation is not quite unconditional: “some degree at least of transformation”, “a certain degree of progress in the collectivity”, is very much required. But there is no question

¹ *Mother India*, 5 December 1953, “A ‘Call’ from Pondicherry”, p 187 ² *Ibid*

of others getting fully transformed as a pre-condition. The question is only whether they have a partial change. Provided this change is present, "the total conquest, matter's transformation", is quite within the reach of the individual who is an Avatar of the Supermind.

That the Mother, the Incarnate Divine, should be slowed down in her personal supramentalisation by her human followers is perfectly understandable. After all, to transform them was her central purpose and to accomplish it she had to be linked with them, be affected by their stage of development and, to a certain extent, depend upon it. But in no writing of hers is there the smallest suggestion that her own transformation would not be done because of her dependence on them. Naturally, no such suggestion comes in, since people who sincerely accept her as their Guru are themselves bound to undergo a process of inner and outer change and, in the long run, some degree of transformation which would help her total supramentalisation.

Even if we interpret the passages quoted from her to mean that her whole supramentalisation depended on others getting wholly supramentalised, there is yet no suggestion that she could not hold out indefinitely till they came up in their transformation to the level needed for her to move further. A great delay can be deduced but no inevitable death resulting from group-laws.

We must not mistake the slowness of her personal fulfilment for inability, nor exaggerate her difficulty into a situation of checkmate, nor see in the length of time for her fulfilment the inevitability of death. She has said at one place: "What is acquired in the consciousness of this body is not acquired at all in the consciousness of others."¹ Here is an extreme account of the collectivity lagging behind. Yet what is her conclusion? No more and no less than: "that increases the labour."²

Again, she has announced: "The result remains still far, very far, — much has to be done before the crust, the experience of the most external surface as it is, manifests what is happening within (not 'within' the inside spiritual depths — within the body). To enable that to manifest what is within it ... this will come last, and it is good to be so; for if it came before time, the work would be neglected, one would be so satisfied as to forget finishing the work..."³ This is a most important statement. First, it shows that within the body the supramental working was going on and only remained to be manifested in the "crust". Secondly, there is the definite announcement that "this will come last". Much time will be taken for the manifestation in the "crust", but, however late, it will "come". And, when we dwell on the words, "The result remains still far, very far", we must also bear in mind that these words are immediately preceded by: "The work remains to be done. But now a certitude is there."⁴

What follows all this is perhaps even more important. The Mother affirms: "But once it was done (Sri Aurobindo has said that), once one single body has done it,

¹ *Bulletin*, August 1967, p. 71. All our excerpts from the *Bulletin* or *Questions and Answers* are taken from our fellow-disciple's own selection from the Mother's talks.

² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.*, February 1968, p. 57. ⁴ *Ibid.*

It has the capacity to pass it on to others. It is the only hope, because if everyone had to go over once again through the same experience...¹ Evidently, something radical and crucial in the matter of transforming the external surface does not depend on the collectivity doing the same: "one single body" can do it and the others do not have to repeat its experience: they will simply be given the results. What we may conclude is: the Avatar of the Supermind and the disciples go on interdependently for quite a period of time but ultimately the Avatar breaks loose in a considerable measure from the drag of the collectivity and accomplishes a decisive turn which will hasten the collectivity's own progress.

It is with regard to this power of the Avatar that the Mother made some unmistakable statements in answer to pointed questions.²

Q. "What have you been expecting from us and from humanity in general for the accomplishment of Your work upon earth?"

A. "Nothing."

Q. "Does the success of Your work for us and for humanity depend in any way upon the fulfilment of Your expectation from us and from humanity?"

A. "Happily not."

As for the intermediate stages involved in the physical transformation, the Mother is not referring mainly to mankind in general. She is referring primarily to her own bodily progress:

"This (*Mother holds her skin with her hand in between her fingers*), how can that change into this other thing? .. that appears impossible."³ "I understand very well a progressive change and that one could make of this substance something which might renew itself from within to the outside and eternally and it is that which would be immortality, but only it seems to me that between what is now, as we are, and this other mode of life, there have to be many steps."⁴ "Sri Aurobindo also has said that first of all there will come the power to prolong life at will..., but this one is a state of consciousness which is being established; it is a kind of relation, a constant and subtle contact with the supreme Lord; it abolishes the sense of wear and tear and replaces it by an extraordinary flexibility, an extraordinary plasticity. But the state of spontaneous immortality is not possible — at least for the present. This structure must change into something else than this, and in order to change into something other than this, in the way things are happening, it will take long."⁵

Not only when the Mother shows her own skin, but also when she refers to a state of consciousness which abolishes the sense of wear and tear and she speaks of it as "being established", the talk turns upon the transformation going on in her physical being, for what is "being established" is evidently in herself. It is personal and it points at the end not to failure but to a long future before "the state of spontaneous immortality" arrives.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65. ² *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Twenty-fourth Number, 1968, pp. 2 and 3.

³ *Bulletin*, February 1967, p. 65. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Now, are there any direct statements contradicting the idea that one would search in vain for any promise or even a remote hint of the Mother transforming in entirety the body which she had? Certainly. Let us begin with some words published in the *Bulletin* of April 1965:¹ “Even when I am quite unwell or things are quite difficult or even when I am left a little quiet, that is to say, at night and I say to myself: ‘Oh, to go into my blissfulness’ — and it is not permitted. I am bound there (*Mother touches her body*). It is there, there, it is to be realised. It is for that.” A definite indication is here that her body is meant for the arduous transformation.

Next, take what appears in February 1972:² “The old routine is ended. What is to be found is the plasticity of Matter so that Matter is able to progress. There you are. How long will it take? I do not know. How much experience is needed? I do not know. But now the way is clear. The way is clear.” Do not these words suggest the surety of somehow finding the key to Matter’s progress towards total transformation?

Again, we read:³ “If you like, one might say that at every minute one has the feeling that one may live or one may die or one may live eternally.... At the same time the knowledge, ‘This is the moment of winning the Victory’ which comes from the psychic and through it from above ... ‘Hold fast, it is the moment of winning the Victory.’”

And consider the following:⁴ “... yesterday, or the day before, I do not know, all of a sudden the body said: ‘No! It is finished. I want life, I want nothing else.’ And then things are getting better since.”

From *Questions and Answers* of 1956,⁵ the year of the Supermind’s Manifestation in the subtle-physical, we may cull: “What Sri Aurobindo promised and what naturally interests us, we who are here now, is that the time has come when some of the élite in humanity who fulfil the conditions necessary for spiritualisation will be able to transform their body with the help of the Supramental Force, Consciousness and Light so as not to be animal-men any longer but become supermen.” Note the phrases: “Sri Aurobindo promised” — “We who are here now” — “The time has come” — “will be able to transform their body.”

Finally, from *Questions and Answers* of 1957,⁶ we have: “Sri Aurobindo expected of us to become supermen — I think — I know — that now it is certain that we shall realise what he expects of us. It has become no longer a hope but a certitude ... let each one do his best and perhaps not many years need roll by for the first visible results to be apparent to all.”

Nothing can be more positive. Of course we may be told of the three hundred years the Mother thought not enough for the full change of the present body into the supramentalised one. But in the above affirmation she is speaking of “the first visible results” appearing fairly early. Once these signs of bodily transformation are there, we may hope for the full change. And indeed the Mother says that such a change is

¹ p. 59. ² p. 79. ³ p. 11. ⁴ p. 93 ⁵ p. 281. ⁶ p. 165.

certain amongst "us", which naturally means the Mother herself first and foremost. And, even in connection with the three hundred years or more, the Mother's accent is optimistic:¹

"So, to change this into what I have just described, I believe three hundred years are very little. It seems to me much more is needed than that. Perhaps with a very, very, very concentrated work.. ."

Q. "Three hundred years with the same body?"

"Well, there is a change, it is no more the same body.... If each year that passes represents a progress, a transformation, one would like to have more and more years in order to be able to transform oneself more and more...."

"And then, when all is done, when all is perfect, then there is no more question of years, for you are immortal."

Even when the Mother envisages the objection that "it would be impossible for the body to change unless something is also changed in the surroundings" — beings and objects — all that she concludes is: "It seems that a whole set of things must change, at least in relative proportions, so that one exists and continues to exist. This brings much complication, for it is no more one individual consciousness that is to do the work, it becomes a collective consciousness. And it is much more difficult."²

Yes, a greater difficulty but nothing beyond that. No impossibility, not even improbability. Failure is not in the least visualised. On the contrary, in February 1972, we find the Mother saying:³

"I heard something written by Sri Aurobindo saying that for the Supramental to manifest upon earth the physical mind must receive it and manifest it — and it is just the physical mind, that is to say, the body mind, the only thing that remains in me now.... It is on the way of being converted in a very rapid and interesting manner. The physical mind is being developed under the supramental influence. And it is just what Sri Aurobindo has written, that this is indispensable so that the supramental may manifest itself permanently upon earth. So, it is going on well — but it is not easy (*Mother laughs*)...."

"To what extent would it be able to change? Sri Aurobindo has said that if the physical mind were transformed the transformation of the body would follow quite naturally. We shall see...."

"The mind that is in the body had become wide; it had a global view of things and the entire way of its seeing was absolutely different.... The Supramental is at work here."

The prospect presented by the Mother for her body, in the light of Sri Aurobindo's announcement, is a natural inevitable transformation. To overlook this fact is to begin with a capital mistake, a false premise.

Besides this unfortunate *point de départ*, there is to my mind a note of over-optimism about our own immediate possibilities. I should be ready to grant that the Mother's force is working for the advent of the new race, but I cannot believe that the

¹ *Bulletin*, February 1968, pp. 35, 37 ² *Ibid.*, p. 37, ³ pp. 83, 85, 91.

collectivity can so easily become responsive now and achieve for itself what it is alleged to have fatally prevented the Mother from doing for her own body. True, she has declared: "The superman is now on the way to formation, and a new consciousness has manifested itself recently upon earth to perfect this formation."¹ But she also added: "it is hardly probable that any human being has reached such a consummation, more so since there must go with it a transformation of the physical body, which has not yet been done."² What the Mother, despite her herculean labour, left undone for the present in her own material frame — are we going to do in ours in the near future merely by being child-hearted and following in all simplicity and sincerity the path shown to us by her? A good deal of Yogic progress we surely can achieve but in the immediate days ahead not the physical transformation which has to go with becoming supermen.

All we can do is to prepare ourselves for the glorious time when the Mother again takes a direct physical hand in earthly evolution. How and when she will manifest is not given us to know with absolute certainty, but we may look forward to the materialisation of her supramental body as an outstanding possibility. And in regard to our preparation as well as in regard to an occultly managed materialisation we have been provided by our friend with a most inspired clue. At first his assertion looks bewildering but a little thought opens up a new vision.

He has spoken of the Mother's transforming the mind of matter in her own body and added: "This transformed bodily mind has survived the death of her body..." It is the last phrase which is revelatory. Not only the transformed vital being and the subtle-physical have survived her body's death and been assimilated into her new mode of existence and accompany her supramental form: even the bodily mind, by being transformed to a considerable degree, has been given an immortality and is part and parcel of her new mode of existence.

The survival of this mind in separation from the dissolved physical frame has, on the one hand, brought the supramental body an extra density enabling it to come closer to our earth and prepare a break-through and, on the other hand, afforded to the obscurest and densest component in our consciousness, to our own body-mind, a sort of link with her supramental body. Hence, at the same time she can draw near to us and we can draw near to her. Our progress can thus be speeded up so as to make us co-operate with her supramental body's increased drive towards materialisation by means of its newly acquired extra density — materialisation which will put her supramental presence once more embodied in our midst and set us once more on the way to the fullness of physical transformation which, without her embodiment as the Avatar and leader of the transformative Supermind, may be considered, as Nolini has put it, "postponed — not cancelled".³

Perhaps the Mother consented to leave her Yogically hard-pressed body because she saw in the survival of her transformed body-mind a shorter cut to her goal. Attached to her body, this mind might have taken very long to lead to that body's supramen-

¹ April 1970, p. 51. ² *Ibid.* ³ *Mother India*, March 1974, p. 167.

talisation. Detached from it and assimilated into the supramental, it would help the latter to be materialised in less time. The Supermind's embodied presence was her goal. It was to be accomplished by the supramentalisation of the body in which she had taken birth. She strove towards it according to the plan Sri Aurobindo and she had made. But, just as Sri Aurobindo found that he could work for the goal better by leaving his body and concentrating everything in the Mother's, and himself acting from the subtle-physical plane, so too she found that she could fulfil his Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation better by taking up into her supramental body the greatest victory of this Yoga — sufficient if not full transformation of her body-mind. The strategy was changed in order to effect in a swifter way the Supermind's embodied presence. The sacrifice demanded for it was gladly given.

