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## TO OUR READERS

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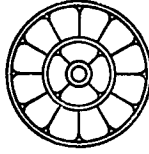
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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

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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

CONCENTRATE in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up, and take a plunge and sink down into the silence of your inner being.

A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you — your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates.

1929

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## SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER APROPOS OF AUROVILLE

IN modern civilisation, men work on the surface. The mind is the surface of existence, they work along this surface and try to find by more and more study the Truth that is behind. But the true method is to enter into direct contact with the inner Truth and, propelled by It, directed by It, make an outer creation which is not a search for the Truth but rather Truth's own creation; that is to say, the power of Truth realises itself by way of human instruments in an external manifestation.

Men always make plans, mental constructions, and attempt to create upon that base but there is not a single human creation which is totally a realisation of their mental structure. Always something else is added, always it is altered by a force that they do not understand but that they take to be chance, luck, circumstances, all sorts of things, yet at bottom it is the force of Truth which tries to make itself manifest upon earth and exerts a pressure and naturally this changes the mental and vital creations which are merely superficial. There was a quotation from Sri Aurobindo on this subject in the *Bulletin*.<sup>1</sup> He said that it is necessary first to know and then act, whereas men act and then seek to arrive at knowledge through the action.

<sup>1</sup> August 1966, p 20 See page 431 of the present issue of *Mother India*.

## **POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE**

**(BASED ON A TALK OF THE MOTHER)**

EVEN when doctors say something is impossible, it is still possible. Science has gone very high, but about one thing it will say, "It is possible", and about another, "It can't be done." So there is a division, a contradiction in Science. Actually, you cannot say "No" about anything. Every time the impossible can become the possible. If, when doctors say "Impossible", people turn to the Divine about it, the Divine can achieve the impossibility.

The Supreme has every power: there are no limits for Him. And when people will realise that they do not know anything they will realise that to the Supreme's Will all things are possible. In the Supreme, there is a whole universe waiting and ready to make impossibilities actual. Even what is most inconceivable to us now can happen. For, everything is already there, hidden. So, when human beings come to feel they are quite ignorant, at that very moment the impossible will start happening. At present, people think they know everything. Oh they are so very clever!

9. 9. 1963

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of May 1974)

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

### DECEMBER 19, 1956

*“Impossibility is only a sum of greater unrealised possibles. It veils an advanced stage and a yet unaccomplished journey.*

*“If thou wouldst have humanity advance, buffet all preconceived ideas. Thought thus smitten awakes and becomes creative. Otherwise it rests in a mechanical repetition and mistakes that for its right activity.*

*“To rotate on its own axis is not the one movement for the human soul. There is also its wheeling round the Sun of an inexhaustible illumination.*

*“Be conscious first of thyself within, then think and act. All living thought is a world in preparation; all real act is a thought manifested. The material world exists because an Idea began to play in divine self-consciousness.*

*“Thought is not essential to existence nor its cause, but it is an instrument for becoming; I become what I see in myself. All that thought suggests to me, I can do; all that thought reveals in me, I can become. This should be man’s unshakable faith in himself, because God dwells in him.”*

(Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glances*)

*What is the meaning of “thought awakes and becomes creative”?*

No, Sri Aurobindo says at the beginning of the sentence: “Thought *thus smitten awakes.*” What he says is that in order to progress one must break up old constructions, buffet, demolish all preconceived ideas. Preconceived ideas are those habitual mental constructions in which one lives, and which are fixed, which become rigid fortresses and cannot progress because they are fixed. Nothing that is fixed can progress. So the advice is to break down, that is, destroy all preconceived ideas, all fixed

mental constructions. And this is the true means of giving birth to new ideas or to thought, active, living thought — which is creative.

And a little further on Sri Aurobindo says that you must be conscious first of yourself, *then* think, *and then* act. It is the vision of the inner truth of the being which must precede all action; first the vision of the truth, then this truth formulating itself into thought, then the thought creating the action. That is the normal process.

And it is that which Sri Aurobindo gives as the process of creation. In the Unmanifest a thought began to play, that is to say, it awoke and became active; and because thought became active, the world was created.

And in conclusion Sri Aurobindo declares that thought is not essential to existence, it is not the cause of existence, but is just the process, the means of becoming, for thought is a principle of precise formulation which has the power of creating forms. And as an illustration Sri Aurobindo says that all that one thinks, by the very fact of that thinking, one can become. This knowledge of the fact that *all* that one thinks one can be, is a very important key for the development of one's being, and not only from the point of view of the possibilities of the being, but also from that of the control and choice of what one will be, of what one wants to be.

That makes us understand the necessity of not admitting into ourselves any thought which destroys aspiration or the creation of the truth of our being. It reveals the considerable importance of not permitting what one doesn't want to be or doesn't want to do, to get formulated into thought within the being. For, to think these things is already a beginning of their realisation. From every point of view it is bad to concentrate on what one doesn't want, on what one must reject, what one refuses to be, for the fact that the thought is there gives a sort of right of existence to these things one wants to throw out. That explains the considerable importance of not letting destructive suggestions, thoughts of ill-will, hatred, destruction enter; for simply to think of them is already to give them a power of realisation. Sri Aurobindo says that thought is not the cause of existence but an intermediary, the instrument of giving form to life, of creation, and the control of this instrument is of capital importance if one wants disorder and all that is anti-divine to disappear from the creation.

One must not admit into oneself bad thoughts under the pretext that they are only thoughts. They are tools of execution. And one should not allow them to exist in oneself if one doesn't want them to do their work of destruction.

(*Silence*)

No one has a question? I have brought one. In fact I have brought two. (*The Mother unfolds a paper and reads.*)

*“Is it possible for a human being to be perfectly sincere?”*

And this question continues:



*“Is there a mental sincerity, a vital sincerity, a physical sincerity? What is the difference between these sincerities?”*

Naturally, the principle of sincerity is the same everywhere, but the working is different according to the states of being. As for the first question, one could simply answer by: “No, not if man remains what he is. But he has the possibility of transforming himself sufficiently to become perfectly sincere.”

To begin with, it must be said that sincerity is progressive, and as the being progresses and develops, as the universe unfolds itself in the becoming, sincerity too must go on perfecting itself endlessly. Every halt in that development necessarily changes the sincerity of yesterday into the insincerity of tomorrow.

To be perfectly sincere it is indispensable not to have any preference, any desire, any attraction, any dislike, any sympathy or antipathy, any attachment, any repulsion. One must have a total, integral vision of things, in which everything is in its place and one has the same attitude towards all things: the attitude of the true vision. This programme is evidently very difficult for a human being to realise. Unless he has decided to divinise himself, it seems almost impossible that he could be free from all these contraries within him. And yet, so long as one carries them in oneself, one cannot be perfectly sincere. Automatically the mental, vital, and even physical working is falsified. I am emphasising the physical, for even the working of the senses goes wrong: one does not see, hear, taste, feel things as they are in their reality as long as one has a preference. So long as there are things which please you and things which don't, so long as you are attracted by certain things, and repulsed by others, you cannot see things in their reality; you see them through your reactions, your preference or your repulsion. The senses are instruments which get out of order, even as do sensations, feelings and thoughts. Consequently, to be sure of what you see, what you feel, what you experience and think, you must have a complete detachment; and this, very evidently, is not an easy task. But until that moment your perception cannot be wholly true, and hence it is not sincere.

Naturally, this is the maximum. There are crass insincerities which everybody understands and on which, I believe, it is not necessary to insist. As for example, saying one thing and thinking another, pretending that you are doing one thing and really doing another, expressing a wish which is not your real wish. I am not even speaking of altogether glaring lies, the saying something different from the fact; but even that diplomatic way of acting, doing things with the idea of getting something out of it, saying something and expecting it to have a certain effect, every combination of this kind which naturally makes you contradict yourself, is a kind of insincerity gross enough for everybody to recognise easily.

But there are others more subtle, more difficult to discern. For instance, so long as you have sympathies and antipathies, quite naturally and as it were spontaneously, you will have a favourable view of what is congenial to you and an unfavourable view of what you dislike. And there too the lack of sincerity will be flagrant. However,

you may deceive yourself and not perceive that you are insincere. Then in that case you have as it were the collaboration of mental insincerity. For it is true that there are insincerities of slightly different types according to the state of being or the parts of the being. Only, the origin of these insincerities is always a similar movement arising from desire and the seeking of personal ends — from egoism, from that combination of all limitations arising from egoism and all deformations arising from desire.

In truth, as long as the ego is there, one cannot say that a being is perfectly sincere, though he makes an effort to become that. One must pass beyond the ego, give oneself up totally to the divine Will, surrender unreservedly and without calculating ... then one can be perfectly sincere, but not before.

That does not mean that one should not make an effort to be more sincere than one is, saying to oneself: "Good, I shall wait for my ego to disappear in order to be sincere", because one may reverse the terms and say that if you do not try sincerely your ego will never disappear. Consequently, sincerity is the basis of all true realisation, it is the means, the path — and it is also the goal. Without it you are sure to make innumerable blunders and to have to undo constantly the harm you have done to yourself and others.

There is, besides, a marvellous joy in being sincere. Every act of sincerity brings in itself its own recompense: the feeling of purification, of soaring upwards, of liberation one gets when one has rejected even one tiny particle of falsehood.

Sincerity is the safeguard, the protection, it is the guide, and finally the transforming power.

---

# THE POWER OF AGNI AND THE PSYCHIC FIRE\*

## SOME ANSWERS BY SRI AUROBINDO

*Q: Coming from the Mother, I felt as if a burning transformation had started. I feel around me a burning sensation. To give an example, each of my fingers feels surrounded by a fire.*

It is the Agni fire that you feel. Agni is at once a fire of aspiration, a fire of purification, a fire of tapasya, a fire of transformation.

*Q: While leaving the Ashram I was conscious of something very weighty, wide, full of power and intensely strong entering not merely through the Brahmic passage at the top of the head but through the whole head.*

It is simply the force of the higher consciousness descending in greater mass.

*Q: I feel the experience in flesh and teeth and it is becoming more and more dense. Does it mean that there is also a working of peace?*

The force can also be dense in that way; but probably it is establishing the solid calm in that way.

*Q: Along with the psychic fire in the heart there was a simultaneous action of a vital fire. How is that?*

There is no incompatibility between them.

*Q: What is it that acts in the Agni?*

It is the Mother's Force that works in the Agni.

*Q: Before my consciousness could realise fully the Self, the psychic seems to have come so much forward. Is the experience of a burning action almost everywhere in the being a sign of this?*

All that is simply the burning of the Agni in various parts of the being. It prepares it for transformation. But the coming forward of the psychic is another matter and its signs are psychological.

*Q: Since it is mostly the Agni that burns within me, why does the mind take it for the psychic fire?*

It is some association in the mind probably coupling Agni with the psychic. Of course the individual Agni fire has its starting-point in the psychic, but the mere burning of the fire does not show that the psychic is coming forward.

\* An extract from the writer's forthcoming book, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, due to appear in August 1974.

When it burns in the heart it is the fire in the psychic. The psychic fire is individual and takes usually the form of a fire of aspiration or personal tapasya. This Fire is universal and it came from above.

*Q: What is experienced in the vital as fire?*

The psychic fire may burn in the vital. It all depends on whether it is the fire of the general Force that comes from above or the fire of your soul's aspiration and tapasya.

*Q: What does the fire in any part indicate?*

The fire indicates a dynamic action.

*Q: You wrote a few days back that the signs of the psychic's coming forward are psychological. What are these signs?*

A central love, bhakti, surrender, giving everything, a sight within that sees always clearly what is spiritually right or wrong and automatically rejects the latter — a movement of entire consecration and dedication of all in one to the Mother.

*Q: I feel something very intense and as if burning deep within — just as it was in the case of the fire of aspiration, and yet it is not the same.*

It may be the Yogic force (tapas) which is also called *Yogagni* — Yoga fire.

*Q: What is the function of Yogagni?*

It prepares the system, creates the yogic aspirations, brings in the experiences of the sadhana etc.

*Q: Is it not possible at my present stage to maintain my central consciousness in the pure-existence all the time and let my external actions be directed by the Mother's Force so that they may come automatically from the true consciousness?*

No, it is not yet possible. The true consciousness must be there in the mind and vital before that is done and the true consciousness is the psychic and the higher. What one can do before that is to use the mental will to direct the actions in the right way or reject the things that have to be rejected. But this you had stopped when the silence, emptiness etc. came down.

*Q: Today my inner being collected all its diffused energy of will-power and fought out the inertia massed within me. Was the force used rajas, the vital push, something unspiritual? It was not a silent duel. There were strong vibrations all around me.*

There is nothing unspiritual in that — the use of this force is very good — it is tapas, not rajās.

*Q: You once wrote: "As for the submind etc. these things have a habit of sticking, so*

*long as the higher dynamic activities are not established.” What are the higher dynamic activities?*

Knowledge, higher Will, Force, universal Ananda.

*Q: With a certain kind of will, I can quiet even the subconscious for a while. But a greater will-power is required for a constant hold.*

That is one of the higher dynamic activities.

*From NAGIN DOSHI*

## ON DUALITY

luminous angel  
show your hand  
and thrill us  
with your touch ...  
vital embers  
still aglow  
trying to go out ....  
dying  
flaring  
frustrating fears  
and boredom ....

luminous angel  
give your hand  
take pity on our quest ....

today we had our morning  
later on  
the night . .

sea gulls soar  
above  
the wallowing of the pigs ...  
circles  
and cyclic exercise  
have done  
and dizzied  
enough  
take pity on our quest ....

luminous angel  
show your face

and thrill us  
with your kiss ....

WILLIAM T. NETTER

# SOME PROSPECTS OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

## A DISCUSSION OF TWO QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(A Letter)

To the question — “Is physical transformation really postponed?” — your answer runs: “Our Yoga and the transformation of the body are not two separate things. Each is complementary to the other; so, if we accept that without the Mother’s body being there the work of transformation of the body is postponed, it means Yoga is postponed, and to say this would be quite wrong. With the change of the consciousness and the inner parts, the change of the body goes on. There can be no postponement.”

I am afraid what you write misses the mark. Of course, all our Yoga is a process of transformation, but physical transformation in the sense intended by Sri Aurobindo and by the Mother is the work of the Supermind in direct action and such work cannot take place in the very near future unless the Avatar of the Supermind is present amongst us in a physical form. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to accomplish in their bodies the supramentalisation which would create a fully divine life on earth. If they, for reasons best known to themselves, did not supramentalise their bodies, it is idle to think of any of us achieving a physical transformation in the present stage of the evolving world. Physical transformation is indeed postponed.

We can experience the psychic and spiritual transformations, we may even receive something of the supramental light but the body’s supramentalisation is beyond us without the Divine being with us in an embodied shape integrally supramental. The Supermind which manifested on a universal scale on February 29, 1956, did so in the subtle-physical. There has been a pressing by it more and more towards the gross-physical in the years that have followed, but it is not yet such a ruling power in the most outward universal existence as to create conditions that would enable man to supramentalise his body. Even the conditions for an easy supramentalisation of the mind and the vital have not yet been created. The Superman-Consciousness, too, which came at the end of 1969 has not worked decisively enough to prepare the ground for any radical change in the body. Humanity has to wait for a fairly distant future for evolution to proceed by some sort of *natural force* towards supramentalisation.

So far as we of the present day are concerned, it is only the materialisation of the Mother’s subtle supramentalized body that can start again the general supramentalising process for us. Short of that glorious much-hoped-for moment of the Mother’s return by a direct breakthrough from the subtle-physical plane, there is no denying the fact that physical transformation has been postponed. Of course, to consider it cancelled is to rule out the possibility of the Mother’s reappearance to continue her work as well as, in a general way, to deny that evolution will ultimately bring the subtly manifested Supermind into the open for a direct action on the body. But we

should not blink the truth that the Supramental Avatar's physical absence necessarily makes for postponement.

With regard to your answer to the second question — “Do the sadhaks of the Ashram really have the capacity to be Gurus? Has the Mother asked them to be sub-Gurus?” — you are on better ground and have the essence of the truth but in too negative a way. Here also the situation is a little more complex than you think. A deeper, more discriminating look, free from preconceptions as well as personal reactions and making a broad approach, is called for. You have given excellent quotations — the one from Sri Aurobindo:

“No sadhak should worship another sadhak or look on him as the embodied Divine; such movements are contrary to the sadhana and to the discipline of the Ashram and create false movements in the atmosphere” —

the other from the Mother, which shows that even to worship “gods” is not advised:

“I do not see any necessity for us to worship gods, big or small. Our adoration should go only to the Supreme Lord ....”

I may add two more passages. This is what the Mother has said elsewhere about the gods and our Yoga:

“Those who believe in gods can certainly continue to worship them if they feel like it — but they must know that this creed and this worship have nothing to do with the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and no connection whatever with the Supramental Realisation.”

Sri Aurobindo's words on the Guru-topic are equally emphatic:

“It is very necessary not to take the attitude of Pranam to others or to give even in thought a place at all approaching or similar to the Mother's.” (27.7.1934)

Sri Aurobindo's stand on sadhak-worship and on Pranam-attitude is certainly expressed in clear-cut language. But we must properly appreciate the context of his pronouncement. He has written against a sadhak being looked upon by another sadhak as the embodied Divine and being worshipped under that aspect. Indeed, all worship is here taken as if of the Divine embodied. So sadhak-worship as such is considered out of place here. A lesser mode of approach does not seem negated. The prohibition of Pranam is again tied up with substituting somebody else for the Mother — but now a further shade is to be noted: the question was of doing Pranam to “holy men” outside our Yoga, alien Gurus either in their own Ashrams or during their visits to our Ashram. And Pranam was prohibited not because of any

devaluation of holiness in Yogis other than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have always given proper dues to spirituality wherever it may be found. All of us know how highly they thought of Ramana Maharshi, for instance. But they also pointed out that the Integral Yoga was a special discipline with a new power behind it and with a new goal in view, and that, therefore, any other spiritual influence would prove to be an interference if not even a deflection. All spiritualities continuing today from the past have their roots in an old world-vision which, for all the modernisation it may be given, remains still directed finally towards a fulfilment beyond the earth. The Gita itself, the most dynamic scripture imaginable, looks upon the nature of the earth-scene as inherently "transient and unhappy" (*anityam asukham*) and, while enjoining Arjuna to love and worship Krishna and to go on doing work in the world and for the world as Krishna himself forever does, has no doubt that not here but beyond is the consummation of the soul. Surely this was to be expected since the time had not come for the descent of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind and for the knowledge it brings of a terrestrial evolution. This evolution has to be by a thrust from below of an involved Supermind at the very base of Matter and by a pull and pressure from above of a free Supramental plane where exists in open power the divine truth or model not only of mentality and vitality but also physicality, the same divine truth or model which exists *in potentia* in the apparently blind and brute material phenomenon that serves as the starting-point of the evolutionary process. All spiritual disciplines which do not have the Supermind as their motive-force are bound to cut across the Aurobindonian work, and the great personalities who embody those disciplines would unknowingly introduce a foreign element into the consciousness of a sadhak of the Integral Yoga. That is why, according to Sri Aurobindo, even in thought they must not be put on a par with the Mother, though we should never run them down or be slow to acknowledge their greatness in their own fields. What is to be guarded against is the approach that mixes up their fields with the Aurobindonian.

Obviously, this is a different story from being open to those who themselves belong to the Aurobindonian field. A sadhak of the Integral Yoga can be a help to an aspirant for the spirituality taught and exemplified by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But can a person do Pranam to such a sadhak?

Quite a number of visitors who are devotees of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have asked for the present writer's blessings and wished to do Pranam to him. While thanking these good and sincere seekers for their exalted opinion of me, I have always felt an aversion to let my hands behave like Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's or my feet accept what theirs were given. So, although I have never in a fit of perverted humility given a clout or a kick in return, I have also never allowed even a shadow of a blessing-rewarded Pranam to be offered to this far-from-Motherly-or-Fatherly sadhak groping for and limping after perfection. But I realise that in India to touch people's toes and get their fingertips on one's head is a very common procedure. When people do these acts they do not necessarily regard you as a spiritual Master, much less od



they hail you as an Avatar — they mean to express their affectionate reverence for you and, whether you deserve it or not, they feel happy and benefited if you allow your hands and feet to function as wanted. It may even happen that your refusal of the offered affectionate reverence lifts you still higher in people's eyes and brings the halo of the spiritual Master, if not of the Avatar, around your would-be humble head. Hence the refusal itself may be used by one to aggrandise one's ego whereas an obliging "Yes" may be a more modest gesture. As a Parsee I have no stomach for such problematic modesty. But it is not easy to make a universal rule in the matter. When a Hindu happens to accept a Pranam here and there, he need not be suspected of treachery to the Mother. However, no conditions should be created for a cult of Pranam. A move in the direction of a cult would put one on the way to what Sri Aurobindo has forbidden. His pronouncements can, in general, be understood as making — to say the least — this cult difficult for his followers.

K. D. SETHNA

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## FERTILISATION

As a grain of pollen that falls upon the surface of a flower  
 Need no longer struggle, but is drawn without respite into its womb,  
 Even so, my Mother, captured in the rhythms of your power,  
 I follow without struggle as you lead me from the gate to your warm room.

No more shall I wander, a traveller without home or destination,  
 Blown by winds of Fate, to prosper where I fall by my own toil,  
 I am made a seed, a kernel of your wondrous new creation,  
 Dropping with the ripe fruit, to sink deep roots of love into your soil.

PETER HEEHS

## A LOOK BEHIND

### SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY ASHRAM LIFE

WE were chatting together while taking tea, myself and D, in his room, at the south-east corner, ground floor, of the main Ashram-building. In those days it was a disorderly room and I happened to be working in my department of Electricity, Waterworks and Stoves, just next to it.

In the early thirties, tea was not an item favoured by the Mother for social consumption in the Ashram. Later She did not care to say anything. She disapproved not because She thought tea was a poison for the body but because it was an avoidable luxury, specially when the Ashram's economy was not affluent, and also because in those days of one-pointed sadhana it was advisable not to be tied so much to old habits of the body, that are not really necessary for its healthy maintenance. In the present-day Ashram, tea is in fashion, exactly as anywhere else, almost an unavoidable necessity of life.

D said the Mother had allowed tea only to one person. She let him take one cup in the afternoon, because he had prayed to Her for it, as otherwise he felt too lethargic to do work. He was, and has always been, one of the most active followers of the Mother, doing important service, a person of exemplary self-control, whom we never saw indulging in petty desires like many of us. Moreover, if he needed anything, he asked only the Mother, like Amrita or Pavitra, and accepted Her decision unquestioningly. So the authorised one cup, and only one, was solely for him. He was not made of the stuff to indulge in another cup, with any plausible pretext, because he had grown in consciousness to realise that this one cup, forbidden to others but allowed to him, was really a concession of the Divine Grace to help him overcome the resistance of his body in course of time.

I was not fortunate enough to understand this in the beginning because, as I realise so very clearly now, I was over-intimate with some others with whom it was an open practice to take tea, with the double excuse that it was after all not something that could not be given up if need be, and that there was no need to bother the Mother for such petty things. I found it very convenient to follow this group. At first, as I began taking tea with them, I had a clear uneasy feeling because I had not taken the Mother's permission, but gradually I got hardened and felt accustomed and at ease.

But D was a bit different. He was not for indulging without the Mother's knowledge. He was one of the rare few of those early Ashram days, whose resources had been considerable and who had offered all his money to the Mother, and I could very well understand from talks with him, and from seeing him with the Mother, that She had a very special consideration for him. Moreover, when I compared the case of a pauper like me, with that of almost a prince like him who yet lived so very plainly, I could not but admire, and be attracted towards him. It also happened, as I have mentioned earl-

ier, that my departmental work was for some time done in the room just next to his, and he was by nature as talkative as myself, if not more. So he readily invited me to share a cup of tea with him, even though he had told the Mother he would like to take it alone in his room. And thus our chats continued.