5

We may ask: "Under what circumstances was it realised that here was a swifter way?" To attempt answering the question we must attend to certain words of the Mother.

A few years back she stated about her body's future:¹ "(... as if the world put the question) Will it continue or will it get dissolved?... But the body knows that it has been decided, and that it is not to be told to the body. It accepts, it is not impatient, it accepts, it says, 'It is all right, it is as Thou wilt'...." Some time after this we find:² "It is becoming terrible. It is like a pressure, a frightful pressure — to bring about the desired progress. I feel it in myself for my body. But my body is not afraid, it says: 'Very well, if I am to end, it is the end.' Every minute it is like that: the true thing or the end. The body knows that this is the way for the supramental body to be formed. It must be wholly under the influence of the Divine — no compromise, no approximation, no 'it will come', not so, it is like this (*Mother brings down her fist*), a formidable Will. But — it is the only way for things to go fast." Not much later she saw her new body:³ "I was like that, I had become like that." And shortly afterwards she announced:⁴ "I have had for a moment (the body) — just a few seconds — the supramental consciousness. It was so wonderful."

We must surmise that in the wake of all these experiences and in the course of a tremendous subsequent trial of the body (from May 21 to November 17, 1973) she learned simultaneously the Supreme's decision — the Will of her own transcendent self — that she should abandon her body and the same Will's disclosure of the swifter way, a new pointer to the reward for all her luminous travail, all her exalted agony.

If we are to pinpoint the exact span of time in which, during this period, the about-turn took place from the effort of body-transformation to acceptance of body-abandonment, we should, in my opinion, put it after certain incidents reported by Pranab.⁵ On 14 November last year, she tried to do some walking with the help of

¹ April 1969, p. 87. ² April 1972, p. 73. ³ August 1972, p. 75.

⁴ February 1973, p. 85. ⁵ Supplement to *Mother India*, 5 December 1973, p. 3

Champaklal and Pranab but could not and had a severe temporary collapse. She took twenty minutes to recover. Immediately on recovery she said: "Lift me up again, I shall walk." She was told that it would be harmful. She insisted but the attendants dared not risk the repetition of the frightening break-down. Several times that night she asked to be lifted out of the bed. Once more at 4 a.m. next morning she said: "Pranab, lift me up and make me walk. My legs are getting paralysed; if you help me to walk again, they will become all right." The attendants did not co-operate: they could not bring themselves to face further danger. The whole of that day the Mother was quiet, but at night she wanted to walk. The attendants said: "Mother, you should not walk." She, as Pranab tells us, "obeyed" them. Pranab continues: "That was on the 15th. From that day She became absolutely obedient. Whatever we told Her She did"

It would seem from this calm passivity of the Mother that the Will of her transcendent self had dawned on her. There was an unexpected complete acquiescence on her part for the next two days, at the end of which the heart failed. The intervening spell of tranquil effortlessness and of what Pranab has called absolute obedience must have been due to the stoppage of the straining for bodily transformation and to the sudden burst of a novel light on the future, revealing the "blue-print" of the new Yoga-structure which would occultly bring about the fulfilment of the Aurobindonian Ideal.

K. D. SETHNA

LONGINGS FOR THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of October 1974)

(6)

Mother, we are sorry, very sorry, indeed!

MOTHER, as we think of you, longingly remember you, a long past and your varied dealings with us begin to play up in our mind. We heartily enjoy all those dealings over again, are grateful for them, but are weighed down by a regret, feel awfully sorry that we did not behave and respond to you and your dealings as we should have. We feel very sorry, indeed.

We enjoyed so much going to you for blessings and there was a time when we went to you three times a day. You received each one of us with great joy, showered on us the Divine's Peace and Love and Force and we felt so thrilled, elevated, reinforced! But we had a queer silly attitude — a demanding, a comparing and a critical attitude. We felt, 'Oh, Mother smiled more to him, concentrated longer on so-and-so, did not pay much attention to somebody, I was just passed over or ignored!' and so forth. How silly it all was!

We just failed to appreciate one simple truth that to the Mother we were all Her children, She had accepted us, She looked after us and wished us all to grow in divine Consciousness. Her love was for us all a patent fact. Compassion is native to the Divine Consciousness.

But this simple and obvious truth we could never get and, in fact, found fault with the Mother's dealings, thought they were discriminatory. We are miserable, Mother, we apologise, we are sorry for all that.

Sri Aurobindo explained to us time and again that the Mother was concentrating on so-and-so, was putting a special Force on some point in him and, therefore, could not smile to him. She was not at all displeased with him. Or sometimes the Mother was in a trance and, therefore, the smile could not be there. But we did not care to understand the trance and its deeper working and insisted on having the apparent smile and there too we insisted on a fuller and a broader smile and had not much appreciation for a deeper and quieter pleasure.

How stupid was it all, Mother! Your abiding joy in us, in spite of our mistakes, wrong attitudes, gross misbehaviours, we did not recognise, but the absence of a smile on a particular occasion, whether due to an act of concentration or a trance, was harboured long. And Sri Aurobindo's repeated explanations we did not accept. How funny! How unintelligent! How unworthy of a seeker after Soul and God, who has come and made his total surrender to his Guru!

We recall it all, feel terribly sad. We apologise. Never shall such a feeling cross our mind again. We have all the reasons to be grateful to you, grateful to you for your

love and joy, for your marvellous help in difficulty and even more grateful for your rebuke, usually very incidental and suggestive, since that shook us up in our self-complacency and opened a truer and a larger vision. We are grateful, only grateful, for all your marvellous and varied dealings with us.

Our past failures were very many and we feel very very sorry for them. Mother, forgive us. They shall never be repeated.

Sri Aurobindo's advice now comes to us with a special force. He said, 'Open and receive.' That was the only thing that mattered, He said, and this He said time and again in many ways. He said, 'Open yourself and receive what the Mother is giving to you, is pressing upon you at meditations and otherwise'.

But this one thing that mattered was the one thing we did not heartily accept and follow. If we had done that, our progress in finding our soul and discovering the Supreme would have been immense and immense would have been the Mother's pleasure in us. How happy we would have felt then!

The daily 'blessings' were a great thing and we ran to those occasions. But our birthdays were a festival to each one of us. The Mother had seen that on a birthday a sadhak was usually more open and She sought to put into him a great deal — of Divine Peace and Force and Love and Knowledge. She welcomed each one of us with a special warmth, the Ashram community rejoiced over it and we were happy the whole day, thinking of the Mother and Her great love.

A similar great occasion in collective form was the New Year's day. There was a time when the Mother received us all at 5 a.m. and wished each one of us 'Bonne Année' ('Happy New Year') and we thrilled with the experience.

The Darshan Days were days by themselves of exceptional giving and large collective and individual receiving and they were welcomed and celebrated jointly by the Ashram community, the disciples living outside and the admirers and seekers all over the world. On these days, the Mother was in a form that reflected the great occasion.

There used to be for a time 'a vegetable Darshan'. At about midday, the Mother would come down to the courtyard of the Ashram to receive the offering of the vegetables of the Ashram gardens. At that time, a relatively small number of sadhaks would come round to see the Mother. The Mother would look at the vegetables of the day and then have a little fun with us. That Darshan had an evident quality of amusement and we would laugh a great deal. The Mother would give us some fruit or the like, but this She would throw out to us and ask us to catch. Some did it very neatly and some clumsily and some failed and we would all have great fun.

Christmas was also a special occasion and at one time the Mother Herself gave each one of us a Christmas gift.

There were quite a few other special occasions of joy and celebration.

We remember all that and it is such a joy to live them over again inwardly. But as we do so, we do also remember that we went to the Mother, met Her and had a lot of joy. But this joy was a variable fact. At times very keen, very vivid and long-staying. But at times, it would not be so. And then there would be occasions when at home

itself, in our room, quietly sitting by ourselves, we would have a nice meeting with the Mother. It would be thrilling and we would long dwell over it.

Latterly when the Mother withdrew and the occasions of going to her for blessings became fewer, many of us reported that this situation necessitated the cultivation of the capacity of inner spiritual contact independently of the physical meeting. And we also heard that many felt they could then have freer contacts. They said that, there being no necessity of physically running for 'blessings', they learned to rely more on their inner turning to the Mother and off and on get the contact. This experience was heard of as being a very very happy thing.

Mother, you are now all a spiritual Reality, presumably more free, more active, more dynamic. And since your passing, your Presence and Contact have been widely felt. We pray that we develop this capacity more fully, more perfectly and enjoy your Presence and Contact more abidingly. You can thus be to us a constant companion, guide, friend and helper. You will then be to us more living than ever before. This is what you demanded of us when you withdrew latterly and this is what Sri Aurobindo also advised — an inner contact, not the physical meeting. Now you would desire it all the more.

Mother, grant that this may become a complete reality of life, for your pleasure and satisfaction and our fulfilment.

But for our past failures, failures to recognise that you are always compassionate and loving, failure to follow Sri Aurobindo's advice 'Open and receive' and indulging in a childish demanding, claiming, blaming attitude we are very very sorry indeed.

(7)

Mother, You were Mother, but we were not children

Mother, you were really a Mother, always solicitous about our welfare, so kind, so gracious, so full of love, always forgiving, you were truly a Mother.

In you, we saw what spiritual motherhood is like — enlightened, illumined, concentrated on the goal, the true aim of life, cognizant of the means and the methods of attaining to the goal, ever helpful, ever forgiving, never harbouring anger or regret, always warm and encouraging, displeased only when we obstinately resisted what should be welcomed. A spiritual mother is a marvellous person! She knows us inside out, our past, present and future and is ever intent on promoting our good, much more than we can do it ourselves.

Our human mother, who gave us birth and brought us up with such tender care, is no doubt a very dear person. But she does not know much about us, about the aim of life and renders us no help in realising it. She can also be very angry and long retain a resentment. She can be very demanding, claiming, complaining too. A mother is a marvellous individual in nature, representing as she does a striking measure of selflessness. But a spiritual mother helps our soul to be born, raises us to

the spiritual status and shapes our destiny. Our relation with her is eternal, that of an immortal soul to an immortal soul. Our human mother is cherished for one life. She gave us, under nature's law, this body and this mind. The spiritual mother operates under divine law and takes us across the rule and dominion of the ordinary unconscious nature.

Mother, you are marvellous, miraculous, a Divine Mother for a divine birth and a divine immortal life!

But were we, could we be children to you, conscious, loving, relying, happy, contented? Were we, could we be children feeling ever more safe in the mother's lap, always playing about her, always running to her in danger, ever full of her, ever mindful of her? Were we, could we be little children aware of ourselves as very very small or not at all aware of ourselves, but always full of the mother, mother as everything, all-knowing and all-powerful, an absolute resort and refuge for all our needs?

No, Mother, we were not. Obviously not. We were conscious of ourselves as important, capable of much, knowing a great deal and yet you were so gracious and kind. We approached you not very much in humility, in a true dependence and reliance and yet you helped us so large-heartedly, so effectively.

You did not mind our conceit and pride, our pretension and ostentation, because you knew we would one day be like little children to you, simple, spontaneous, transparent, trustful, reliant and cheerful.