My point was that it was better to stop indulging in such petty things than to ask the Mother to let me continue it. D's point was that this was the common idea of most of us Indians here, but the Mother did not appreciate it. "Look at Pavitra, whatever he does the Mother knows, whatever he wants the Mother decides." I argued, "The Europeans have an advantage in this matter, as they are by nature exacting in their physical preferences, and they have the natural frankness to approach the Mother for these preferences, whereas we Indians feel shy because our conscience pricks." D refuted my point very politely, yet quite firmly, "But if that pricking of the conscience is not strong enough to reject the vibrations of desire or indulgence, it is better to ask the Mother." I stuck to my point, "I prefer to ask the Mother to stop my feeling of indulgence, rather than to ask for its satisfaction." D argued, "That would be ideal if you could, but do you think you can do it? It is not so easy, specially in the lower vital, where the sadhana is now going on. Without the Mother's direct help our nature cannot be changed. And for the change, we have to expose our nature to the Mother without the least hesitation, we have to inform Her of what is going on in us. This is the only way in Sri Aurobindo's yoga. And that is why the Mother is out and He is in. Intellectually, by reading His writings you can be an expert in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. But if you want to make a progress in life, you have to turn to the Mother."

I heard from Amrita a true story about himself, which is an exact echo of D's talk, although it had no connection with our particular day's topic. Once Amrita complained to Sri Aurobindo about some of his personal difficulties which he could not overcome. It was perhaps in 1922, when outwardly there was no Ashram, and few people knew about the Mother's importance. Sri Aurobindo, pointing towards the Mother's room, told Amrita to go to Her and speak to Her about all those things, as it was only She who could really help to change human nature, She who was the master occultist and knew the detailed process to be followed for quick progress. He could help only by giving some Force, but one has to do the rest by oneself. So one may remain with Him for twenty years without making much progress, if one did not care to labour, whereas with Her, within a few days or months, one could go very far, because She would not only help, but do the sadhana for the person .... After a month, Amrita approached Sri Aurobindo again and lamented that according to His advice he had approached the Mother, but She had only allowed him to meditate with Her for no more than two days in the month, and for fifteen minutes each time. So, with that much what could he achieve? Sri Aurobindo replied that it was true that She did not like to come out at present to help. But if it should happen that there was a combined appeal to the Divine in a concentrated gathering, then it would be easy to get Her help in all the details of one's life-movement. And that would be a period of golden

chance for the world to progress. And that is exactly what happened from 1926 onward after Sri Aurobindo withdrew into seclusion and the Mother was always out amongst the sadhaks.

Such was our gossiping and the temptation of my tea-cup and the contact of D. But the situation had another side also, not less attractive than the tea.

I was curious one day to enquire of him how he had managed the tea, with or without the permission of the Mother.

“Well, it was not so easy, and if you knew what a heavy price I had to pay for it!” exclaimed D. It roused my curiosity still more, and I requested him to tell me if he had no objection. What he said was, in short, like this: “When I saw that my desire for tea persisted in me for some time, I asked the Mother for it. She did not say anything for some days, as if She had forgotten about it, although She never forgets anything. After reminders from time to time, very reluctantly She told me one day, ‘For one person alone it will be an unnecessarily costly affair. Better find out somebody who is taking tea and share it with him, I shall sanction some extra tea and sugar.’ But I told Her that I preferred to take it alone quietly in my room. So after some days I got everything that was needed from P who was in charge of the Prosperity. I saw that he gave me a big teapot, quite a new one, whereas there was a smaller one in his stock. But he refused to give it and told me that it was not to be given to anybody, according to the Mother’s order. And, in fact, nobody was supposed to know about it. Some of us were meeting the Mother just before the Soup, in the evening, in the Prosperity room; that is why I could see it. His refusal provoked my desire still more, and I was bent upon having it. So I went on asking the Mother for that small pot in exchange for the new bigger one and, when I became very insistent, She too said that She did not want to give that one to anybody. Then one day, as if quite tired of my continued requests, She ended the tug-of-war, and told me in Her usual quiet manner, ‘So, finally I have decided to give that pot to you. It was to be used for Sri Aurobindo, so I did not want to let it go out. But you were bent upon it. So have it. But this will stop your progress in the sadhana.’” D told me this calmly, as if he were unaffected, but the vibration of his regret touched me and I never forgot it, nor the words of the Mother, because I had similar occasions of petty vital insistences on the Mother, and the consequences, though minimised by Her Grace, could not altogether be ruled out.

Years later when a book of the Mother came out, I was struck when I read for the first time these lines:

“... That is why, whenever in our Ashram, some petty request for more comfort and material happiness is refused, it is for your own good and to make you fulfil what you are here for.

“The refusal is actually a favour inasmuch as you are thereby considered fit to stand before the highest Ideal and be shaped according to it.”

M.

## THE GRACE OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

WITH humility and gratitude, I narrate in brief my recent experiences of the Grace of the Divine.

The middle of the year 1971 saw me suffering from intermittent pain in my left shoulder which was aggravated very often by a sudden push or jerk to the affected region. At the same time I had in the left leg a mild pain, and was unable to get up easily after squatting. This pain did not worry me much as there was no difficulty in moving about. But using the Indian-style water-closet was an ordeal.

For the pain in the shoulder I consulted orthopaedic specialists. I was recommended physio-therapeutic exercises which I followed strictly for nearly two months, but with no effect. They said that at my age (77) I should not expect a cure but try to live with my disability for the rest of my life. That meant I would have to pass sleepless nights and suffer restricted movements till the end of my life. I had also a go at homeopathy; this too did not help me. Then in the beginning of 1972 some correspondence appeared in the press regarding a 'Wave Therapy' administered with an electric gadget in Poona, which was supposed to be a "cure-all". A friend of mine in Poona kindly advised me to come there and get the benefit of the treatment.

In March/April 1972 I was in Poona and had a full one month's course of the treatment but, to the chagrin of the proprietor of the clinic, there was not the slightest improvement in my condition. I returned to Pondy, greatly disappointed; besides losing a small fortune in lodging and boarding at Poona.

Before leaving Pondy I had had a wonderful experience. The pain in the shoulder, whenever it became acute because of a jerk or push, was spontaneously converted into inner bliss for as long as it lasted. The severer the pain the deeper the bliss! But, back in the Ashram after my visit to Poona, I found the chronic pain becoming worse. I could not stretch my arms at the flower bed on the 'Samadhi' to offer my pranam even for a few seconds at a time. About two months passed like that.

Then one evening after experiencing agony at the Samadhi I prayed to Sri Aurobindo, bitterly complaining about my inability while all the others could offer their pranams with arms stretched for as long as they desired. I said to Sri Aurobindo, "Why have you called me here to your feet? Is it only to eat, drink and enjoy myself? If I am to be denied the simple pleasure and mental satisfaction of doing my pranam at your lotus feet, what use is in my being here? Is it such a formidable thing for you to cure me of my ailment?" Then my eyes became moist and I was silent.

About a couple of days after the above incident, I observed to my great surprise and joy that the pain in the shoulder had completely disappeared and I could do my pranams with my arms on the flowers on the Samadhi.

Yes, the pain disappeared. Automatically I was also denied the strange bliss

which had accompanied the acute experience of the pain. But that was a sacrifice well worth giving for the immense general relief.

During all this time — that is, for nearly three years and more — the pain and disability in the left leg while squatting and unsquatting had continued unabated. But now a remarkable turn took place.

In the early morning of 15th April this year, I woke up from my sleep. As usual, before leaving the bed, I did some up-and-down movements with my legs and arms to make sure that all the parts were in working order. To my horror, I felt a swelling and a pain in my right leg, which had never been there before. I said to myself, "There is already pain and discomfort in my left leg. Whence have this pain and this swelling come?" I was completely bewildered and helpless. I surrendered myself at once to the 'Inner Being' with all sincerity. Then a miracle happened. I saw a 'Living Force' about the size of a thin palm enter laterally the inner side of my right leg's calf-muscle. It was not the first time that I had seen a 'Living Force'. I had had a glimpse of it once before. But now its action was most masterful. As soon as it entered, the pain and swelling were completely gone.

At the 'Samadhi' I again communed with Sri Aurobindo "Perhaps you consider my pain on squatting and unsquatting to be unimportant? Is that why you have let it remain?"

About three to four days afterwards, I noticed that gradually the pain became less and less. Soon it disappeared completely. Now I can squat and get up normally.

“PATH”

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## LEONARDO AND MONA LISA

ONE evening in January, 1963 a casual discussion began concerning Mona Lisa and who she was. The speculations continued at length in almost hushed but enthusiastic tones as we spoke of possible past lives, of Leonardo's multitudinous gifts, and of the possibility that Leonardo and Mona Lisa had been very close to one another, kindred in spirit. We kept referring to the enlarged portrait of her face on the wall, and finally, with the strange feeling that something of her presence was really in the room, I said aloud, "There's going to be an exhibit in Washington with a special opening. I wonder when it will be" And clearly, as if a woman's voice were speaking within, I heard the word "Aujourd'hui." At the time I could not recall what it meant in English. The next day, January 9th, an article in the newspaper described the previous evening's grand opening at the National Gallery hailing Mona Lisa's first visit to the United States.

'La Joconde', as she is called in France, was born in Italy in 1479. Her name was Lisa di Anton Maria di Noldo Gherardini, daughter of Anton Gherardini, "who lived in the Santo Spirito quarter of Florence" and came from an old family.<sup>1</sup> At sixteen she was married to a man of some means, Francesco di Bartolomeo di Zanobi del Giocondo, who was twice widowed and at least fifteen or twenty years older. This took place in 1495, which was also the year of the French invasion when Mona Lisa's once-wealthy father is assumed to have become ruined. "It was said that she had married Giocondo not out of love, but only at the will of her father, and that the bridegroom she had chosen first had found a voluntary death on the battlefield."<sup>2</sup> Francesco del Giocondo may have been a friend of Leonardo. His family loved art and had commissioned paintings from various artists, Andrea del Sarto among them. In 1499 he had been one of the twelve 'Buonomini' of Florence, and in 1512 he was one of the 'Priori.'<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, we know a great deal about Leonardo da Vinci, his thoughts, and his Promethean works. As Vasari says, "Leonardo ... was the most universal genius of the Renaissance, perhaps of all time. He was painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, musician, philosopher, chemist, botanist, and geologist...." He was a poet ("one of the best 'improvisatori' in verse at that time"<sup>4</sup>), student of the classics, mathematician, city planner, physiologist, physicist, optician, designer and prolific inventor of devices from the simple to the complex, including even destructive war machines, among his innumerable constructive aids to man's life. In Symonds' view "... he revealed God's

<sup>1</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, Reynal and Co., Inc., N.Y., 1956, p. 77

<sup>2</sup> *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* by Dmitri Merejkowski, The Modern Library, Inc., 1928, p. 506

<sup>3</sup> *Monograph on Leonardo da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa'* by John R. Eyre, London: H. Grevel & Co., N.Y. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Lives of Seventy of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, by Giorgio Vasari, Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y., 1896, Vol. II, pp. 373-4

subtle handiwork in man ... winds and tides, birds and beasts; everything that he saw awakened in him that curiosity which was the dominant spirit of the Renaissance, that thirst of discovery, that dauntless belief in man's intellectual potentialities which he incarnated as has no one before ..."<sup>5</sup> Vasari felt that Leonardo was one of "those who represent not only humanity but also divinity itself..."<sup>6</sup>

Very little is known about Mona Lisa, however. She was still a young woman, perhaps twenty-one to twenty-five, when Leonardo, who was probably commissioned by her middle-aged husband for the painting, was assuredly twenty-seven years her senior. He may have begun the portrait around 1503, when he returned to Florence, or sometime before he left Florence in 1502. It has been said that Madonna Lisa had lost a baby daughter (perhaps in June, 1499) before her portrait was begun.<sup>7</sup> There is a good possibility that he painted more than one portrait of her. John Eyre feels strongly that the Isleworth "Mona Lisa" was begun during these earlier years and delivered uncompleted to Giocondo; and he suggests that the Louvre portrait of her was painted later, during the period when he worked on "The Virgin and Child with St. Anne". Although Leonardo generally made study drawings before commencing to paint, it is interesting that no preliminary sketches have been found for "Mona Lisa".