And the day did come when your long working on us brought about within us, in our heart, the birth, the emergence of a sweet little thing, which just eagerly looked at you and wanted ever to look at you and which disowned all that we knew or could do or had been. It felt as knowing nothing, capable of nothing, just looking up to the Mother for everything. Mother, then we had the true experience of being a child, a sweet simple little thing. How wonderful it was!

The first experience of being a child was a marvellous thing. Ah, to get over being a grown-up, responsible, anxious, apprehensive, calculating, important, 'wise', was a relief— a real relief. And to be a simple little child, sure and safe in the Mother's lap, an entire comfort.

Then we really discovered you as the true eternal mother, whom we could never lose in life.

How sad we then felt about our earlier impudence, self-conceit, self-importance, condescension in our dealings with you! We had called ourselves your children, but we had not been. We could not be children. Childlikeness was not our quality.

You were, Mother, always a mother, always, but we were not children, never.

But we did get reborn as children and then, Mother, you revealed yourself to us as the eternal Divine Mother that you truly are and we your eternal divine children, ever happy to live in you, with you, for you.

(8)

Mother, why did You leave Your Body?

Mother, I wish to ask, in all confidence, 'Why did you leave your body? Had it become necessary? Absolutely unavoidable? Why so? How so?' My heart longs to know all this, yearns for clarity and satisfaction.

No doubt the heart is rather selfish. The Mother was nice, so sweet, so lovable, the Mother was my world and she is now not there! Why has the Mother gone away, why did she leave her body, we are sad, we are forlorn. The heart, therefore, insistently asks, 'Mother, why did you leave your body?'

Mother, you were determined to achieve supramentalisation of the physical, the task confidently entrusted to you by Sri Aurobindo. You yearned for an indefinite prolongation of life to achieve this.

You did explain to us that the transformation of the physical was a tremendous thing, it meant carrying Light to the deepest subconscious and the inconscient, of making the mechanical conscious and intelligent, of eliminating all obscurity and unconsciousness, of becoming all-conscious, of fighting the past habits of nature, the so-called established laws of cosmic existence, of conquest over Death. Ah! tremendous!

You also explained that the physical, being inert, is full of subjection, defeatism, sense of impossibility and suffering and that the process of spiritualising it entailed evoking all that suffering, defeat, impossibility, etc. in a heightened form.

You also told us that the body must suitably respond to the Supramental Force you were pulling down on it for its transformation and that if it did not then it could collapse.

You were also filled with a sense of urgency, as Sri Aurobindo was before his passing, that things needed to be hastened.

But your will, Mother, was indomitable. You were resolved to face all contingencies and achieve the high task, the mission of your very birth, the assignment from on high.

How did it then happen, Mother, that you left the body or found it necessary to do so, or that it had become contingent to progress of the work of transformation?

We know full well that you never submitted to suffering, however acute and terrible. Your will for victory was firm and clear in the worst of situations. Your pressure on the inconscient was constant and unflinching and perhaps the body unconsciously submitted to it in its own traditional way through disintegration because it found it impossible to respond to it by way of conscious assimilation of the descending Force.

Was it like that, Mother? How can we know, Mother, unless we know it from you?

Surely all that must have been a deep dent in the inconscient and that means a

great gain for farther penetration in the future and the ultimate complete conquest.

We rejoice over it in that way, that a real strong impact on the inconscient has been made, which can be a promise and an assurance of farther penetration. But we cannot help thinking that it would have been so nice if the body had responded in a conscious and intelligent manner, assimilated the High Immortal Force and become divinised and rejuvenated.

But Sri Aurobindo and you have taught us a philosophy of spiritual realism and a Yoga which is a systematic procedure of concentrated evolution. A play of possibilities is also a trend ingrained in existence.

Supermind is something inherent in the evolutionary process. But it has to be pursued and achieved and the achievement is a high task with all resistances involved in the material conditions of existence.

Your will for this achievement, Mother, was always clear, firm and full and it is bound to prevail whatever the vicissitudes it may have to face on the way.

Your will and Sri Aurobindo's will in this connection are our complete assurance and we take your passing as we did Sri Aurobindo's, under your guidance, as an incident, a contingency somehow connected with it.

Mother, is it correct? Do you think this orientation is right?

Our query is very keen, insistent and persistent, 'Mother, why did you leave your body?'

However, one thing is sure — you are still present, present around us, within us and we do not feel that you are no more. We turn to you as we used to for the joy of contact and communion, for advice and guidance, for help in difficulty and we find you as ready for contact, guidance and help as ever before. And this is a marvellous experience. But our externalist posture of mind spoils this dealing and intercourse by insisting on the physical form of things.

Mother, let this interference of the physical mind disappear from us and let us enjoy with you a true and an abiding and a full spiritual relationship. And let this query be effectively pacified. Our Mother is there as ever, body or no body makes no difference.

Mother, you are so sweet, so nice. We cherish you always, live for you, do your will and feel fulfilled.

(9)

Mother, will You come again in a new Body?

Mother, we hear you will come again in a new body. That will be grand, wonderful! But will it really be so? Is that needed for the prosecution and completion of your work?

A first supramental body is all the problem for the integral transformation of life. The first body which will no longer be subject to death and disease and deterioration

in this wide world where Death rules and has always ruled. No doubt the first emergence would mean at one point throwing off the sway of death and a complete self-assertion of the immortality of the spirit. How difficult is such a self-assertion and how difficult will it be to subsist in complete defiance and rejection of the sovereignty of death all around!

But that is what is inherent in the nature of the evolutionary process, a supermind coming as the necessary culmination of mind, an integral consciousness as the consummation of the divided consciousness.

But the achievement of the first supramental body has been, Mother, a very serious problem. Hasn't it?

Sri Aurobindo's earnest concern was the supramental descent. That descent presented tremendous difficulties. The human consciousness being self-complacent, un-aspiring, un-open, repulsed the descending power and Sri Aurobindo's concentrated effort was, on the one hand, to create some openness below and, on the other hand, through personal identification with the supermind to seek to bring that power down into the matrix of earth-life. And the attempt to do so meant persistent battle with the universal inconscient, the hard and dark abysmal base of life.

However, after his passing, the passing being evidently an incident connected with the struggle against the inconscient, the supramental Manifestation came off six years later in 1956 and you declared with great joy that the supramental was no longer a promise but a living reality.

His passing was then perhaps instrumental too in that long-hoped-for, worked-for Manifestation.

After that the deeper and deeper penetration of supramental consciousness into earth nature became the problem and was represented in yourself by the progressive descent of the same power into the cells of your body. This was your Yoga of the body or the physical Yoga as we understand it, Mother. This presented awful difficulties in the form of the arousal of the latent incapacities, sufferings and deficiencies of the physical nature. The cells of the body and their unconsciousness resisted the action of the Higher Power rather than welcoming It. The body could not cope with the task. The realisation of the supramental body thus got put off.

But if Sri Aurobindo's passing proved to be instrumental to the supramental Manifestation coming as it did soon in the wake of his passing, will it be wrong for us, Mother, to think that your passing too is going to be instrumental to the realisation of the first supramental body? If your passing will prove so, that would be wonderful. And as the physical transformation was your problem, maybe this will occur as an accomplished fact too in you.

That being probable, we ask, 'Mother, are you coming in a new body, a supramental body which will be the completion of the mission of the integral transformation of life and the beginning of the supramental age?'

We rejoice over it, Mother, heartily, and long for your coming and your Supramental Darshan.

But we must ourselves grow supermind-ward in some measure, acquire some sympathy and equivalence with your supramental nature to be able to get a contact with you, to enjoy your Presence and your Pleasure, to have any dealings with you.

Even previously when we approached you with our vital nature, demanding-complaining-blaming, we missed you. But when we approached you with self-giving and love, psychically, you were marvellous. So a spiritual approach was necessary for a spiritual contact and a spiritual enjoyment of the relation.

When you come to us in your full supramental form, we must needs approach you in some little supramental way.

So we rejoice, Mother, that you are likely to come again in a supramental form, but, Mother, help us to develop some little supramental sensibility to see you, to feel you, to serve you, to be tolerably worthy disciples of you.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

THE DREAM

IN dream-real regions of my sleeping self
 I moved, mid subtle symbols of my present state.
 I found myself on peaks of purest white,
 In clearest skies I was suffused with light;
 Yet on these heights I was not firmly placed,
 And slipped and slid on icy sheets; in haste
 My unsure motion in a heaven-world too bright.
 And in this realm of dazzling snow
 Coiled serpents lurked and hissed
 And snapped at all my to-and-fro.

And now, awake, with city sounds and morning light,
 And pulse of people and of life,
 I recollect my voyage through the night,
 And if a poise of ice-cool calm had been my state
 I could have stayed in spaces great
 As in my home, and not as stranger;
 Nor would the snakes have seemed a danger.

VIKAS

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 October 1974)

6 (Contd.)

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

(m)

How much Teilhard was himself imbued with what we may term the religious intuition of the modern scientific consciousness may be gathered from the words in his letter¹ to Auguste Valensin on 31 December 1926: "Instinctively, and especially in the last ten years, I have always offered myself to Our Lord as a sort of testing-ground, where, on a small scale, He might bring about the fusion between the two great loves, of God and the World — for without that fusion I am convinced no Kingdom of God is possible. — Is it perhaps for this that He makes me share as intensely the spirit of those whom we call free-thinkers, heretics and pagans?... But may He in return for it give me the force to baptise this soul of the World which has become my true soul (supposing it was not always that)!"

The profound change, cutting down to bedrock, which intense affinity with the World-soul would imply in the rethinking of Christ which Teilhard wished the Church to do, can be guessed in general from a letter a year earlier than the one to Jeanne Mortier, which we quoted in the previous chapter. Claude Cuénot² cites this letter dated 20 April 1954: "We have been forced to abandon the static Aristotelian cosmos and introduced (through the whole physico-chemico-biological system) into a universe still in a state of cosmogenesis. In future, therefore, we have to

¹ *Lettres Intimes de Teilhard de Chardin à Auguste Valensin, Bruno de Solages, Henri de Lubac, André Ravier, 1919-1955, Introduction et notes par Henri de Lubac (Aubier Montaigne, Paris, 1974), p. 144: "Instinctivement, depuis dix ans surtout, je me suis toujours offert à N(otre) S(eigneur), comme une sorte de champs d'expérience, pour qu'Il y opère, en petit, la fusion entre les deux grands amours de Dieu et du Monde, — fusion sans laquelle je suis persuadé qu'il n'y a pas de Règne de Dieu possible. — Peut-être est-ce pour cela qu'Il me fait participer aussi intensément à l'esprit de ceux que nous appelons les libres-penseurs, les hérétiques et les païens? . Mais qu'en revanche Il me donne la force de baptiser cette âme de Monde qui est devenue ma vraie âme (à supposer qu'elle ne l'ait pas toujours été)!"* The first half of our English translation is from the introduction (p. 39) of *Letters to Léontine Zanta* (Collins, London, 1969).

² *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study* (Helicon, Baltimore, 1965), p. 362.

rethink our Christology in terms of Christogenesis (at the same time as we rethink our anthropology in terms of anthropogenesis). And such an operation is not simply a matter of slight readjustment of certain aspects. As a result of the introduction of a new dimension, the whole thing is to be recast (just as when you move from plane to spherical geometry) — a tremendous effort: and from it, I assure you, Christ will emerge in triumph, the saviour of anthropogenesis.”

Positive pointers to the extreme implications of recasting Christology abound in *Intimate Letters*. They are at their sharpest where we find, for the first time (as far as I know) in Teilhard’s writings, the terms: “trans-Christic”, “Trans-Christ”, “trans-Christian”, “trans-Christianised Christianity.” On the very face of them they cannot but get linked with the “transcending of Christianity” which, as we saw in the preceding article, Cuénot reads, for a good reason, in Teilhard’s “neo-Christianity”. We shall quote in chronological order the passages where the terms occur. They all belong to the last nine years of Teilhard’s life.

On 20 April 1948 a letter¹ to Valensin contained the following: “... I have never felt at the same time more full of ‘my gospel’, and more integrally dependent, body, soul and mind, upon Jesus Christ. I have a feeling both sweet and painful that I can do absolutely nothing without him. And simultaneously I am frightened to see how much I perceive him always farther and higher upon the axis (I hope!) of orthodoxy. A little like the stars that astronomy shows us always more tied to our system and yet always more vertiginously distant than we thought. — In fact, my pan-Christism is somewhat ‘trans-Christic’. And it is the only position coherent with my Humanism which, biologically, is that of a Humanity still *very imperfectly* centred upon itself, individually and collectively.

“This idea of a super-evolution of Humanity *in process* is more and more becoming my scientific platform....

“At present the great pity is that still for a majority of Catholics (especially priests) religion is a field-glass held by the wrong end: it diminishes the greatness and value of the World, instead of exalting them!”

De Lubac² annotates the phrase “upon the axis (I hope!) of orthodoxy” thus:

¹ *Op cit*, pp 371-2: “ je ne me suis jamais senti en même temps plus plein de ‘mon évangile’, et plus intégralement dépendent, corps, âme et esprit, du Christ-Jésus. J’ai un sens à la fois doux et douloureux que je ne puis absolument rien sans Lui. Et simultanément je suis effrayé de voir combien je l’aperçois toujours plus loin et plus haut sur l’axe (j’espère!) de l’orthodoxie. Un peu comme les étoiles que l’astronomie nous montre toujours plus liées à notre système et cependant toujours plus vertigineusement loin que nous ne pensions. — En fait, mon pan-Christisme est en quelque façon ‘trans-Christique’. Et c’est la seule position cohérente avec mon Humanisme qui, biologiquement, est celui d’une Humanité encore *très imparfaitement* centrée sur soi, individuellement et collectivement.

“Cette idée d’une sur-évolution *en cours* de l’Humanité devient de plus en plus ma plate-forme scientifique

“Présentement le grand dommage est que pour une majorité encore de catholiques (prêtres surtout) la religion est une lunette prise par le mauvais bout: elle diminue la grandeur et la valeur du Monde, au lieu de les exalter!”

² *Ibid.*, p 373, note 5 “Expression nouvelle de ce que T a souvent répété. Il écrivit, 14-2-1949: ‘Entre ma manière de penser et la vision chrétienne du monde “orthodox” (je ne dis pas “officielle”

“New expression of what Teilhard often repeated. He wrote, 14-2-1949: ‘Between my way of thinking and the “orthodox” (I do not say “official” but “practical”) Christian vision of the World, there is not such a big gulf as you think.’” The note seems completely to miss the point of both pronouncements of Teilhard’s. Whatever “practical” may denote, his “way of thinking” is definitely set over against the orthodoxy of the “official” Christian vision: that is, the declared stand of Rome. This is the central significant point. And even as regards the “practical” Christian vision’s orthodoxy the difference is not denied: the difference is still a “gulf”, but the gulf is less big than one might conceive at first sight. As for the phrase glossed by de Lubac, the bracketed exclamation “I hope!” has a double shade: it simultaneously suggests the wish to be orthodox and the uncertainty of really being so. The accent of doubt breaks in because Teilhard has recorded his dismay at finding his Christ moving ever more far and high than one would customarily set him in his divine role *vis-à-vis* the world. The role Teilhard assigns him is increasingly more remote, more grandiose than the Church has given him by its interpretation of scripture. Teilhard would like to believe that the same scripture essentially justifies his position and that therefore his position cannot be called quite unorthodox; but the two interpretations, despite referring to the identical Jesus Christ and having certain terms and approaches in common, tend to differ *toto coelo*. The simile of the stars seeming aligned with our galactic system but really lying incalculably beyond it is surely an index to this difference, no matter what the apparent relationship.

If we keep this simile in mind we shall also see the irrelevance of de Lubac’s next annotation¹ — the one to Teilhard’s “trans-Christic”: “Some days later, 1st May, he transcribed into his notebook the text of St. Ambrose: ‘The world resurrected in Him, heaven resurrected in Him, the earth resurrected in Him. Indeed a new heaven and a new earth resurrected.’ ... And on the 7th, day of the Ascension: ‘All my mysticism: the ascensional force of Christ ...’”

Just because Teilhard quoted a traditional text and summed up his mystical message in terms of Christ’s act of Ascension, it does not follow either that Teilhard was directly referring to the particular theme with which his letter had dealt a few days earlier or that, if he was, we have to understand the entries in his notebook in the conventional Christian sense. We must never forget how he put heady new wine into old bottles: in the letter itself he has clearly referred to the strikingly unusual function he has attributed to the Christ of Roman Catholicism. As he² says elsewhere to Valensin mais “pratique”) l’abîme n’est pas si grand que vous imaginez’ (*Acc.*, 241).”

¹ *Ibid.*, note 6: “Quelques jours plus tard, le 1^{er} mai, il transcrit dans son cahier le texte de saint Ambroise. ‘Resurrexit in Eo mundus, resurrexit in Eo coelum, resurrexit in Eo terra Resurrexit enim coelum novum et terra nova’ (Lect. 7. 5e dim. après Pâques). Et le 7, jour de l’Ascension: ‘Toute ma mystique la force ascensionnelle du Christ . . .’”

² *Ibid.*, pp. 136-7. Je crois . . . Dieu aidant, être toujours sur l’axe chrétien profonde Mais, à côté de cela, je ne puis me dissimuler qu’il va, se développant en moi, une opposition *native* et profonde pour ce qui est regardé habituellement comme la forme, les espérances, et les intérêts chrétiens Que voulez-vous dans le ‘monde chrétien’ tel qu’il se présente à nous dans les documents ecclésiastiques et les gestes ou conceptions catholiques, ‘j’étouffe’ absolument, physiquement.

in *Intimate Letters* (on 27 June 1926 from China): "I believe ... that, God helping, I am always upon the profound Christian axis But, side by side with that, I cannot hide from myself that there has come about, developing within me, an *in-born* and deep opposition to what is habitually regarded as the Christian form, hopes, and interests. You see — in the 'Christian' world', as presented to us in ecclesiastical documents and Catholic gestures or conceptions, I altogether 'suffocate' physically. We gave, a thousand years ago, a compass-measurement which claimed to encircle the world of physical and moral possibilities; — and now the whole of reality is beyond. We are no longer 'Catholic' in fact; but we are defending a system, a sect. Hence, as I believe I have already told you on my first arrival in China, Christianity now appears to me much less a closed and established whole than an axis of progression and assimilation. Apart from this axis, I cannot see any guarantee or any way out for the world. But around this axis, I can glimpse an immense quantity of truths and attitudes for which orthodoxy has not yet made room. — If I dared use a word which could be given unacceptable meanings, I feel myself irreducibly 'hyper-Catholic'."

Here we have a clear light with which to see the implications of the twenty-two-year later passage. Teilhard accepts in essence the axis of Christianity, the orthodox axis, but would like it to be no fast-shut final doctrine: he visions immense vistas of new spiritual revelation to which he wants it to open up instead of constituting a stifling old-world creed. Not orthodoxy as it is but orthodoxy changing itself enormously is what makes his religion. As such, it cannot help exposing itself to the accusation of not being orthodox at all: Teilhard, by saying he is farther and higher — "hyper" — along the Catholic line, without any chance of reducibility to the customary Christian gestures or conceptions, might have the charge laid at his door that by centring his Catholicism in the Universal Christ, the Christ of pan-Christism, who is intimately linked with the idea of Humanity's "Super-evolution", with the envisagement of the "ultra-human," which is not accepted by the Church, Teilhard in some way is going in for the "trans-Christic", a Christianity basically transposed.

Indeed, we get the very word "transposed" in a context closely resembling the one in which he is "frightened" to see how much he perceives Christ always farther and higher than does the Church to which he has pledged himself. And in that second context he even brings in themes related to that which de Lubac mentions as supplying the key to our passage — Christ's Ascension after his Resurrection. On

Nous avons donné, il y a mille ans, un tour de compas qui prétendait encercler le monde des possibilités physiques et morales, — et maintenant toute la réalité est au-delà. Nous ne sommes plus 'catholiques' en fait; mais nous défendons un système, une secte. Alors, comme je vous le disais déjà, je crois, à ma première arrivée en Chine, le Christianisme m'apparaît maintenant beaucoup moins comme un ensemble fermé et constitué que comme un axe de progression et d'assimilation. Hors de cet axe je ne vois au monde aucune garantie, aucune issue. Mais, autour de cet axe, j'entrevois une immense quantité de vérités et d'attitudes auxquelles l'orthodoxie n'a pas encore fait de place — Si j'osais employer un mot qui peut avoir des sens inacceptables, je me sens irréductiblement 'hyper-catholique'." The closing part of our English translation is from the Introduction (p. 36) of *Letters to Léontine Zanta*.

17 December 1922 a letter¹ to Valensin says: "I am sometimes a little frightened when I think of the transposition I have to impose, within myself, upon the common notions of creation, inspiration, miracle, original sin, Resurrection, etc., *to be able* to accept them."

And has not Teilhard written to de Lubac himself of the novel shape required of old dogmas and indirectly warned him against doing the transposing act by halves? On 9 December 1933 de Lubac was told:² "I have quite a number of friends, and you know some of them, who admit at the same time that Christ is the Centre of things and that the ensemble of things is of an evolutive form; — but they do not seem to see what are the reactions organically and psychologically necessary of this situation upon: the notion of Redemption, the notion of Incarnation, and the moral Evangelical ideal."

On 27 June 1934 Teilhard³ speaks even directly of transposition to de Lubac apropos of the Christian idea of the Supernatural face to face with the old pre-evolutionary idea of Nature: "... the most serious defect of the 'Supernatural' is to stand opposite a static notion of 'nature' which suffices no longer. The whole theory of the Supernatural (like all the rest of the theological theses which express themselves by 'substances' and 'accidents') moves about in a domain of thought which the majority of the moderns have deserted. It is essential to *transpose* it to a system of representations which will be intelligible and living for us."

How radical and definitive the general transposition of Christianity was to be in Teilhardism can be gauged from the uncompromising declaration he made in the essay "Christology and Evolution"⁴ written in the same period as the above letters and sent to both Valensin and de Lubac to be read: "... *nothing can any longer find place in our constructions which does not first satisfy the conditions* of a universe in process of transformation. A Christ whose features do not adapt themselves to the requirements of a world that is evolutive in structure will tend more and more to be eliminated out of hand — just as in learned societies today articles on perpetual motion or squaring the circle are consigned to the wastepaper-basket, unread. And correspondingly, if a Christ is to be completely acceptable as an object of worship, he must be presented as the saviour of the idea and reality of evolution."

About this very essay Teilhard⁵ wrote to Valensin on 28 December 1933: "... I

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90: "Je suis parfois un peu effrayé quand je songe à la transposition que dois faire subir, en moi, aux notions vulgaires de création, inspiration, miracle, péché originel, Résurrection, etc., pour pouvoir les accepter."

² *Ibid.*, p. 259: "J'ai bien des amis, et vous en connaissais, qui admettent à la fois que le Christ est le Centre des choses, et que l'ensemble des choses est de forme évolutif, — mais ils ne semblent pas voir quelles sont les réactions organiquement et psychologiquement nécessaires de cette situation sur la notion de Rédemption, la notion d'Incarnation, et l'idéal moral Evangélique."

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-8. "... le plus grave défaut du 'Supernaturel' est de s'opposer à une notion statique de 'nature' qui ne suffit plus. Toute la théorie du Supernaturel (comme du reste toutes les thèses théologiques qui s'expriment en 'substances' et 'accidents') s'agit dans un domaine de pensée que la plupart des modernes ont déserté. Il est essentiel de le *transposer* dans un système de représentations qui soit pour nous intelligible et vivant."

⁴ In *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 78.

⁵ *Op cit.*, p. 261. " je vous envoie un nouveau papier qui, in se, aurait tout ce qu'il faut pour

am sending you ... a new paper which, in itself, would have in it all that is wanted for me to be treated as a heretic."