Walter Pater declares that "'La Gioconda' is, in the truest sense, Leonardo's masterpiece..." and the artist himself cherished it. He worked on it during the soft-lit early evening hours because this light "gives most grace to faces". Evidently there were twilight sittings over a period of three or four years, but what became the Louvre portrait was never delivered to Francesco Giocondo. Leonardo "carried the painting to Milan, Rome, across the Alps to France, wherever he went, claiming it was not yet finished."<sup>8</sup> And even though King Francis I paid Leonardo 4000 gold crowns for the "Mona Lisa" after he had settled at the Chateaux de Cloux in France, Leonardo was allowed to retain the portrait. When he died in May, 1519, King Francis then claimed it.

Subsequently, the "Mona Lisa" stayed "at Fontainebleu, at Versailles, at the Tuileries, where in 1800 she adorned Napoleon's bedroom wall", and finally she came to the Louvre to be hung near Titian's portrait of Francis I.<sup>9</sup> Then one Monday morning in 1911 Vincenzo Peruggia, who had been employed briefly at the Louvre, entered and walked out with "Mona Lisa" under his arm. Two years later (December, 1913) when he brought the painting to art dealer Alfred Gori in Florence with the suggestion that she really belonged to Italy, he was immediately arrested and sentenced to seven months' imprisonment. "Mona Lisa" was back on the wall at the Salon Carré a month later. She spent the second World War in French chateaux

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 406, footnote 59.

<sup>6</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Monograph*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>8</sup> "Escorting 'Mona Lisa' to America" by Edward T. Folliard, *National Geographic Magazine*, June, 1963, p. 843

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 843



and was moved four times to escape the reach of Hermann Goering.<sup>10</sup>

A partial note on Leonardo's technique with Mona Lisa's portrait could be mentioned. "This is a composition on wood — Italian poplar — with an extremely thin coat of paint so deftly applied that even under x-ray no brush strokes are visible. Coat after coat of color was laid on, so thin and so transparent that the painstakingly prepared hard white undercoat shone through to give the whole a great luminosity."<sup>11</sup>

Who but 'Mona Lisa' herself could tell us all the comments her portrait has inspired, observations expressing a range of admiration, enthusiasm, and irresistible fascination — or indifference — or reactions of withdrawal, suspicion, mockery, and open antipathy. But these latter are in the minority, as are people like the mad Bolivian waiter who threw a stone at her, smashed her glass covering, and chipped her elbow.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the extremes only indicate a response to extremes discoverable (though reconciled) within the painting.

There must be a prevailing attraction in a painting which impels a man like Antonio Bin to paint 184 copies of it over a period of more than 50 years.<sup>13</sup> He says, "She is driving me absolutely insane!" John Walker, director of the National Gallery said: "People came to see the 'Mona Lisa' because they knew she represented a peak of artistic achievement, a summit of human creativity."<sup>14</sup> Jules Michelet, the nineteenth-century historian: "This painting calls me, invades me, absorbs me. I go to it in spite of myself, as the bird goes toward the snake."<sup>15</sup> A Washington cab driver, who saw her: "She's still packing 'em in after 400 years. Some babe." Mona Lisa has been called: "The symbol of humanism", "the flower of astronomy, physiology and aerodynamics", "Leonardo's best practical joke." Andrew Wyeth confessed: "To be frank, she has never thrilled me." An English schoolteacher observed: "She is a woman who knows something nobody else knows." Peladan, the French theosophist, spoke symbolically: "She is Plato in woman's guise." To Napoleon she was "the sphinx of the Occident." The poet, Paul Valéry, said: "Speak, thou pure smile surrounded by the skies —". From Giorgio Vasari: "It is a painting more divine than human, or rather, it is not a painting but the despair of painters...."<sup>16</sup> And Malreaux: "Leonardo gave to woman's soul that idealization which Greece had given to her features. The mortal being with the divine gaze triumphs over the sightless goddesses."<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the most interesting remark came from a young man from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy: "What makes her so famous that even I, who know nothing, know

<sup>10</sup> "Enchantress from the Louvre The Mona Lisa" by G. Kent, *Reader's Digest*, July, 1963, pp 176-180.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 176-180.

<sup>12</sup> "She's Packed and Pampered" by O Seiberling, *Life*, Jan 4, 1963, p 17

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>14</sup> "Escorting Mona Lisa", p. 844

<sup>15</sup> "Enchantress", pp. 176-180.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Times Magazine*, "Mona Lisa's Smile Enigma or Asthma" by P. E. Schneider, July 30, 1961, pp. 10-11, 52.

<sup>17</sup> "Escorting Mona Lisa", p. 844.

her?"<sup>18</sup> "Mona Lisa" is said to be the only painting universal enough to have found its way into "Lil' Abner".<sup>19</sup> Do universal qualities in the painting lend a sense of familiarity? Perhaps she is someone of whom we have hidden knowledge subtly quickened by a glimpse of her face.

What of one's first impressions of "Mona Lisa"? Years ago my reaction was simple. The painting didn't appeal; but I noticed wisdom, then kindness in the woman. She looked like a rock sitting serenely in the landscape. — Now it is the light from her face reflected through the eyes, the inner smile, glancing even through the exquisite shadows that nestle over her features. Her expression is like that of a Padmapani, a Prajna-Paramita. "The celebrated smile," as David Robb puts it, "that is really no smile but the outer expression of inner life"<sup>20</sup>, recalls images of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, even perhaps of a Siva-Nataraja. Again we see a familiar expression in the exquisite Kangra painting of Shiva-Ardhanari (early 19th century) and among the old Kuan Yins.

"The face which, more than mere flesh and blood, seems to radiate with an inner warmth is so provocative, so eternally enigmatic in its expression that it has tantalized the millions who have seen it in the Louvre or in reproduction...The inner spirit within a Raphael is neither so enigmatic nor so timeless."<sup>21</sup>

Mona Lisa's portrait is such perfection that many have called her an idealization, a daydream, or an imaginative depiction of qualities found in Leonardo himself. Is it possible, however, that Leonardo was scrupulously objective, painting with supreme skill and patience what he saw in her, and that some of these very attributes happened also to be in himself? If only we could see her through the eyes of this man whom Gabriele d'Annunzio called "master of truth"!

Da Vinci's life was spent in studying nature's forms and functions, the known and unknown laws of her varied workings. Antonio Baldacci says: "His mind in observation is like that of a modern scientist, but his eye is infallible: it always hits its mark."<sup>22</sup> Leonardo was able to depict not only surface structures, nature's forms in delicate, minute detail, but he saw within, "divining the sources of springs beneath the earth or of expression beneath the human countenance, clairvoyant of occult gifts in common or uncommon things, in the reed at the brookside, or the star which draws near to us but once in a century. — ...for years he seemed to those about him as one listening to a voice silent for other men."<sup>23</sup>

Who else could have painted Mona Lisa? Compare the innumerable careful copies by various men. Has any revealed the exquisite living emanations which Leonardo focused into 630 square inches of space? It is as if other attempts have

<sup>18</sup> "Mona Lisa's Smile", p. 51

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 10-11

<sup>20</sup> *Encyclopaedia Americana*, 1962 ed, article by David M. Robb, p. 333.

<sup>21</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Inc, Chicago London Toronto, 1960, Vol 18, p. 267

<sup>22</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, p 454

<sup>23</sup> *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* by Walter Pater, MacMillan & Co, London, 1873, pp. 85, 88,

brought her image down into a flat, duller plane where she and nature are out of harmony, where the elements in the portrait become faintly disjointed, its forms taking on sharper edges along with a heavier density and tendency toward conflict, disorganization, and pedestrian deadliness.

G. P. Lomazzo in his "Idea del Tempio della Pittura" (Milan, G. Pontio, 1590, p. 8) has given Leonardo a design symbol above the temple roof. "To da Vinci I have given the lion, for the reason that just as this animal is more noble than all others, so much more noble is the style of this famous painter, for as the lion conquers all other animals, so does he conquer those who set themselves to gaze at his things and wish to imitate them." Within 100 years of Leonardo's death, according to P.E. Schneider, 60 copies of the "Mona Lisa" had been attempted.

The contrast between Leonardo's work and that of others, including Salaino, one of his best students, is strikingly evident in the "Madonna and Child with St. Anne", a painting which glows with a heavenly grace and sublime harmony through Leonardo's touch. It is a marvelous painting imbued with veiled rays of spiritual light. Compositional elements are complex and unified in subtlest perfection — out of context they would be awkward, if not grotesque. Just observe the sure, rhythmic placement of feet, elbows, lamb's legs, and of Mary, who is bent almost double (though graciously at ease on her mother's lap) to reach for her son, who turns while balanced to mount the lamb, which has already lost its footing. As Edward McCurdy says, "...we think of it as a sequence of difficulties triumphantly solved."<sup>24</sup> With an all-knowing, transcendent composure St. Anne smiles down on them and her face reveals a visage of Mahalakshmi, serenely radiant in beauty. Surely music is drifting in from higher realms. When we turn to Salaino's gentle version of the subject its components are no longer sweetly reconciled: the limbs are foreshortened, feet gawky, Anne's smile sugary, and the structural foundation shaky. Mary is about to slip from her mother's lap. The whole mood is more stiffly terrestrial, the sun's rays have withdrawn, and there is no sound of music. Yet it is a pleasing painting on its own level.

Leonardo made the understatement of the Renaissance over a dispute with stingy clerics when he said, "I am no penny-painter."<sup>25</sup> This involved a 20-year court battle which was finally resolved for both sides, but in Leonardo's favor.

The spirit and technique in the "St. Anne" and "Mona Lisa" are wondrous. Walter Pater speaks of Leonardo's mastery of an earlier Florentine style with its limitations and says, "Now he was to entertain in this narrow medium those divinations of a humanity too wide for it, that larger vision of the opening world... and everywhere the effort is visible in the work of his hands."<sup>26</sup> These paintings "unite perfection of delicacy and softness of modelling to what seems to be an almost absolute rightness of line.... Just as in the greatest poetry there is often the touch of prose, the something inevitable which makes the result seem effortless by contrast with art less than perfect,

<sup>24</sup> *The Mind of Leonardo da Vinci* by Edward McCurdy, Dodd, Mead & Co., N.Y., 1939, p. 296.

<sup>25</sup> *Lives*, p. 400.

<sup>26</sup> Pater, *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

...even so does the 'Mona Lisa' live in the memory as a supreme utterance, effortless in its inevitability..."<sup>27</sup>

"Mona Lisa" appears to be a simple composition. But one observes things. She is painted sitting by a firm parapet which is already on a height, the same level on which Leonardo stands; and her form rises like a pyramid before the landscape extending below and beyond. Her head lifts above the succession of mountain ranges and ocean levels still into the sky above them. One notes the curvature of the earth along the upper right horizon of the sea. Earth's roundness wasn't wholly accepted at that time, but da Vinci had climbed mountains by the sea and drawn his own conclusions. He had even determined the earth's diameter at 12,500,000 meters — Milan units — a figure very near its 12,700,000 meters. And he was conscious of earth's daily axial rotation, commenting that "...when it is noon in our hemisphere, it is midnight in the opposite hemisphere."<sup>28</sup> After a while one sees that the "Mona Lisa" has contradictory elements, oppositions which are somehow remarkably reconciled. Mona Lisa is a young woman, but she seems ages old. Oscar Wilde called her smile "archaic". There is a childlike sweetness, an expression of fresh, innocent expectancy, and at the same time a reflection of ancient wisdom, of a deep and entire understanding of life. She seems to embody a kinetic power of action in quiescence, an affirmation of love, cheer, joy contained within or supported by a spirit of detachment and peaceful serenity. A most delicate gentleness is revealed, along with a wide, calm strength which conveys an impression of rocklike unshakability. Indeed, she seems even more stable than the mountains behind her, and one guesses that if the earth began to crumble, Mona Lisa would remain firm, a pyramid of adamantine composure. Still, nature's landscape appears to be related to her, if not a kind of extension of her.