In the face of such pronouncements it would be misguided to suggest a different view with the help of a quotation dating to 1954 which de Lubac¹ makes at nearly the end of *Intimate Letters*: "The essential of my position: to integrate Evolution into Christification. (Nature into Supernature)" Here, despite appearances, we do not have the earlier position reversed. What is said is simply that Evolution and Christification are inseparable. The emphasis is laid on Christification, but it is a Christification which is to be seen in evolutionary terms: these terms have to become part and parcel of it, be integrated into it, at the same time that they are not to be understood except as implying a process of the World being more and more changed into Christ-stuff, so to speak. What Teilhard intends to convey is his desire to reconcile with the Christian Pleroma or complete Christification of the universe the evolutionary attainment of the ultra-human, the Omega Point, the peak of the progression on earth, so that there would be a fusion of the God Above with the God Ahead. The proper elucidation of de Lubac's extract is to be obtained by looking at some words in Teilhard's very last letter,² the one to André Ravier two days before his death: "A God of Evolution: that is to say a God divinising, Christifying, simultaneously the Above and the Ahead"

As to the second part of de Lubac's citation — "Nature into Supernature" — we may seek light at two places in *Intimate Letters*. First, in a phrase to Valensin on 12 December 1919:³ "... the Supernatural forms itself continually by super-creation of our nature." Second, a phrase to de Lubac on 29 October 1949:⁴ "... Ultra-human and Supernatural: the two complementary terms of a total experience of the Universe." Here, as with Evolution and Christification, we find an indivisible pair — Nature and Supernature playing into each other's hands, the former getting super-created into the latter, the latter completing by that super-creation the former's development of the ultra-human. Evolution is again the *conditio sine qua non*. As the letter⁵ just before Teilhard's death puts it: "Evolution, that is to say ultra-Creation!" And, when Evolution is concerned, we must have a Supernature no longer of the old type, the type hit off by Teilhard in the letter to Lubac on 27 June 1934, where he speaks of "re-thinking the Supernatural"⁶ and then, as we have already seen, he mentions that "the gravest defect of the Supernatural" is its being coupled with "a static notion of 'nature' which no longer suffices."⁷ So, when he writes of integrating

me faire traiter en relaps "

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 464, note 6. "L'essentiel de ma position: intégrer l'Evolution dans la Christification. (La nature dans le Surnaturel.)"

² *Ibid.*, p. 465. "Un Dieu de l'Evolution: c'est-à-dire un Dieu divinisant, christifiant, à la fois l'En Haut et L'en Avant ."

³ *Ibid.*, p. 33. " le Surnaturel se forme continuellement par sur-creation de notre nature."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 382. "Ultra-humain et Surnature: les deux termes complémentaires d'une expérience total de l'Univers "

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 465: "Evolution, c'est-à-dire ultra-Creation!"

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 277: " de re-penser le Surnaturel." ⁷ *Ibid.*

Nature into Supernature, he means a new dynamic evolutionary Nature-notion getting assimilated into a vision of the Supernatural, in which the Supernatural is found to prolong and perfect, complete and crown the natural rather than rejecting it as something that has no issue in itself, no earthly developmental fulfilment.

Neither part of de Lubac's quotation changes the basic stand emerging from the various pronouncements we have underlined. And directly to counter-balance it we have two statements in a letter to de Lubac himself on 15 August 1936. There Teilhard¹ first says: "Thus I succeeded in re-integrating the historic Christ, — as a structural condition for the universal equilibrium." Obviously, the central figure of Christianity could not be taken up in his own traditional right: he had to form a reasoned necessary part of a new cosmic outlook. Such a change is further clarified in more general and clean-cut terms when we further read:² "It is a great point of force for me, in any case, to recognise that the whole effort of 'evolution' is reducible to the justification and development of a love (of God). It is already what my mother used to tell me. But it will have taken me a lifetime to integrate this truth into an organic vision of things. I imagine that it is this effort of integration that the World must make in order to be converted..." The words unmistakably show that to Teilhard Christianity, as it is, cannot be primary and convincing: he needs to reconcile it with an evolutionary view of the world for it to be credible and acceptable. The integration of it into Evolutionism is always the "essential" of his "position", whether made the frontal or the background theme and whatever the verbal shape it may assume.

So the pronouncements we have underlined earlier should bear out our contention *contra* de Lubac's hints for interpreting Teilhard's "trans-Christic". And our contention will be found totally supported by each of the several passages we shall produce as companions to the one where that new word catches our eye. These passages have no play of any counterpoint but are quite straightforward in their tune.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 315 "Ainsi arrivé-je à ré-intégrer le Christ historique, — comme une condition structurelle de l'équilibre universel."

² *Ibid.* : "Ce m'est une grande force en tout cas de reconnaître que tout l'effort de 'l'évolution' est réductible à la justification et au développement d'un amour (de Dieu) C'est déjà ce que me disait ma mère. Mais il m'aura fallu une vie pour intégrer cette vérité dans une vision organique des choses. J'imagine que c'est cet effort d'intégration que le Monde doit faire pour se convertir "

LOTUS-FLAME OR SURYAMAN

(Continued from the issue of October 1974)

BOOK I, CANTO II (*Contd.*)

THE ebon skies were split by the stroke of a gleam.
A thunder crashed from above with vehemence stark;
A blade of lightning tore down the shroud of gloom.
And obscurity fled from the earth and the soul
Leaving the arena bare for joy's outpour.
The rumbling clouds flew beyond the horizon's stretch,
Away from the stroke and light of an approaching dawn,
Unable to bear the intensity of the flood —
The bare epiphanies of a coming bliss.
The storm of Night passed like an evil dream.
The winds of drunken passion ceased and the chill
Of numbing winter of the Abyss was no more.
No more the striding coils of dread and chance,
The ebb and flow of Fate's alternate masks.
Grateful and happy he rose, a child of God
Reborn amid the velds of awaking green
And soft murmurs of an elysian wind
Blowing from the spheres of Light with spanless grace,
The mother's kiss upon an infant soul.
He rose and found the earth boundless and free;
An intimate air greeted his angel-limbs;
Drunken bees hovered on him as on a bloom
And streams and fields opened their arms of joy;
The stars beacons with lustrous nearing call;
The hills encircled his spirit like a charm
And seas opened their vistas to his thought
Winging to the skies whence had come down his seed.
Below, the dust was awake with endless life
And beats of strange unaccustomed thrills of change
And sudden rapture to seize and live — a heart
Vibrant that was long dead with ancient sleep.
The mire was awake, intense, beating with a call.
A puissance and a laughter possessed its limbs
Happy to be reborn in a world of light

With arching infinities of skies above
 And an emerging world throbbing within.
 No memory lurked of the hectic distances
 Of travailing night and slow encompassing death
 And strangling grip of eyeless mortality.
 The earth spinned on towards a shadowless goal —
 The mystic El Dorado was close at hand
 With its living presences, articulate vasts,
 Dreaming spaces of crimson luminosities
 And cloudless days and nights of beauty's call.
 Each flower and shrub mirrored a sacred gleam
 All too remote yet to the struggling clay,
 Almost impossible for the fallen sod.
 There was a presence here, a kinetic touch,
 The kindred hand of an unexpected grace
 Essaying to rouse the lost and primal bliss
 Perfect in a groping and imperfect world.
 But the winds of past obscurities yet lurked
 At weaker hours of lull and senseless drowse,
 At moments of remembrances of Night,
 The skeleton-hands of blind recurrences
 Came back imperious like a forgotten will,
 A sign of the need to outgrow the fallen past
 That lurks unseen within the aspiring breast.
 These, like withdrawing tides, grew less intense,
 Like racks in the wake of long-forgotten storms,
 The memory of the earth's all-shrouding sleep
 Veiling the white undying visage of the soul.
 And slow he grew from gleam to greater light,
 Across the passage of the winds and stars,
 Across the highway of gods walking in Time.
 Earth felt profounder mysteries stir in her deeps
 Untraced by the hands of thought or possessing life
 Or dull matter's obliterating lull.
 Somewhere a hidden pain burned, a still spark
 Too faint, obscure behind the sensation's mark,
 A need to be, a necessity of light
 To grow and wake in a world of dismal fate,
 To live and rise amid earth-nature's tracks,
 A master and a lord of self's expanse.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

THE SECRET SOURCE OF THE GANGES

A QUEST IN A STRANGE LAND

(Transcreated by Gurudas Banerjee from the last chapter of Promode Kumar Chatterjee's Bengali book, *Gangotri, Jamunotri O Gomukh*, first published in April 1950)

“Even though the end is left for ever unknown ...
His paths are found for him by silent fate.”

SRI AUROBINDO, *Savitri*, I.iv.

“And a ship without rudder may wander aimlessly
among perilous isles yet sink not to the bottom.”

Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet**

I

THERE is a little known, remote, Arcadian valley in the Himalayas which hardly anybody has explored. Not only is it off the map — very small in itself and further dwarfed and camouflaged by the surrounding ice fields and mountains with sky-piercing peaks — but also it is practically inaccessible. Even if one has heard of its existence, who will make an attempt to go there gambling with his life, jousting with death? Travellers and pilgrims in general like to visit holy places or beauty-spots which are on the highways or are well-known. “Content with (their) safe round’s unchanging course, (They) hazard not the new and the unseen.”¹ Everybody shuns out-of-the-way places where you can go only by trudging across difficult terrain, struggling for breath at every step. The centres in the Himalayas which are mostly sought after are, as we know, Kedar, Badrinarayan and other goals of pilgrimages situated on the highway of Mahaprasthan. Very few people care to visit Jamunotri, and fewer still Gangotri. The way is hazardous. It is attempted only by some seekers, sannyasins, tapaswins and, on rare occasions, by flamboyant adventurers.

To come directly to my present account suffice it to say that in 1915 I trekked to Jamunotri, thence towards Gangotri, and at last thought I had reached the cave of Gomukh. The *darśan* (seeing) of the “source” of Ganga Mai (Mother Ganga) gratified my eyes. I was so filled with joy and excitement that I wondered whether I was on earth or in heaven. The atmosphere of mystery and sacredness investing the area may be recognised by even the most blind or insensitive. The thought of the long distance, starting from Calcutta, and the pains of the travel melted into thin air. I took a dip in the holy water; freshness came back to me after many days. My guide Naranarayan merely touched its surface reverently with his fingers. I questioned him about this — what seemed to me quite ‘eccentric’ — act of his. For it is not daily that one gets an opportunity to wash one’s sins off by bathing at the fountain-head of the sacred Ganga. His reply compelled me a little later to launch

* These quotations are added by the transcreator. ¹ *Savitri* (I. iv)

on the most crucial enterprise of my life: Unravel the mystery about the origin of the Ganges river.

"I don't think this is the actual source of the river," my guide said flatly, then added, pointing to the width (20 ft.) of the stream, "How could such a wide stream be the origin of the Ganga?" His reasoning was sound, coldly logical. I could not but appreciate his hard-headed consideration; in fact I also felt that way. But the realisation of this hard truth made me a little dismal; the thoughts of the long and arduous foot-journey started to create ripples in my mind.

He said that the actual Gomukh ("Cow-mouth") was still higher up: "There — see in the north the wide field of snow rising gradually upwards to unite with the snowy mountain? On that mountain is the real Gomukh. No ordinary man can go there, because those realms belong to the gods, through that region winds the path to Alakapuri. There is a spot on that path which is continually lashed by blizzards and it is beset with all kinds of dangers. There is also a mountain pass on the way which has to be crossed before one can get as far as Gomukh. But if somehow a human being can manage to reach there, then he comes back a god!"

Consequently, then and there I gave up the idea of spying out the spot and coming back a god. But cunning providence must have laughed secretly and, even in that holy place, the abode of the gods, thought nothing of putting a spoke in my wheel. Then all my plans absolutely changed! Contemplating for some time that huge cave of ice, I experienced an unaccountable stimulation or *je ne sais quoi*. I was probably struck with nympholepsy. This was exactly the kind of ecstasy or frenzy which courts death. My enthusiasm also inspired Naranarayan, and he was keen to accompany me, but my heart did not want him to be a party to this pride. Finally, alone I started off with the understanding between us that he would wait for me for only three days near that cave. It was a relief that he did not insist on following me. My conscience was clear.

Up to where the flow of the Bhagirathi — as this part of the Ganga's 1560 mile-long stream is called — suddenly gushes out from inside the Gomukh cave at the foot of the Gangotri glacier in the Garwhal Himalayas, there is the journey of the ordinary trekkers. They stand aghast staring at the calm challenging head of this huge natural gargoye which spits out a mighty river.

Both the right and the left sides of the cave were covered with heaps of ice-crusted rocks. The right side was so steep that there was no question of climbing it; but it might be possible to shin its near side by stepping on the ice-covered stones. If somehow this near side could be clambered, it would be possible to ascend quite high; even some of the distance towards the real Gomukh could be made; and later, on the second day the whole of it. Then I could take along Naranarayan to complete my journey. This was my idea. I decided to mount upon the cave and beat about just to see if any clue could be found.

I rose to the top of the cave from its left side. There ice had collected in a massive heap and stuck firmly to the body of the mountain. On one side of this heap, a little

below, I could hear a babbling sound. I followed it and discovered between cracks of ice-heaps the stream of the Ganga. I became hopeful that if I picked my way along this stream perhaps I should find the direction to Gomukh.

Taking courage in both hands I adventured up the rugged trail. Some time later I started gasping. I had with me two chapatis and some soojee — I wolfed them down as I lumbered on. Gathering some strength I pushed onward; even so I could not ascend much more. I covered in all probably two miles, but not finding any trail of the mainstream I was down in the mouth, my hopes snuffed out. Also my throat went dry and the thirst was unbearable.

I had to beat a retreat after all. Confident that I was going back by the same way as I had come, I moved fast. Sensing that now I could walk easily, my heart was light. The cave was invisible, but I surmised that soon I should spot it. I felt that I flitted towards the south all right, because I had set out towards the north-west. But the feelings are a bad guide; for soon it flashed upon me that the trackless snowy area that I had left behind was not so wide. It did not seem that this tract would terminate soon; also I must find some refuge before evening. I had not much time to think.

There was no such thing as a path; before me was merely whiteness. In some places the ground was high, in others low, just like a plateau, with heaps of ice. Overhead the whole sky was so covered with a misty screen of light and shade that to discover the sun penetrating through it was not quite possible for my sight. Besides, having looked at the whiteness all through the day my eyes were aching and streaming, perhaps they had also become red. Therefore with great apprehension in my heart I halted to have an all-round view of the region and determine which way to proceed. Needless to say I had lost my way; a fit Nemesis for my recklessness!

I craned my neck to the right. Not too far away appeared a black speck. That it could not be the cave in that snowy mountain I judged by its motion. It was the head of a man looking like a black dot because of its distance and the white background. Just as when the sun rises from below the horizon or from behind a mountain its upper part is seen first and then slowly the rest of the orb, even so that dot grew bigger as it emerged from behind a mound of ice. He was coming in my direction. When he had come nearer I distinguished a long staff in his hand.

His head-dress was as in ancient days, and his body was wrapped in a thick deep red cloth; except the nose, the mouth and the eyes nothing was clearly visible. With his golden complexion and his moustache-ends curled upwards, he looked like an ancient Hindu Aryan of the Kshatriya caste.

After some time he stopped. Motionlessly he appeared to be watching something on the ground. He was still afar, so I could not view him well. With the metallic end of his staff he cleared a heap of snow, crouched, picked up something from there with his right hand and tucked it into his breast. He stood up and, holding the staff, resumed his majestic walk.

He must have clapped eyes on me, for he was pacing up towards me; I also inched forward. Slowly we came very close so that he was only about six yards away.

What a heroic stature! Perhaps he was six and a half foot tall and proportionately broad. Over his bright blue eyes were two long, jet-black, pencil-thin eyebrows. Below his aquiline nose he sported a well-trimmed moustache. A godly figure indeed! His upper garment was a deep-red, thick, woollen fabric. The boots were of the Tibetan-an type made of fur. Anyone seeing this figure would be impressed by his power and dignity. Such was his appearance that it claimed immediate awe and respect.

When he came within call I was the first to accost him. I told him in Hindi that I was in trouble, and I asked him how far Gomukh was. Queer how he went past me without caring so much as to shoot a side-glance. I could not understand whether he had heard me. His gaze was on the field of snow in front. Without a word he went directly to a snow-heap and started digging with his staff. A few strokes and he made a hole; probably he saw something inside. Leaving the staff he crouched and, thrusting his hand inside, he brought out three transparent brown-coloured things which resembled eggs. He tucked them into his breast. Holding the staff again he stood up and at last cast on me a propitious look. Then bewitching me with a smile he waved to me to go with him and gently walked on. His regard radiated such faith, confidence and friendliness that I felt he was a beloved, long-lost friend. To my mind his apparition seemed a kind gesture from Providence, and this thought lightened my heart.

The passage in which I had been hiking since midday was a nek of which I had never heard before. Whether Naranarayan had told me anything about it or not I could not recollect; but what I gathered was that it was situated on the side of Gangothri, though again I cannot exactly say on which of its sides; it is very likely that it was on the north western, since all the passes in the Himalayas are on that side.

Now marking that I could not march in rhythm with his strides, he took hold of my hand. As soon as he reached out his strong hand and caught my wrist, by the mere touch of his strength and the warmth of his palm my body was thrilled; all my weakness vanished in a moment. Now I could advance as if effortlessly.

In a short time we reached a spot where heaps of flinty black stones, crumbled rocks and dislodged granite fragments littered the way. Close by the snow-covered stones, half-hidden from the eye, grew shrubs with white or deep yellow leaflets. While passing through there I felt that I was being possessed by a sort of intoxication, the kind produced when a lot of *bhang* is eaten. Bit by bit my brain was overspread by a pleasant drunkenness. Added to that was a waft of some strange aroma; those shrubs probably were the source of it. As I thus advanced I went floppy mentally, I was in a state like drowsiness or sleep for a time. When suddenly I regained my normal awareness I found the entourage changed; no more snow and whiteness everywhere. I was descending down a wide, long and easy slope. And the Olympian was there, leading with gentle but firm steps.

By now he had freed my hand. When exactly he had let it go I could not even guess. Now there was no feeling of elevation; my eyes focussed much better, my mind was refreshed.

(To be continued)

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

THE Jumbo was not really an elephant with wings; it looked just like the other jet planes parked alongside. But as you entered it, it looked impressive enough.

Rows upon rows of neatly upholstered seats as far as the eyes could go, fully packed with obviously opulent Sikhs and other Indians returning from London for a change; a high ceiling painted white and gleaming not too bright with dim lights; the two side walls with miniature sketches of what the breathless tourist expects to see of India — elephants complete with embroidered *howdah* seats, couples making love in Khajuraho style, a Konarak lady lacquering her foot in an impossible anatomical stance; opaque screens discreetly dividing the cabin space into sizeable compartments, screens on which are projected mini-films of the exciting American type that talk only through headphones — supplied on request at two dollars a piece “under international regulations” as the hostess announced rather apologetically; the unexpected voice from the cockpit, the Indian Captain calmly announcing a few minutes before Bombay that two out of the eighteen massive wheels that support the giant on its legs had burst their tyres but “there is no cause for alarm”, and the near-perfect landing that he made soon after; — these and several other details reminded one that this was the year of grace 1974 and things are rather different from what they were forty years ago when I last returned from a longish sojourn in Europe.

Rome, our point of departure for the tour, is now barely eight hours away from Bombay, it is in fact less if you go by the watch on the outward journey. In 1934, the fastest boat (of Lloyd Triestino) took three hundred hours to reach Naples. That, symbolically speaking, is the measure of the change that has come over Europe. Has it brought India nearer? One wonders.

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The winds of change have blown over Western Europe — I had no occasion to look upon the behind-the-Curtain scene — at first from the East. The dust raised by the Storm-troopers has long subsided: there is not a sign of Hitler and his Kampf anywhere, except in the innocent-looking Panzers kept as museum pieces behind Napoleon's Tomb at the Invalides in Paris, and in the magnificent Autobahns that were the Little Napoleon's only lasting contribution to modern civilisation. The winds changed direction soon after the War, and the Westerlies have been blowing steadily over Europe since the inception of the Marshall Plan. In spite of occasional protests and an undercurrent of De Gaullistic chauvinism, Western Europe continues to be pervaded by the American spirit. It has certainly done it some good.

The first thing that strikes one after a lapse of years is the enormous importance Europe has been giving to beauty — beauty in the purely physical sense. This, one

may suggest, is a mere return to the Renaissance spirit. But that is not the whole story. The Renaissance recovered for Europe the Hellenic feeling for the beauty of the human form naked and unadorned, that is represented well enough in its sumptuous art galleries; it did little for the beauty of rural and urban environment. Perhaps the necessary technique was still unknown, perhaps the political situation with its perpetual strife in civic life and the large proportion of the economically handicapped both in city and village had a lot to do with it. Besides, the Hellenes thought of civic adornment mainly in terms of public monuments and did little for the rural folk. All this has changed.

Public monuments still, however, receive a share of attention, a good deal of attention in fact. I do not know if there is anywhere in Europe anything like the Preservation of Monuments Act, the greatest glory of the Curzon Administration in India. But the care bestowed everywhere in Europe on its ancient, medieval and modern edifices is something superb.

The old and the new jostle together in most of the great European cities, as they do in India. But the difference is rather striking. The one-horse hackney still plies through the streets of Rome or Pisa, as does the Ekka in Kanpur or the one-bullock cart in the dock area of Calcutta. But the hackney and its trotting horse lend an added charm to the ancient and medieval monuments of Europe and are used mainly for the delectation of the curious visitor from America; they do not in any way clutter the passage of the cars roaring by at whirlwind speed, nor do they look ugly in the peculiar setting. Rome has its ancient Senate and Forum excavated below the present surface level, and even London assigns a special place to its meagre Roman remains in the very heart of the City's financial centre, as it keeps a Monument to the Great Fire of the Restoration era preserved in the same area. But care has been taken to so blend the new with the old that one almost loses the sense of history in the modern setting; in any case there is little of "archaeology" about them, a feeling that one cannot easily get over while touring through the medieval ruins of Delhi or the ancient monuments of Sarnath or Tanjore.

The difference is still more noticeable in the care they bestow on the historic buildings and their treasures. My memory of the Notre Dame in Paris and the Government Buildings in London's Whitehall was that of an unrelieved darkness of soot. Today, thanks to a process of large-scale cleaning recently applied to the surface, both have turned brownish white, possibly their original colour relieving the medieval gloom.

There is perhaps nowhere in the world a palace more stupendous in its proportions than the old Paris residence of the Valois and Bourbon kings of France. The Louvre is known to the outside world for its three masterpieces, the Venus of Milos, the headless Victory of Samothrace and of course the Mona Lisa, and its endless galleries thick with paint. The Mona Lisa has of late taken to touring abroad — she is now somewhere on the way from Japan to Moscow. The other masterpieces remain in their places and draw admiring crowds. But no one seems to remember that

the rooms they now occupy were once the private and state apartments of kings and queens of whose pomp and power the endlessly spreading wings and the huge courtyard of the Louvre were the visible insignia. Sri Aurobindo has observed that monarchy cannot survive long in the midst of a city. But so long as it did survive in Paris, its most imposing symbol, the Louvre, must have created a tremendous impression on the people, as it did on my mind.

And when Louis Quatorze shifted to suburbia, the seat of royal power was no longer Paris but Versailles with its slightly smaller replica of the Louvre, its artificial lakes bordered by ornamental gardens rigorously trimmed and merging unobtrusively into the neighbouring woodland — maintained with care, they say, for lending a “naturalness” to the highly artificial life led by the kings and their retinue. Even then, the Louvre maintained its imposing looks as it does today; but it was well on the way to becoming a Museum of Art which Napoleon began to embellish with the most precious relics of his conquests; it has preserved that reputation ever since. It is generously provided with cushioned seats in every room and gallery. But the weary sight-seer sometimes cannot help the reflection that the great artists of the past might have spared their foot-sore admirer of the present by a little less stupendous energy than they have displayed in their work. And one still wonders why Leonardo da Vinci, the greatest of them all, should have his masterpieces — I am not speaking of the Mona Lisa — placed in obscure corners where one has to search for them.