It is interesting that Gioconda wears no jewelry or ornaments of status, not even a ring. She looks like a simple woman, but one senses that she is inwardly a queen. The shoulder-garment's graceful draping lends nobility to her bearing, and one can almost see a crown shimmering above her head. But despite this intuition, she doesn't resemble an image of a Christian "queen-of-heaven", nor of Leonardo's own depictions of the Virgin. She seems more real than any of them. Edward McCurdy observes, "the contrast of type with the madonnas which it presents is an instance of his essential realism."<sup>29</sup>

Sri Aurobindo said, "Beauty and delight whatever form it takes has an unchanging youth, an eternal moment, an immortal presence." Mona Lisa has the look of a 'universal child' as well as that of a 'universal mother'. While a faintly somnolent air drifts through the portrait, there is yet a concentrated wakefulness which seems to reflect the mood of an eternally wakened dreamer. Who was the bushman who observed, "There is a dreamer dreaming us"? A powerful impression given is that of Now and

<sup>27</sup> *The Mind of Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 89

<sup>28</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 455.

<sup>29</sup> *The Mind of Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 89.

Ever. Right now she looks forth in time, but eternity prevails within and beyond the Now.

Whether or not the reddish path at left with double tracks leads up to the parapet or down to the sea or across the bridge is only to be guessed. But if one looks at one side of the painting and the other, one discovers two moods in Mona Lisa and in the landscape. Perhaps the left expresses a creative, quickened affirmation of life; but the right is more quietly withdrawn, and shadowed. Death and life are here. Mona Lisa may truly have lost a child or foreseen her own passing (she died years before her elderly husband) or some other loss. Nevertheless her straight vision seems a direct confrontation in the portrait, and whatever of Death enters the scene is acknowledged by her. There is something of Kali in Mona Lisa, something in her demeanor which could look the great power Death in the face without flinching, without blanching. And one suspects that she could deal a lethal blow to Death itself. Probably this is the most astonishing aspect of Mona Lisa, whose features radiate not only beauty, wisdom, and serenity, but a budding delight, an utter lifting sweetness which can be perceived unfailingly. If Leonardo's compass is partially responsible for this, then all-praise to his compass.

Fra Pietro di Novellara gave hints on symbolic meanings in Leonardo's religious themes and wrote: "With the same care that he lavished on investigating nature for pictorial ends, he also explored spiritual symbols in order to render every element in his painting significant."<sup>30</sup> Whether this applies to "Mona Lisa" or not, one would like to know more about the landscape. Oppositions of light and shadow, heights and depths interplay. Leonardo as geologist had studied seashells and fossils on mountain tops, earth structure, mountain strata, the action of erosion by streams and rainfall, and he declared that "there are no mountains where there has been no sea or lake" and that "mountains are formed in the great depths of the seas."<sup>31</sup>

It might be mentioned that Leonardo's apocalyptic novel, *The Deluge*, contains a beautiful aspiring symbol. Mt. Taurus ("supreme height") rises directly out of the sea, and it becomes the last refuge of survivors on earth from the cataclysm. He writes, "in the whole world there is nowhere so high as the summit of this mountain, and the sun's rays rising from the east strike the summit four hours before daybreak. And since the peak is of the purest white stone, it performs for the Armenians the same office as that which the glorious moon performs for the sake of illuminating the darkness...."<sup>32</sup>

At the time of the late 15th century a theory still prevailed that earth's ocean had different levels, rather than a vast single level with varying depths, which Leonardo knew it to be. And yet, strangely enough, he has painted the "Mona Lisa" landscape as if this former theory were true. Or it may be that the water is simply a continuation of a river or bay down to the ocean. Da Vinci, despite his keen sense of humor and

<sup>30</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 71-73

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p 464

<sup>32</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by Robert Payne, Lion Books, Inc, N. Y. C., 1955, pp 53-55

irony, probably wouldn't have portrayed in the landscape a depiction of the physical ocean which he knew to be false. His words on truth are so impressive they are included here. "Lying is so vile that even if it were speaking well of godly things, it would take off something from God's grace; and truth is so excellent that if it praises but small things they become noble. Beyond a doubt truth bears the same relation to falsehood as light to darkness; and this truth is in itself so excellent that even when it dwells on humble and lowly matters, it is still infinitely above ambiguity and lies regarding great and lofty matters; because even if lying should be the fifth element of our minds, the fact remains that the truth of things is the chief nutriment of superior intellects, though not of wandering wits."<sup>33</sup> Earth's curvature is very apparent at the right where sea and mountains fade into the distance, and this exerts a subtle globular influence on the whole painting. The impression of Mona Lisa as world-mother becomes more distinct.

In his poetic essay Walter Pater mentions Da Vinci's landscapes, "not of dreams or of fancy, but of places far withdrawn, and hours selected from a thousand with a miracle of 'finesse'. Through Leonardo's strange veil of sight things reach him so; in no ordinary night or day, but as in faint light of eclipse, or in some brief interval of falling rain at daybreak, or through deep water."<sup>34</sup> Of Gioconda he says, "We all know the face and hands of the figure set in its marble chair, in that cirque of rocks, as if in some faint light under the sea."<sup>35</sup> It sounds as if Mona Lisa would be at home as Neptune's daughter or mother, but she seems rather to be queen of an invisible sea which contains sky and earth and Nature's whole range of seas. Perhaps four lines from "*Savitri*" will illustrate the mystic quality in this painting:

"A halo of the indwelling Deity,  
The Immortal's lustre that had lit her face  
And tented its radiance in her body's house,  
Overflowing made the air a luminous sea."<sup>36</sup>

How Leonardo has reconciled all the oppositions in "Mona Lisa" is a mystery. It is as if he had called on the Vedic deity, Varuna, to perform the work. *On the Veda* contains an illuminating and inspiring, nine-page description of Varuna as one of "The Guardians of the Light." The ancient mystics "felt divine existence like an encompassing ocean, lived in its boundless presence as in a pure and pervading ether. Varuna is this highest heaven, this soul-surrounding ocean, this ethereal possession and infinite pervasion." He is King of the Vedic rivers, "streams of the Truth; they are the rain from its luminous heavens, ... they descend upon the earth, they rise from the ocean,

<sup>33</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp 26, 27

<sup>34</sup> *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p 92

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p 102

<sup>36</sup> *Savitri* by Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo International University Centre, Pondicherry, 1954, p 745

they flow to the ocean, ... — ... purifying ... honey-pouring, ... — All heights to which we can climb from the basis of our physical existence are described in symbolic figure as mountain summits upon the earth and Varuna of the vision holds them all in himself.”<sup>37</sup>

Surely the spirit of Love is contained herein and has played a unifying role in “La Joconde”. Like one who is “helpful” and of good cheer, her visage summons up the passage in *Corinthians* about Love which “suffereth long, and is kind ...”, which “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,” which abides and never fails.

We return to Walter Pater’s mysterious and perceptive description of “Mona Lisa”.... “The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Here is the head upon which all ‘the ends of the world are come’, and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experiences of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sin of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; ... she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes .”<sup>38</sup>

Before the turn of the century John Addington Symonds wrote of Leonardo, “he evolved a new spirituality in art...” but “He passes beyond art and stands upon the very edge of infinity, face to face with the insoluble and yet forever questioning. He is man projected for centuries beyond Raphael and Michelangelo and Titian. He hints at more than we even yet know. In all the race it is perhaps he who makes one proudest of being a thinking creature, ... and one may not establish a merely artistic standard for this stupendous man.”<sup>39</sup> Mother-Nature revealed her glorious colours and manifold designs to him as to no other master of the time.

CLARA REEVES

<sup>37</sup> *On the Veda* by Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1956

<sup>38</sup> *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p 103

<sup>39</sup> *Lives* , p. 406, footnote 59.

*“I cherish God the Fire, not God the Dream.”*

SAVITRI

**Images for a Film Script of Our Time**

## **“THE IMMORTAL FIRE”**

**Adapted from Sri Aurobindo’s translation of KATHA UPANISHAD with additional text from HYMNS TO THE MYSTIC FIRE and SAVITRI**

CAMERA’S EYE from the height of a towering MATRIMANDIR scaffolding sweeps panoramically the burning plain from which here ... there ... signs of the City of Dawn rising in India, Auroville . . . gleam in the blazing sunset splendour.

An unaccountable light from the steel-screened depths of the construction catches CAMERA’S EYE. Peering down through the black tubular-steel maze to the concrete foundation, the EYE penetrates at a point of the aura-like light to see ... the concealed cornerstone with its symbol OM inscribed on it by The Mother’s hand.

From its headlong plunge of sight EYE sees, like the Aswattha Tree, the converging Pillars rooted in the fiery sky. OM reverberates amongst them, resounds through the central trunk, sounds through the projecting steel cables as through a great harp.

Sunil’s MUSIC is heard, distant at first, as of *The approach of a blue pilgrim multitude ... a great arriving voice*. OM rolls through it like a distant thunder of joy.

CAMERA’S EYE scans the horizon for the source of the *great arriving voice*. It picks up the Palmyras ringing the Bharat Nivas, House of India, catches a glimpse of the monumental sun-emblazoned roofing ... then of one figure, several, a group, more and more threading their way through the Palmyra trees, circling the blue-metal stone heaps and sandpiles around the unfinished construction, arriving at the stonelike concrete stairways. Descending, CAMERA’S EYE joins a group of white-robed figures among those assembling at the Bharat Nivas.

NARRATOR’S VOICE

“In the assembly of the wise, he who being pure recites or hears the eternal story of Nachiketas wherein Death is the speaker, grows great in the world of the Brahman.”

SANSKRIT CHANTING

(First Cycle, Third Chapter, Slokas 16 and 17)



CAMERA’S EYE circles the concreted steps upon which the now assembled audience sits in a hush of expectancy. It faces the Processional of the Company of DANCERS and SINGERS, the CHORUS OF YOUTH moving through the assembly and to their places on the circular floor. As softly the COMPANY intones the Invocatory OM, it seems the voice of the Matrimandir chanting through them, continuing the eternal sound.

NARRATOR’S VOICE

“Even a little of this Law delivereth one out of great fear.”

CAMERA’S EYE spots thread of smoke rising from a secluded upper space, apart from the assembly. Hastening towards it, EYE comes upon an ancient, hooded RISHI in Vedic robes and mantle performing a Fire Rite of Sacrifice, MYSTIC FIRE MUSIC emerging from the inner mystic depths of the place.

NARRATOR’S VOICE

“The word *Upamshad* means *to enter into a secret place*. The Rishis ... earned by Yoga the right of entry into the secrecy of the mind where hangs the key to the Integral Knowledge ... penetrated into the hidden chamber ... and became sovereigns of vast realms of that infallible knowledge ... with direct vision ... attained only by Yoga.”

CAMERA’S EYE catches sight of a YOUNG STUDENT in contemporary dress detaching himself from a group of still, attentive figures around a column of the hall. *Let there be a young man, excellent and lovely in his youth, a great student; let him have fair manners, and a most firm heart ....* (TAITTIRIYA UP., VIII.) It is NACHIKETAS. As if drawn by a magnet, unerringly the YOUNG MAN seeks out the RISHI and prostrates himself before the Seer, touching the ANCIENT ONE’S feet.

SINGER’S VOICE

“*O spirit, remember!... remember why thou cam’st ....  
Find out thy soul; recover thy hid Self; ...  
Then mortal nature, change to the divine.*”

CAMERA’S EYE meets close-up the ardent light burning in the YOUNG STUDENT’S eyes as he lifts his head to address the RISHI.

NACHIKETAS

(humbly)

“Teach me the change, O Wise One.”

But the RISHI swaying before the fire seems not to hear. The YOUNG MAN

waits as a suppliant, in meditation before the ANCIENT ONE.

SINGER'S VOICE

*"A movement is abroad, a cry, a word  
Beginningless in its vast discovery  
Momentless in its unthinkable return."*

CHORUS OF YOUTH

(distantly murmuring like a wind of the future)

"OM            The Fire of Transformation            The Immortal Fire."

CAMERA'S EYE gazes into the heart of the RISHI'S altar fire; its light is like that of the YOUNG MAN'S.