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The other palaces that draw enormous crowds on the continent are those of the Doge in Venice and of the Pope in Rome, and in London the early medieval Tower where Mary Queen of Scots lost her head for presuming to be a rival to Elizabeth and in whose underground cellars are the glittering jewels of the British Crown. The Doge of Venice ruled over a short-lived commercial empire, but his palace (adjoining the St. Mark Cathedral and the Campanile in brick) still provides anecdotes for the Italian guide with a keen sense of humour who takes a particular pleasure in announcing solemnly to the visitors after they have sat for a moment in the Senators' chairs: “And now to the prison cells.” We preferred walking on foot *through* the famed Bridge of Sighs to sailing precariously under it in a swaying gondola as seems to have been the fashion in olden days. One does not know if this small span over a channel of the Grand Canal — the main thoroughfare of the city — was the chosen spot for lovers to sigh over their disappointments. But it surely must have been the scene of many a sigh from men walking to their doom from the seat of justice to the dungeons on the other side. And what dungeons! The little airless rooms with their single piece of furniture, a slab of stone which served as a sleeping couch and as a sofa for the condemned man, these dungeons remain among the most powerful symbols of the darkness and cruelty of the Middle Ages, so nearly placed to the magnificent paintings of Tintoretto adorning the walls of the Senate Hall.

The palace of the Vatican looks almost insignificant by the side of the majestic church of St. Peter. But the huge courtyard in front, peopled by innumerable pigeons as in every other place in front of a renowned church and thronged by visitors all round the year, lends it a special charm, which is no less enhanced by the smallish private chapel of the Pope than by the world-renowned Sistine whose ceilings Michel Angelo adorned. Of St. Peter I shall speak later. But the Tower of London needs special mention among the palaces of Europe. It is not only the oldest among those that survive in their original shape; it is also perhaps the most formidable to look at. The pictures we see do not bring out its enormous size well enough, nor the massive strength it embodies. It must have been built to resist all attempts at trespass, surrounded as it was by a wide ditch and the river Thames and protected by battlemented walls through which the archers aimed their deadly arrows. Surprisingly enough, apart from school children who make it a picnic spot — there are special sheds provided for their meals — republican America throngs its gates more than any other country. One main attraction naturally is the fantastic collection of gold plate and the jewels (mostly diamonds) adorning the crowns of royalty. The Cullinan diamond is there, the world's largest find now cut into a number of separate gems but kept in its original shape and size as a model exhibit. The Kohinoor is there, set on the crown of the Queen Mother Elizabeth, and a host of other glittering pieces that hold a never-ending stream of spectators glued to the spot in spite of the constant admonition from the attendants to keep moving on. The surprising thing about the show is that there is not a policeman about, nor even a pistol hanging anywhere tucked to the waist of attendants, and the jewels are kept in glass cases seemingly vulnerable.

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There are other monuments to royalty or its Renaissance equivalent, but they do not attract attention except when pointed out by the guide. The palace of the Medicis in Florence, of the Sforzas in Milan are cases in point. They may have served as inspirations to the builders of the Louvre or Versailles, as the proud Florentine guide said about the Medici palace; otherwise they have little importance at present. Two monuments in this genre form a notable exception. There is in the heart of Rome a rather flamboyant memorial to King Victor Emmanuel (on horseback and looking very much like Bismarck to whom he owed his glory), with a background of a semi-circular colonnade adorning an eminence (perhaps one of the seven hills of Rome). The whole thing gives the impression of a new-born sense of pride in national patriotism — Italy, it may be remembered, was no more than a geographical entity for centuries after the fall of the Roman empire. Mussolini, it seems, used to perform his best histrionic feats in front of this monument to Italian unity.

The Buckingham Palace, of course, stands in a class apart. It is not only an actual residence of royalty. It also keeps up something of the pageantry associated with royalty. Its daily changing of the Guard, precisely as the clock strikes eleven, is a

ritual that has to be seen to be believed. Who would imagine that an almost childish pageant could draw such huge crowds every morning, crowds of children and young men and women and old people, speaking all the languages of Western Europe — and of America — who throng the gates of the Palace as far as the footpath allows them, just in order to catch a glimpse of the young grenadiers in their gaudy uniforms and foot-high fur caps tied to their chins, as they march slowly towards each other and finally make an exit through the main gate into the street, keeping time in an incredibly precise low lifting of the toes as the crowds break out in hilarious applause? We were caught in this happy crowd, my wife and I, of our own accord naturally, and allowed time to fly as the coach with the rest of our company stood, waiting a short distance away. It was almost on the point of departing without us. But we could not have cared less if it had.

Europe seems to have perfected the art of pageantry.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

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SEVEN LIVES

A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

(Continued from the issue of October 1974)

CHAPTER VII: PART 3

YEARS slipped by without any fresh change or addition to Edward's way of working. Term upon term a score of the university's most brilliant physics students would pass through his hands, and though many of them came to worship their professor as a virtually superhuman being and he too regarded them with that strange love of which only he seemed truly capable — at once detached and yet so immensely powerful — his true attention he lavished upon his work. By the turn of the twentieth century when Einstein had begun to publish his findings, a host of fresh lights and modifications quickly occurred to Edward as he began to peruse the Einstein papers. Indeed, like a stag released into a vast new forest, he leapt forward into the field of possibility so freshly illumined by the German master, bounding from stone to stone in his odyssey of discovery concerning the incredible mechanism that was the physical universe. His shelves began to bulge with the papers and sheets of calculations that poured from his pen. Each he had deposited in its respective bundle and then left there, unrevised, untyped, and unread by any but himself, for he no longer had any time to compose treatises or arrange his work for publication. He simply wrote and pressed on, wrote and pressed on, so irrepresible was his desire, even his urgent need, to explore all the worlds of possibility the new sciences offered him.

A few times, Mr. Malthus, the University President, even suggested that Edward once again try to bring his findings to light, but on every occasion Edward answered, "Yes, of course, when I have the time." And each time, there the matter would rest, nor would the President press him further, for Edward was already the oldest and most revered member of the faculty, having been on the staff since 1885, and Malthus was honour-bound to allow him to do as he pleased in his own way.

Edward's next turning point came in 1914, the year that half the world went to war. For the past five years he had been working almost single-handed on the structure of the atom, and by 1914 through a gargantuan effort goaded by nothing but the raging curiosity of a pure scientist he had uncovered the secret of atomic fission. It was late summer and the guns along the Marne had just begun to boom on the other side of the Atlantic, when Edward awoke after the long night during which he had checked his calculations for the last time. Silent Daughter had come to him in the early hours of sleep and was still with him when he passed into his morning meditations. Within the hours that followed he conversed with her as he had rarely done in the close-to-thirty years she had been coming to him, but now speech was imperative and he did not hold back.

"So this is the conclusion of the path we have been treading," he began.

"Yes, beloved," she whispered. "In twenty-five years, others will know what you have already discovered."

"And, as a result, thousands will die?"

"Millions."

"But surely man will look beyond the atom's power to kill."

"Later, but with no security, till he has ceased altogether to be a beast."

"Of course, but will he give himself time for that?"

"The Divine One will give him time, my Golden One."

There was silence as a new feeling arose in Edward, a feeling that had been unfolding in him like a tiny, germinating seed since yesterday. Slowly now it gathered momentum within him, until it burst from him at last in the form of a categorical declaration.

"I can no longer go on with the scientific enquiry into the composition of matter. Others will do it in their own time. Meanwhile I will burn my papers on atomic fission this morning. None need ever know of them. I myself am certain, dearest one, that any further enquiry along the lines we have been following would not only be futile but even potentially destructive, for we would only learn how to undo the universe like children taking a toy to pieces, and nothing more. The purposelessness of such an endeavour is manifest. Everything in my nature cries out against it, for my inner heart seeks to build, not disintegrate and destroy....

"All these years I have swum through the great oceans of scientific enquiry with their myriad currents, whirlpools and obscure, ill-lighted depths, observing, recording, theorizing, formulating. I have taken almost a life-time over the work, doing it slowly, meticulously, and exhaustively. And in the end I have come to an infinite, all-encompassing wall with just one opening in it, an opening as minute as a pin-prick. It is that pin-prick at the ultimate point in physical creation from which the oceans seem to find their genesis. At this juncture, I find myself faced with two choices. Should I ignore the pin-prick, turn my back on it, and return to those ocean depths I have known and studied, that are apparently so mechanical in their working, presumably so bound by the laws we discover for their habitual action, and so enmeshed by their own iron-lawed system of existence that no new light or breath can ever enliven their predetermined pattern of being? There I too would be doomed to a robot-like conception of myself as part of this inconscient matter, even though I miraculously possess the power to view and bemoan my own hopeless destiny.

"The second choice is to squeeze through the hole and escape matter's dreadful void of sense and consciousness. In doing so, I do not even feel I would escape into a total unknown, for something within me already knows and raises its insistent voice. Something tells me it has lived beyond that opening already and must do so once again, or all life and love and beauty will dissolve into an irremediable futility."

"Pass through the hole then." She said it softly, not as a command or even a suggestion, but as a whispered compliance resonant with its own silent joy.

Without further ado, he turned his inward gaze to the dense wall with the pin-prick aperture in it and leaned against it with all the weight of his immaterial body and his outstretched immaterial hands. Once again a cry rose from some depth within

him, a prayer sang out and struck against the barrier like a reverberating wave of sound. It was then the wall, at first so apparently impenetrable and solid, began to move, wavering back and forth like a dark, dense net strung out beneath the sea. More and more lightly did the net-wall move till soon it assumed the consistency of gauze. Now in sheer excited exuberance, Edward thrust his hands at the hole and pulled them apart again so that a great gaping tear in the material appeared. The next moment everything happened at once. The wall dissolved into wispy shreds that fluttered in the air for a brief instant like spider's webbing, before disappearing altogether. Then with a great sigh of overwhelming relief that seemed to arise from all the four corners of space at once, the light that had been penned beyond the wall flooded forward and claimed the material universe. Immediately, the senseless, mechanistic round ceased, the laws no longer gripped with their blind, intransigent grasp, and the dull fatalism of insensate matter vanished in the all-conquering blaze. Only slowly thereafter did the brilliance of the glow begin to dissipate, and life and existence begin to take form again out of its whiteness. But now it was a life and existence transformed, luminous and incredibly free; and the relief of it poured over Edward in refreshing wave upon wave. Suddenly he saw that what he had been defining as laws, laws of science and nature, the atom and space, were nothing but the myriad, ever-moving extensions of a self-initiating action. Or were they in truth the flowing limbs of the universal God involved in his meticulously unfolding dance of a fantastic and self-absorbing creation? Yes, surely they were, as surely as they were not "laws" the way men defined them, but movements as free in the immensity of time, and yet as rhythmical as the tides of the sea or the delight of the wind among the trees. Neither in this illumined universe was there any trace of "dark fate," but only the eternal joy, of the dance. At this moment, an ancient visitor returned to the one who had been Hiranyamaya and was now Edward Everton. The divine embodiment of joy that had come to the young sadhak so long ago over the Himalayan valley as the second boon of his yogic tapasya, now reappeared before the aging professor. But now the god filled not only a valley but existence itself. He sang in every firmament and every atom; he coursed through every chemical substance known to the science of man, and he gazed with his vast smile upon every little theorem or formula man had ever written in an effort to chart his godly movements, or to record the rate of his ethereal pulse-beats.

Now for the first time in his life Everton felt thoroughly at home. He had returned full circle after his sojourn in the dimly-lit alleyways of thought as it had evolved in modern man, and he had once again come to the point from which all his soul's knowledge had sprung.