SINGER'S VOICE

*"Behind the flame ... behind the solar fire ... the nuclear fire ... is spiritual fire —  
carrying the Splendour that has lit the suns.  
O Agni Youth            Force-Consciousness  
thou leadst the universe by the appointed path  
towards the appointed destination."*

The SUN, setting amongst the Palmyra trees yearning towards it, is a ball of molten fire-gold.

CHORUS OF YOUTH

"OM            The Fire of Transformation            The Immortal Fire."

THE YOUNG MAN catches the hem of the RISHI'S mantle, pressing it to his heart.

NACHIKETAS

(humbly, intensely)

"Teach me of the immortal fire, Master."

As though coming down from the aeonic past the ANCIENT ONE'S hand touches the YOUNG ONE'S heart.

RISHI

"Thy Master, Youth, is Death."

NACHIKETAS

"Then teach me, Seer, of Death."

CAMERA’S EYE follows the RISHI’s hand as it lifts up his hood, and watches as he looks long into NACHIKETAS’ eyes. The ANCIENT ONE is drawing his mantle over the YOUNG MAN’s head when the distraught voice of a middle-aged man is heard calling Nachiketas by name.

EYE catches sight of the man, VAJASHRAVASA, prosperous looking, in contemporary dress of a wealthy, westernized Indian business-man, searching for his son. Seeing him with the RISHI, displeased and alarmed, the father VAJASHRAVASA snatches the mantle from NACHIKETAS’ shoulders. The RISHI withdraws into himself, resuming his place at the fire.

CAMERA’S EYE observes the silent struggle between FATHER and SON as VAJASHRAVASA tries to propel NACHIKETAS out of the sacred precincts, and the YOUNG MAN resisting bows down before the ANCIENT ONE to take sanctuary with him, clinging to his feet. Forcefully VAJASHRAVASA lifts up his SON who catches his FATHER’s eyes with such fiery determination that the FATHER, daunted, turns away and throws a coin to the RISHI as to a beggar.

NARRATOR’S VOICE

“Vajashravasa, desiring, gave ... Desiring.”

At NACHIKETAS’ grave look, the FATHER takes out his wallet impatiently, ostentatiously.

EYE watches the ten-Rupee note being thrust at the RISHI’s feet ... and NACHIKETAS’ sorrowful reaction.

NARRATOR’S VOICE

“Give ... desiring.”

NACHIKETAS

“Me, O my father, to whom will you give?”

(Distant, ominous SOUND OF CONCH SHELL, TEMPLE BELLS, GONG.)

The FATHER looks about for the source of the ominous sounds.... Perhaps his own imagination? Or the magic of the old beggar? He hesitates; then gives a one-hundred-Rupee note to the ANCIENT ONE.

NACHIKETAS

“Me, O my father, to whom will you give?”

(Distant, ancient TEMPLE SOUNDS come closer.)

Disturbed, VAJASHRAVASA puts away his wallet uneasily and turns upon his SON determined to end his nonsense. But NACHIKETAS catches hold of his FATHER’s wallet as determinedly.

NACHIKETAS

“Me! O my father, to whom will you give!”

(ANCIENT TEMPLE SOUNDS are very close now, ringing in the FATHER’s head.)

The RISHI rises before VAJASHRAVASA, his august nobility further confusing and upsetting the FATHER who wrests back his wallet from his SON, angry at his own weakness before the two.

VAJASHRAVASA

(furiously)

“To Death I give you!”

CAMERA’S EYE watches the FATHER striding out wrathfully ... and turns to see the RISHI draw the YOUNG MAN close and look so deeply into his eyes they become fathomless pools of the ancient temple sounds.

RISHI

“Then learn of Death, my son ... from Death.”

The pools of sounds become slowly, then more and more rapidly, whirling pools of DARK WATERS in which a drowning FIGURE ... resembling NACHIKETAS ... throws up its arms in a voiceless cry for help. The FIGURE multiplies .... ALL the same and all throwing up their arms for help, ALL being sucked down into the WHIRLPOOLS which move like pulsating fever-pits.

ANCIENT TEMPLE SOUNDS become magnified HEART-BEATS, GASPINGS through waters for air, hoarse terrified CHOKINGS as in a delirium of fever.

RISHI’S VOICE

(pulsing through the fever)

“Look back and see, O Nachiketas. Even as were the men of old, — look round! — even so are they that have come after.”

The WATERS steaming under torrid suns become FIELDS of waving grain falling under the curving, flashing scythes of bowed PEASANTS harvesting.

RISHI’S VOICE

“Mortal man withers like the fruits of the field, and like the fruits of the field he is born again ... until transformed in the immortal fire he wins to immortality. For only to him who while living dies to himself in the mystic death is that sacred Fire revealed.”

The HARVESTING SCYTHES flash and glint like LIGHTNINGS: GRAIN-STALKS like HUMAN FIGURES fall and fall.

RISHI’S VOICE

“Then learn of Death ... from Death, O Nachiketas.”

The delirium of sounds, feverish HEART BEATS and GASPINGS for air are suddenly cut short by a TEMPLE GONG reverberating ... fading into a profound hush. CAMERA’S EYE follows NACHIKETAS as he drags himself sweat-soaked and trembling out of a field-gully and towards a stone stairway surrounded by heaps of sand, red earth, and wooden scaffolding.

NACHIKETAS

(gasping, whispers to himself)

“Something ... Death means to do ... which today by me ... he will accomplish.”

NACHIKETAS gains strength enough to crawl under the stone stairway and into the dark recess of a stone subterranean passage. Doubled-up like an embryonic form, he repeats *japam*, gaining control over his weakness with difficulty.

NACHIKETAS

“Lead me ... lead me from the unreal to the Real ...  
from darkness ... into the Light ... from death to ...  
from death to ... Immortality ...”

As he goes into TRANCE-STATE OF THE MYSTIC DEATH the *japa* in Sanskrit washes through him. CAMERA’S EYE probing the underground passage begins its journey down into Night. It sees ... the subterranean rock-walls come alive ... Stone-carvings of MYTHOLOGICAL BEINGS, archaeological figures from Temple-Caves slide down and surround the YOUTH ...

NARRATOR’S VOICE

*“His body gathered into mystic sleep.  
His living, sacrificed and offered heart ...  
Sent up its voiceless prayer to the Unknown.  
Extinction could not quench that lonely fire ...”*

EYE widens upon *pillared conscious rocks opening to depths like dumb appalling jaws*. They gape round the YOUNG MAN’s body ... *a mystery that slays*. MUSIC OF DEATH’S KINGDOM ... and *a dread cry ... echoing all sadness and immortal scorn ... moans like a hunger of far wandering waves ...*

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

At Death's Door ... *in the kingdom of the dreadful god he lies.*  
*Inhuman solitudes come close .... Vacant eternities forbidding hope ...*  
*Piling their void unbearable loneliness upon his soul....*

A BODY OF PALE LIGHT rises slowly from the YOUTH's prone body, as though obeying the *dread cry* to follow it:/ — NACHIKETAS begins his slow-motion DANCE-JOURNEY INTO DEATH'S KINGDOM.... *Crossing the borders of dividing sense/ The mortal members fall back from the soul .... Alone in a new world where souls were not.*

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

*Then from the sombre mystery of the gulfs.... Something crept forth....*  
*A shapeless Thought.... A fatal Influence....*

A dark, dread, hooded, FACELESS FIGURE changing shape like a cloud of black smoke steals upon NACHIKETAS compelling him into the passages leading to Hell. The PROJECTIONS of archaeological stone-carvings turn into hieratic FIGURES OF EVIL "REPTILE ENERGIES", the masked and falsely smiling LORD EGO, QUEEN FALSEHOOD, FALLEN ANGELS, SONS OF DARKNESS. Taking on a TELEVISIONED UNREALITY they surround and invite NACHIKETAS to become part of their court, tempting him with food and drink which he refuses; whereupon pretending hurt dismay they clasp him in strangling embraces, cover him with richly-decorated and smothering robes, through its serpentine coils attempting to stab him in the back.

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

(imitates a Television announcer's false enthusiasm reporting a festive Court Spectacle ... the MASKED DANCERS OF HELL giving the lie to his delighted announcements)

Arrive the messengers ... from a world of power! Ambassadors! Influences!

CAMERA'S EYE catches *the prowling and stealthy come and go/ Of armed disquieting bodied Influences ... a no-man's land of evil air ... between the world and hell ... where unreality was Nature's lord: ... a space where nothing could be true. |A vast deception was the law of things ... Love ended early in hate, delight killed with pain....*

## NARRATOR'S VOICE

Nature's Lord: Ah, Love! Delight! Ah, Truth!

The clutching hand, clasping the YOUNG MAN'S, *enslaves a dagger's stab ...*

the embrace could be *Doom's iron cage.... There Ego was lord upon his peacock seat/ And falsehood sat by him, his mate and queen ... Wry statues spat and stiffened in life's mud,; A glut of hideous forms and hideous deeds/ Paralysed pity in the hardened breast ...*

NARRATOR'S VOICE

Ah, Life!            Embrace ... one's self!            Upon a peacock seat ...!

*Grey foul inventions gruesome and macabre/Came televised from the gulfs of Night ... Made vileness great and sublimated filth/A dragon power of reptile energies....*

NARRATOR'S VOICE

One's mate and queen ... a dragon power! Ah, — Televised from the gulfs of Night!

CAMERA'S EYE half-closed by a reptile's tail glimpses NACHIKETAS' hands, torn, bleeding, seeking some holding-place, clutching the jagged edge of an abyss as he strives to climb up out of the pit.

NACHIKETAS' INNER VOICE

Lead ... me ... from ... the unreal ... to the Real....

A GLEAM OF LIGHT from above appears in answer, searching for him. The glitter of HELL'S SPECTACLE, the MASKED DRAGON POWERS, is swallowed up in the abyss below. EYE sees the YOUTH's body pale, naked, flattened against a wet black-moss-streaked wall, his arms spread-eagled, as if crucified. As the LIGHT-GLEAM finds him, he stirs alive. A FLUTE SONG rises.

REVERBERANT VOICE

This is the House of Yama, Lord of Death, called Mansion of the Gods.  
Here for the Master of the Law the flute is blown.

HOLLOW VOICE

(from below)

Who dares to enter.

Rising from the black VOID, barely outlined, a PHOSPHORESCENT-GREEN SHAPE as of Dissolution and Decay ... a subtle body of Moss-like NERVE filaments vaguely resembling a human form and astride a vaguely-outlined glistening hump resembling a water buffalo. The GREEN PHOSPHORESCENCE hovers over the YOUTH'S pale body dissolving its flesh, then becoming the GLEAM OF LIGHT itself climbing to a safe lodge of stone, a resting place.

## REVERBERANT VOICE

A Brahman guest, O Yama, Lord of Death, enters as celestial fire, Spirit of Life. Bring water of the guest-rite, O Master of Law in the world — for he has dwelt unhonoured, fasting for three days and nights in my Lord Yama's Kingdom.

## HOLLOW VOICE

Dead to desire?

## REVERBERANT VOICE

Dead to desire, he has fasted at Death's Door three days and nights, O Lord of Death.

(WIND & WATER SOUNDS as of VAST FOOTSTEPS is heard.)

*(To be continued)*

SEYRIL  
*Peace, AUROVILLE*

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## TWO REFLECTIONS

### I

How unspeakably grateful  
I feel for my decision in early childhood:  
never to become a hypocrite or a go-between!  
Also my Symbol of life: “ever forward flowing waters of a river”,  
which has its best for all people and all creations of Nature,  
but remains free from any kind of bondage — gives me unspeakably much.  
No amount of money, no material advantage, no public distinctions  
can ever satisfy me, if I have to give up my self-respect, Human Dignity—  
my love of Truth and humankind without the least exception.  
I am no traitor to myself — no rascal — no coward —  
but a true world-citizen, selfless world-server —  
a cell of the universal AUROVILLE —  
and this during my whole life, not only from February 28th, 1969, when  
the Mother’s AUROVILLE was founded near Pondicherry, India.

It is simply unbelievable, how Life is generous to me, giving me  
the greatest values and opportunities to evolve and grow —  
to love and be loved....

My Faith and Love of Humanity is protecting me all the time,  
under all conditions, circumstances...

The noblest human beings are attracted to me or I to them.  
All my senses are harmonious  
and there is Beauty in me and round me not only sometimes  
but all the time....

I have no guarantee of an income, yet I receive enough goods,  
so that I can continue my selfless work for unlimited Humanity....

I have only to go on — to see and accept generous gifts  
of Universal Life coming to me through ideally human, spiritually advanced  
friends, fellowmen....

My Faith and enthusiasm are unlimited, unshaken.  
I could prove them in places, where it is generally not expected, believed.

Though many are still not enlightened, the evolution continues,  
is getting stronger and richer — is becoming a powerful magnet  
and irradiator of all that is desirable, universally good and useful —  
even under the most difficult conditions....

The higher you climb,  
 the deeper becomes the distance between you and the valley....  
 You must decide yourself either for the top of the mountain  
 or the society of people in the valley.  
 To be in both places at the same time is indeed impossible.

Not everybody is capable or willing  
 to leave the comfort and friends he has in his valley  
 for a solitary, hard-to-reach top.  
 But those who really desire and long  
 to see unlimited Horizons  
 do not hesitate to climb ever higher,  
 leaving all known behind,  
 not afraid to challenge strong winds,  
 bad weather — high pressure of atmosphere —  
 lack of material, food, drink —  
 other commodities — conveniences of social entertainments,  
 advantages....

To hesitate — waver  
 is the document of a weak character —  
 not Love enough for a higher Ideal, of one's own true Self —  
 the consequence of such a lack is often physical and mental illness.

Don't be afraid to climb spiritual mountains!  
 It is not only every man's inborn, natural duty,  
 but the very source of Self-mastery,  
 uplifting Joy — real Happiness....

Remember, that to get higher,  
 one must be willing and ready to leave the lower.  
 Refuse false pride, but also passivity!

Be creator of your own way of life,  
 as no other way can lead you to inmost Bliss,  
 to those who are really worthy to become your  
 "Brothers — Friends — Cooperators".

# THE VIRGIN MOTHER AT NOON

FROM THE FRENCH OF PAUL CLAUDEL

It's noon. The church is open. I have to go that way.  
Mother of Jesus Christ, I have not come to pray.

I have nothing to offer, nothing to ask for, either.  
I come only to look at you, Mother.

To look, to weep with joy, to know quite clear  
That I am your son and that you are here.

Merely for a moment, while all's at pause.  
Noon!  
To be with you, Mary, in this place which is yours.

To say nothing, to look at your face,  
And let the heart sing its own kind of praise,

Say nothing, but sing simply as the heart overfills,  
Like the thrush who follows his fantasy with abrupt happy trills.

Because you are beautiful, because you are pure,  
Woman at last to Grace you restore,

The creature in her birth-joy and her perfect flower,  
Just as she came out from God, that first glorious dawn-hour.

Ineffably untouched because you are the Mother of Jesus Christ,  
Who is the Truth in your arms, and our sole hope, the sole-prized.

Because you are Woman, Love's Eden of ancient forgotten years,  
Whose glance finds the heart suddenly and makes leap the gathered tears,

Because you are there forever, because you are, Mary, simply because you  
exist,

Mother of Jesus, receive my gratitude!

*Translated by* SHRADDHAMAL

## MEETING

In crowded corridor, full of waiting and trouble —  
What an unexpected place to meet you?  
Sitting here, watching the faces pass by  
How was I to know that I would sight you today?  
Those flaming eyes must have called mine,  
For I looked up and, amazed, found you there standing  
Willowy, lean, elegantly limbed.  
Tall like a tree, supple to bend with the whim of the winds.  
The years have yet but gently touched you,  
Barely a boy, from a nearby place  
With firm gaze fixed upon me, you took your place across  
To where I sat, and crouched down on the floor.  
Why on the floor? It doesn't become you.  
What a messy head of curly locks, like a young cherubim's hair,  
How clean a face of innocence, over the limbs but a loin cloth:  
I look at you, remembering, and quietly whisper: 'Young David  
With the music in his eyes.'

Where are your sheep, David, gently grazing on the hills,  
Where is your song warm in your throat, like wine in summer brewed in  
Leban?  
Out of your shepherd's flute, have you kissed out yet your honeyed tunes?  
The day is warm on Carmel's mount, rest a while,  
Sleep David, — dream away.  
Unaware roams the Philistine brute, secure of his doom,  
God on his throne awaits your song, Adonai, the One  
Willing to grant your call.  
No crown is weighed upon your locks, the kingdom is not yet yours,  
Safe are the charms of sweet Bethsheba in the clasp of her lord,  
Brave captain, poor Uriah, you are not yet to be slain, —  
Oh David, young David, the demons plague us all.

I search your face with melancholy thoughts  
And once more I hear the song of David, praising the Lord.  
Tunes of a charmed instrument come reaching to my ears  
From another age, — the shepherd King plays;  
Into gold Hebron's night the poet King sings.  
Where stands the tent in the desert with the Holy Ark,  
Where burns the flame for the One God of the Israelites?

Gone are the battles once won, the heroes gone to sleep,  
 Oh fire of Judah, where have you gone?  
 I wonder back, holding past visions in my heart  
 And find you unaware, still gazing from the sweet youth  
 Of your eyes.

GEORGETTE COTY

Outpatient in Jipmer's corridor, 4th April, 1972

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## PROMENADE

THE firmaments are but the flow of your robes,  
 each galaxy a limb of your thousand-limbed body,  
 all stars are your cells  
 and on one cell an atom of life  
 is witness to your promenade;  
 all breaths are your one vast breath  
 and breathing we but join  
 the eternal round of your magical march.

The miracle is at work  
 and I witness the Plan Divine,  
 my heart is so full  
 I see you in all movement;  
 joyous I am a part everpresent,  
 enveloping the course of a heavenly direction.  
 Before your feet I place my soul,  
 take me in your stride  
 through the vastness of universal corridors:  
 let me consciously join the sweep of the stars,  
 the spiralling motion of all creation.

Everpresent in your Being,  
 one with all that moves in you and by you  
 I am a witness  
 joyous, of your heavenly walk.

PATRIZIA

## “THE LOST GUIDE”

O MASTER, who are ever on earth,  
Might infallible, with matter your ensign,  
Abdicating for us all your wealth divine,  
Not with any lessening of mirth,  
Accepting our faults which with joy you entwine,  
Never letting a frown crease your brow.  
Dare even divinity frown on its own sons  
And recast its anger with the fearful dance?  
May your children be left to grow  
And be parts of yourself, always in a trance.

Young impulse had led us astray  
Into a forged freedom, forest green and dank,  
Confronting our quest with a face mute and blank.  
Help us move out, show us the way,  
And we still may escape from the foliage rank.  
Improve us please, our Father sweet,  
Till we can journey to the stars on our own,  
And our substance dull to your glory be prone.  
No more can we but to entreat  
Your grace to teach in a crowd to be alone.

Aspiring up your path to tread,  
Master, our Father, we wait for you to speak.  
And seeking in the world, in vale and on peak,  
Your treasures more than drink and bread,  
In trial we proved false many a technique  
Strong nature's tempests to parry.  
Alone can we find our destined royal fate,  
To have with us the golden key to your gate?  
Your love would not let us tarry  
And childishly implore of your sun to wait.

Mountains surround us, sides so steep.  
Await we silently, lost without a guide.  
Yet our honest errors you never deride,  
In helping us take the great leap,  
Praising each shaky step — in that do we pride.  
Awash we, in world's cataract,

Redemption and your grace fading from our sight,  
 As the dark drowning desires draw us to night —  
 Master, act and help us to act,  
 Enable us, pray, to share your gracious light.

LALIT JHALARIA

*The initial letters of the lines add up to Sri Aurobindo's mantra  
 "Om Anandamayi Chaitanyamayi Satyamayi Parame."*

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## TO S ON HER BIRTHDAY

A MOMENT

I saw you  
 And we were comrades of the Eternal,  
 Old friends.

And such a love rushed up  
 I could not speak.  
 Only the heart's mute joy in the prison of my eyes  
 Burned the bridges Time had woven  
 And the dust between our lives.

I may never see you in this life again,  
 Have friendly conversation  
 Or your silent company—  
 But I have always known you  
 And will recognize  
 The vision that I hold of your Soul,  
 Within your eyes...

So *bonne fête!* till when  
 In Divine Companionship,  
 We shall meet again.

NANCY

# HUMAN RELATIONS

## A SERMON AND A STORY

THE base of Human Relations is Fear and Selfishness. Needless to say, relations based on Fear and Selfishness are never permanent. A day comes when they either snap or end. As M.P. Pandit puts it: "Man in his ignorance develops an attachment and clings to the relationship which snaps — physically or otherwise—in time as all human relationships do." And when the relationship comes to an end or snaps, one laments or grieves instead of taking it as an opportunity to get rid of the attachment. This is so because human relationship is, at its centre, a thing of bargain. And when the expectation fails, the relationship comes to an end. Only the relationship with the Divine never fails, because there the base is Love, and in love there is no element of bargaining. The Mother has said:

"Never rely on human relationship, it always fails. The Divine is the only Friend that never fails."

Recently I read the following message of the Mother in the Service Letter No. 11 of The Mother's Service Society:

"Take advantage of the circumstances to get rid of all attachment to the members of your family.

"You must learn that you have no more brothers, sisters, father, mother, except Sri Aurobindo and myself, and you must feel free and unconcerned whatever happens to them.

"We are your whole family, your protection, your all in all."

The moment I read this a chord was struck in me and I remembered a story told to us when we were young, about the frailty of human relationship. Here is the story.

In the town of Rampur, there lived a very wealthy person by name Ramprasad aged about 75. He had a wife by name Rampyary aged 72 or so. They had one son by name Govinda and Govinda had a wife by name Shushila. Govinda was 22 years of age and Shushila 20. As Govinda was born to Ramprasad and Rampyary in their old age, Govinda was brought up in all the luxury that money could provide and, when occasion arose, Ramprasad, Rampyary and Shushila swore that they were ready to give up their lives for Govinda. If Govinda asked for water, they supplied him with milk. So in very affluent circumstances Govinda grew up.

One day he went for a walk. He saw that a very young Sannyasin of his own age was sitting under a tree. Govinda wondered, "Why has this man become a Sannyasin at his age? This is the time to enjoy all the pleasures that the world can afford. It seems he must have been very unhappy in his worldly life. Let me approach him and know the cause of his Sannyas. I shall remove the cause and wean him over from Sannyas." So Govinda approached the Sannyasin and sat before him. When the Sannyasin opened his eyes, Govinda said to him, "Why have you embraced



Sannyas? You are in the prime of your life. What calamity fell on you and made you renounce the pleasures of the world so early? Tell me. I would remove the cause and keep you with me as my own brother as I have no brother.”

The Sannyasin smiled and said, “All human relationships are based on selfishness and therefore I have renounced *samsāra* — the world —.”

On hearing this, Govinda laughed and said, “What nonsense is this talk? I have got loving parents and a loving wife and they are all ready if need be to give up their lives for me. It seems you had no loving parents. Come with me. Give up Sannyas and enjoy life while it is the time to enjoy it.”

The Sannyasin again smiled and said, “It seems you assume that I had no parents and wife as loving as yours and that I have come from a poor family, which cannot afford the pleasures of life. Know for certain that I come from a very very rich family and I had parents and a wife who professed love for me as humans can love and still I realised that all human relations are selfish. Such is my experience.”

Said Govinda, “As against your experience, I have got my experience and as I have already told you my parents and wife are ready to give up their lives, if need be, for me. How can I consider them selfish? Prove to me what you say.”

The Sannyasin replied, “It is all right to talk of giving up one’s life for the sake of others, but when the occasion arises all recede and nobody is prepared to do so. In talk it seems good, nay, wonderful, but it is all a mirage. Man swears doubly by God to do a certain thing when he is fully confident that he will never be asked to do that thing.”

Govinda challenged, “Give me proof of what you say, otherwise I cannot believe it. It seems you are deluded. And if you prove to me what you say I will follow you.”

The Sannyasin assured, “You have asked for proof and proof you shall have. Are you ready to do what I say?”