Silent Daughter smiled. "So it is finished, beloved?" she asked.

"No," he replied. "Something still remains. Something in me still refuses to rest."

"Yes," she said. "I know."

"He has come," Edward went on. "He is here. I can feel it and know it within myself as surely as I have known anything in my life. But where?"

"The other side of the earth."

“Don’t speak of it or I shall die of yearning! Is there no way I can reach him? No way that I can feel his touch again?”

“Oh, my beloved, do you think I would let you suffer here without his touch? You should know that the gods are not so cruel.”

One by one the warm tears spilled down his cheeks as his memory opened, and parts of him that had lain dormant for years rose up and lived again with a massive anticipation, for at last each part of him knew as a certainty that the divine being Hiranyamaya had carved at the back of his cell, the very Divine One from whom the white lion and his boon of wisdom had emanated, now lived upon the earth as concretely as Everton did himself, a celestial visitor upon its dangerous shores.

“It will take some time,” Silent Daughter continued, reaching through his tears with her smile. “He is writing and it will be arranged that even through all the vicissitudes of war his words will reach you. But meanwhile you have no cause to hang back — call him and he will come as certainly as you are his and he is yours, and have been since he came to you in the vision of Hiranyamaya. From then the bond and boon that bound you to him was formed and from then onwards will it last into time indissolubly. Moreover the white lion that came to you at that moment is, as you know, the unique and most intimate emanation of his own essence and wisdom. Therefore call upon him and be certain of his coming, for no father can turn from the offspring of his own soul.”

Reassured, Edward allowed himself to melt into the tranquil waters of his own relief. An overpowering desire came upon him to sleep like an infant exhausted after the trauma of birth, and he drifted off heedless of the world around him, of his papers, his room in the university, and all the great frenetic world outside. Only one thought survived at the core of his tranquillity: that he had come home at last to safe, familiar waters from his wanderings ... come home ... come home ... come home ...

At 9:15 the cleaning woman opened the door of Everton’s apartment and found its occupant still in bed sound asleep. His desk was deep in papers covered with his closely written hand and the desk lamp was still on. Stepping across the carpeted room on her toes, the woman switched it off and left, closing the door silently behind her. She was sure that the elderly professor was unwell and went to report his condition to another faculty member. Shortly afterwards, four men, President Malthus and the university doctor among them, entered Everton’s room and took a look at the sleeping man. Still, despite their presence, he did not move, and yet they hesitated to awaken him, for no one could have said he had the look of a sick man. On the contrary, he seemed rather to have on his face the beatific radiance of a little child, or was it the look of a man who has shed all the burdens of life and is sleeping his first untroubled sleep in years? They thought best to leave him for the time being, for all of them had noticed the papers on the desk and correctly assumed that he must have worked late into the night.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of October 1974)

FUTURE EDUCATION AND LIFE'S EVOLUTION

SIGNS of awakening that are perceptible everywhere point a finger of light at what future education will be. This education will be based on evolutionary principles. Its concluding phase and feature will be *atma-vidyā* (knowledge of the Self).

The Mother does not stop even at this high consummation. When we have advanced a good way in spiritual education, “Then will begin a new education which can be called supramental education leading to the appearance of a divine race upon earth.”

Indeed after graduation only is one entitled to go in for Ph.D. Self-realisation is the first requisite for access to a higher course in spritual life.

Sri Aurobindo maintains: “All life is a growth of the soul from darkness to light.”¹ To consent to this growth, this change, willingly, joyfully, whole-heartedly is to evolve to “fulfil the Divine in life”.² Spiritual education entails conscious evolution. What hinders one on the forward march? What impedes the flow of evolution?

The main hindrance is from the man himself. He refuses to accept a change in his ways of life, his ways of thinking and acting.

If traditional schools do not insist on maintaining the *status quo*, the evolutionary force will find a free play and the change will be more rapid than we might think. The past clings so the teachers find it difficult to rise to the needs of the future.

Let us go back to the days when Sri Aurobindo worked as an editor of the *Karma-yogin*. What he saw and said in the beginning of the twentieth century could still be the *mantra* of our lives:

“We have yet to know ourselves, what we were, are and may be, what we did in the past and what we are capable of doing in the future. This is the first and most important work. To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificent spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us deepest-rooted, deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of all the peoples of the earth.”

Tomorrow requires teachers who are well versed in spiritual education. As long as our personal interest dominates life, the universal forces cannot utilise us for any higher purpose. The disappearance of ignorance and arrogance may witness the appearance of a new power. Without that a teacher cannot become a transmitter of the Grace and Inspiration to his pupils. This is why the Mother declares:

“One must be a saint and a hero to become a good teacher.

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 52. ² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

One must be a great yogi to become a good teacher."

The ideal is not impracticable. India has known glorious days when students from far-off lands (China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet, Java) came to her international university cities for higher studies. Nalanda University was the pride of India. The famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang came here to study *Yoga-Vidyā*. At the time Shilbhadra was the Chancellor of Nalanda.

Dipankar was the Chancellor of the University of Vikramashila. On repeated requests he went to Tibet and rose to a status next only to Buddha among his adherents.

A great past ought to be followed by a greater future for "we belong not to the dawns of the past but the noons of the future."

Another utterance of Sri Aurobindo on the point is not less forceful:

"Break the moulds of the past but keep safe its genius and its spirit or else thou hast no future."

It is within the power of man to break the bonds of the past and carve out a new future.

Can even those rare few who have attained the top positions in modern science reach the heights to which India rose in those days?

Let us take the case of an exceptionally gifted youth who rose to the top. His father is passing his retired life in the peaceful atmosphere of the Ashram. His eyes sparkled with joy and his heart took a natural delight in narrating the career of his two sons and a devoted daughter.

His youngest son is considered an asset even to an American University for his original mind and brilliant academic career. Almost in every letter the father wrote to each of them: "Open to the Mother. Whenever you are seized by depression or beset with trouble, call the Mother for her help and Grace."

After obtaining the Mother's Blessings his daughter, who is an M.B.A. (Master of Business Administration), got a respectable job in a Chicago Bank such as even American students have to hunt for over a year or more. Though living so far away, every morning and evening she gives herself to prayer.

The first visit of his eldest son to the Ashram was in 1958. He was twenty-one. In the final M.B.S. one paper was very hard. He felt puzzled and could not make out what to write or how to write it. In the nick of time he remembered his father's advice. Sitting in the examination hall he closed his eyes for five minutes and sank into himself. Some brilliant ideas flashed through his mind and his pen began to move and did not stop till the end. He got 60 per cent marks.

Most of our problems can be solved if we "put the problems before the Divine and seek his aid". The approach must not be made in a bargaining spirit.

His youngest son was an unusual boy. He came to the Ashram when he was only five. He is now in the Department of Food Science and Industries, University of Georgia, U.S.A. His father feels that it was due to the Mother's Grace that his son was jumping from success to success.

In microbiology he has abundantly researched and made important discoveries.

The following two lines from the two-typed-page certificate by the Head of the Department say much about him:

“He is a type of individual that would be an asset to any research or teaching programme.”

Such are “the national men” Sri Aurobindo extols, “able men, men fit to carve out a career for themselves by their own brain power and resources”,¹ whose lives enrich the life of the State.

But can the soul of India speak through them? One must rise higher and higher to gather knowledge for the Divine Service, and be capable of serving Him better. Then the flow of the Grace can be felt coming down making them messengers of the gods.

“It is to the educated, the masses look for guidance. Their duty is to be worthy of their mission, to bring hope, strength and light in their lives,” wrote Sri Aurobindo in one of his articles in *Bandematararam*.

Slowly, by stages, Sri Aurobindo’s ideal of Supermind and its power to cope with the present chaotic and critical situation of the world is registering in the minds of the élite in India and abroad.

Commenting on Dr. Satya Prakash Singh’s book *Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead On the Nature of God*, J. Shanmugam observes:

“The crisis that confronts the modern man is not ethical but spiritual and evolutionary ... mind has exhausted itself as a frame of reference, and man can no longer act with mind as his centre. The crisis points to the need for a centre far greater than the mind. And Sri Aurobindo rightly tells us that what is urgently needed now is not a change for a better system of ideas, but a complete change of mental consciousness itself. It is to bring about a total transformation of mental consciousness that he has offered the method of integral yoga to humanity.”

“A complete and radical transformation is the only solution,” concludes Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine*.²

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ *Bandematararam*. ² *Am. ED.* p. 558.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle, Thirtieth Number (Sri Aurobindo Society Annual, 1974)
pp. 181, Rs 6.00.

THIS is the first Number of the *Sri Aurobindo Circle* to be issued since the passing of the Mother and much of its matter is concerned with her, and with that ultimate state of *Siddhi*, the transformation of the physical body, upon which she was working at the time of her departure. Reproduced in facsimile is Sri Aurobindo's well-known statement affirming the identity of the Mother and the Divine Mother referred to in the book *The Mother*. Also from Sri Aurobindo are two letters and a passage from a third which emphasise the extreme difficulty of the physical and corporeal transformation. These are followed by a very valuable collection of passages from the Mother's *Notes on the Way* (first published in the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*) in which she herself speaks of the change which was taking place in her.¹

This is followed by two prose writings by Sri Aurobindo which have until now appeared only in the Supplement to The Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The first, here called "The Evolution of Ethical Ideals", comprises four chapters of "The Karmayogin", an incomplete commentary on the Isha Upanishad, written during his stay at Baroda or Calcutta. They are in a mature style that prefigures the later revelatory clarities of the *Arya* writings, and embodies ideas which prefigure the evolutionary view of society presented in *The Human Cycle*. The second piece has been given the name "A Defence of Hindu Legend". While in the form of a letter to Sri Aurobindo's brother, Manmohan Ghose, it is apparently a dedicatory preface to the narrative poem *Love and Death*, whose theme and background it defends. It is full of information and reflections of great interest, and closes with an altogether touching expression of gratitude from Sri Aurobindo to his brother, himself something of a poet, from whose "Sun" his own "farthing rush-light was kindled". Among other articles in this Number, perhaps the most well-written is "The Metaphysics of *Paradise Lost*", the twelfth and concluding chapter of K.D. Sethna's "The Inspiration of *Paradise Lost*". Discursive writing about great poetry always seems to me to resemble a road winding through uninteresting countryside which opens from time to time on some lovely vistaed quotation, only to turn back again to the inevitably less interesting prose argument. However, Mr. Sethna's neatly structured style, his judicious use of scholarship and the touch of his just perceptible humour behind all this serious stuff make his article well worth reading. The scholarship, never merely pedantic, shows the author's deep acquaintance with Milton and with Christian theology. He touches

¹ Two of the passages were first published in 1963, the bulk date from 1969 to 1974. One can only speculate about how long the forces of material transformation were at work in the Mother. I have recently come across a remarkable passage in the *Prières et Méditations* (10 7.1914) in which the Mother speaks of the work that was going on at that time in the cells of her body.

on such problems as Predetermination and Free-Will, argues convincingly that Milton was influenced by the Christian school of Mortalism, and draws an interesting parallel between Milton's idea of spiritualisation of the human form and Sri Aurobindo's insistence on the physical transformation.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's "Sri Aurobindo's Impact on Indian Writing in English" is a critical survey of the large body of prose and poetry written by Sri Aurobindo's disciples and by others who have been influenced by him. It will be a good introduction for those who are strangers to this literature. The author gives some comments on the work that he scans, but the criticism is a little sanguine. One feels that some of the writers at least would benefit by someone taking a firmer hand with them.

None of the other articles is without value. "Liberty in Auroville" by Shyam Sundar Jhunjhunwala and "This Humorous Universe" by Ruud Lohman combine quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with some personal reflections. Prema Nandakumar in three chapters of her essay, "*The Divine Comedy and Savitri*", finds some correspondences between the two poems. Sisirkumar Ghose's speech "Beyond Civilisation" is full of interesting thought and apt citations from many quarters. To close the issue, Maheshwar, in a well-structured article, examines the question "Whither Indian Philosophy?"

PETER HEEHS

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