Govinda answered in the affirmative. The Sannyasin told him of a yogic *kriyā* — practice — and informed him that in doing it he would fall down and people would think that he was dead, but all the while he would be conscious. The Sannyasin added, “Hear what people say and I shall also come to your place. Give me your address. See what happens.”

Govinda gave his address to the Sannyasin and went home. He was very eager to test the truth of what the Sannyasin had said. He was cocksure that it would turn out to be false and that he would be able to wean over the Sannyasin from his Sannyas. He was also confident that his parents and wife would be ready to give up their lives if the occasion arose.

The moment he entered the house he put into practice the yogic *kriyā* which the Sannyasin had taught him. As a result, he fell down. His parents and wife at once rushed to the place where he had fallen and shouted at the top of their voices, “What ails you? Please say at once.” As there was no reply from Govinda they called a doctor, a Vaidya and a Hakim. There was no question of money. They only wanted that Govinda should be all right. When the doctor, the Vaidya and the Hakim came,

they said, "Please take whatever you want from us, but spare no pains and see that Govinda recovers immediately."

The medicos examined Govinda and declared that he was dead. On hearing this, Ramprasad, Rampyary and Shushila began to weep as loudly as they could. They struck their heads on the floor. The sky was rent with their cries. While all this was going on, the Sannyasin came and inquired, "Why all this weeping and lamentation? What has happened?" The persons assembled there said, "A great calamity has fallen on Ramprasad, his only son has died just now and so all this weeping and lamentation. It seems there is no justice. Ramprasad is a very religious man and still his only son has expired. Also, what about Govinda's loving mother and wife? In God's reign there is no justice! Such calamity to fall on Shushila who is a very faithful and *pativrata nārī*, a chaste wife! People talk of God, but it seems there is no God."

The Sannyasin said, "Why lament? I can restore life to Govinda."

On hearing this all present were overjoyed and said, "O Sannyasin baba, if you make the boy alive you will be more than a God to us. Please hasten and make the boy alive. At present one minute seems to us a year. Why delay?"

"Very well," said the Sannyasin, "Take me to the boy."

So the Sannyasin was taken where Govinda was lying. After examining Govinda he said, "Oh! the boy is dead." All present cried out in consternation, "We know the boy has died, what new thing have you said? You promised that you would make the boy alive. Now, if you are a true Sannyasin, be true to your word and make the boy alive."

The Sannyasin nodded and then asked for a bedsheet and a jug of water. When the things were brought to him, he covered Govinda with the bedsheet, put his hand on the jug of water, recited some *mantras* and sprinkled the water over Govinda and then squeezed the water from the bedsheet into a cup. Then the Sannyasin said, "Hear me. In Nature nothing is given free. It is Nature's Law. So if Govinda is to be saved, somebody should be prepared to give up his life for Govinda. He shall have to drink this water. Now, tell me who is ready to drink the water?"

Nobody answered. All looked aghast. The Sannyasin turned towards Ramprasad and said, "Well, father, are you ready to drink the water and give up your life for Govinda? He is your only son, he is young, you are sufficiently old and if Govinda is not saved there will be nobody to continue your line."

Ramprasad replied, "O Sannyasin baba! what you say is true but how could we help? It seems our past Karmas have overtaken us. Moreover, the Shastras say that a woman is fortunate if she dies before her husband. So please ask Rampyary to precede me."

The Sannyasin turned towards Rampyary and said, "Well, mother, you have heard Ramprasad. Furthermore, you are also sufficiently old, you have practically lost your eyes and ears. If you give up your life, your only son—the apple of your eye—will be saved. What say you?"

Rampyary replied, "What you say is true, it is a great calamity that Govinda has died, but what can we do? Everyone is bound by his Karma. As yet I have not done any Dharma. I want to devote the rest of my life to God and do whatever good I can do." So saying she refused to drink the water.

Now the Sanyasin turned towards Shushila and said, "Well, sister, you have heard both Ramprasad and Rampyary, what do you say? Your whole life is spoiled by the death of Govinda. How will you pass the rest of your life without Govinda? For a Hindu wife, the husband is all in all. You will be a great *satīnārī*, chaste woman, if you give up your life for Govinda. Are you willing to give up your life for Govinda?"

Replied Shushila, "O Sannyasiji, what you say is true, nobody knows better than myself what a great calamity has fallen on me. Just ask my father-in-law and mother-in-law, how dearly I loved my husband but the cruel Vidhātā has thought fit to take away my dear husband from me. How can we resist the Lord of Karma? I am still very young, I have not seen what life is. I want to see both life and world, and even though I am very very sorry for my husband, I am not inclined to drink the water."

After hearing Shushila, the Sannyasin turned towards all who had gathered there and asked with inquiring eyes whether anybody present was ready to drink the water and give up his life for Govinda. But who would be ready to give up his life when Govinda's own parents and wife had refused to drink the water and give up their lives for him? The Sannyasin smiled and said, "Well, what if I drink the water?"

All present at once shouted with joy, "O Sannyasin baba, what a strange person you are! Why have you wasted so much time and kept us in suspense? You are a God in human body, nay, you are more than a God to us, please do not waste a minute now, drink the water and save Govinda at once."

Again smiled the Sannyasin, and then with a jerk took away the bedsheet from Govinda and bade Govinda to get up. Govinda got up and at once fell at the feet of the Sannyasin and said, "You were right, I was blind."

Nobody present could understand what Govinda was saying, but, seeing that Govinda had come to life, they rushed towards him and shouted with joy, "My son, my dear dear son, my beloved husband," and so on. But Govinda had now realised the truth of human relations and so at once said, "None of you is my relative, my true relative is the Sannyasin, I will go with him."

Ramprasad, Rampyary, Shushila, his other relatives, all his friends tried to persuade Govinda to stay and enjoy the pleasures of life, but Govinda, having realised the Truth, declined firmly and went away with the Sannyasin.

VALLABH SHETH

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## STRAY THOUGHTS

### WHILE SEARCHING FOR THE MISSING PAPERS ON SRI AUROBINDO'S ACTION AGAINST BRITISH RULE IN BENGAL IN 1906-1910

(Continued from the issue of May 1974)

5

EVER since Sri Aurobindo's acquittal, Bengal Government had remained alert, if not frantic. The Governor, the Chief Secretary and the IG. Police, would read newspaper reports on Sri Aurobindo's new speeches and consult one another. The notings in File No. 205N/09 make entertaining reading in retrospect. The Legal Remembrancer would be consulted but now Mr. Chapman who must have seen the Chief Secretary's noting on him was no longer philosophic in his comments. Sri Aurobindo's speech in Beadon Square on 13th June 1909 came to notice. The IG held it to be seditious, and put up the local Police Inspector's report as well as the report in the *Bengalee* to the Chief Secretary, underlining the objectionable portions. Next was a report of a speech on account of the 'preliminary meeting, 7th August celebrations'. Both were put up to the Governor with the comment: "the language is extremely doubtful; distinctly immoderate; he demanded self-government in no uncertain terms and apparently for the near future." The Governor and the Chief Secretary were being pestered by repeated complaints from the Police and Government of India and, almost fed up, the Governor noted, "Please consult Legal Remembrancer quickly." Chapman returned the file with the remarks: "We cannot take any step against Arabindo Ghose on this material (police reports of speeches). If the article appears in the *Karmayogin*, let it be sent to me."

A record of a speech delivered by Sri Aurobindo in Kumartolli Park on 11th July, published in the *Bengalee* on 13th July 1909, was put up to Chapman and he records:

"I am of the opinion that this speech (read with Arabindo's use of the word Swaraj elsewhere as meaning 'absolute independence') is indictable under Section 124A, Indian Penal Code.

We may prosecute under that Section —

- (a) If we can prove that he made the speech (proof by evidence of witnesses who heard it); or,
- (b) If the speech or its substance is reproduced in the *Karmayogin*.

I understand we can prove that Arabindo publishes or manages the *Karmayogin*.  
(Sd.) E. P. Chapman, 20th July 1909."

Chapman followed up his official note to the Chief Secretary the same day (20th July) with a demi-official letter. It reads:

“My Dear Allen,

Arabindo has in his last speech in Beadon Square (published in the *Bengalee* to-day) resiled from his position in regard to the use of the word Swaraj. I have no doubt he has done this designedly (probably under advice). This move of his throws some doubt upon the opinion I gave that his speech in Kumartolli Square on 11th July is indictable; for if his aim is Colonial Self-Government, there is a precedent of the High Court against treating such language as seditious.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sd.) E. P. Chapman.”

Here Chapman refers to a High Court ruling given by Mitra and Fletcher in the Sadhana Press case declaring that demands for colonial self-government could not be called sedition, a ruling that had greatly upset Bengal Police at the time.

The Chief Secretary was worried at Chapman’s qualified opinion. He wrote to the DIG, IB Police on 21/7/1909:

“... We cannot prosecute upon the matter of the Kumartolli speech of 11th July, unless upon a much stronger opinion than this.

However, any day we may get a speech which contains actionable matter, and what I want to know is whether, since we seem to have so much trouble in proving anything through reporters, we can make Arabindo *responsible* for what comes out in the *Karmayogin*.

Have you anything more than what appears on the outside of the cover of the issue of 17th instant (July 1909), ‘Contributors: Srijut Arabindo Ghosh and others’? That alone is not enough....

Please return the file as it has to go to His Honour at once.”

The Police Intelligence Branch’s reply (signed F.C. Daly) on the same date deals with the query and incidentally refers to a letter by Sri Aurobindo to Barin, then in jail. Here is Daly’s reply to the Chief Secretary:

“I am not able to furnish any evidence that Arabindo Ghose is the Editor of the *Karmayogin*. Strictly speaking, I believe he is not, but he writes more than half of the paper himself.

In a recent jail letter to Barin he wrote of it as ‘the Paper I am writing in’ and went on to say that he was ‘putting so much Vedanta and Yoga into it as the people could swallow.’ He added, ‘Most people think it is my paper, and it is selling to the last copy.’

In the advertisement of the paper which appeared in other newspapers be-

fore the first issue, Arabindo Ghose is advertised merely as a contributor; but in the news columns of other papers, notably the *Patrika* of the 10th June (1909), he is spoken of as the editor.

Though I cannot at present give any evidence of it, there is no doubt that he is practically Chief of this paper and that a report of one of his speeches appearing in it would be submitted to him before printing. I am told he always corrects the reports that appear in the *Bengalee* and sometimes tones them down.

If I get a second steno-typist Sub Inspector (as asked), I may be able to get the speeches properly reported. No one man can do it *verbatim* unless he is in constant practice and a first class man.

(Sd.) F. C. Daly, 21/7/1909."

The much-harassed Chief Secretary then put up the file to the H. H. the Governor on the same date (21/7/1909), referring to the Governor's order of 19th July 1909 for a quick report as to legal action on Sri Aurobindo's Kumartolli speech. The Chief Secretary noted after discussing Chapman:

"Upon the whole, then, Mr. Chapman's opinion is evidently that the speech of 11th July does not contain matter indictable under Section 124A.

Even if it did, we should not be in a position to prosecute Arabindo for delivering it, owing to want of reporting.

I may point out here that we have failed again and again to prosecute on speeches; for even when there are two good reporters checking each other, it is seldom that they agree so perfectly that the Court will consider the utterance proved....

... As long as the Press Registration Law is not amended so as to enforce the regulation of bonafide and responsible editors in the manner recommended by us last year, we shall not be able to touch the people who really conduct newspapers. And after his success in getting out of the *Bande Mataram* prosecution Arabindo is not likely to make a mistake ...

It seems to me therefore that so far no offence has been committed, nor has anything been done to warrant preventive action under Section 108 of Criminal Procedure Code, and that Government of India will have to be informed accordingly.

Length of rope may induce him to cross the border line, or we may have to resort to other action....

The question is whether a reply should be given on this to Government of India's letter of 9th July or not, until the question of deportation has been fully considered.

I submit a draft, but I thought that we could not write without referring to the alternative of deportation, and all I can say is that the time has not yet come.

(Sd.) F. C. Daly, 21/7/1909."

Mr. E. W. Baker, the Governor, on the same date read the above and noted: "I feared that no prosecution was possible. Please expedite the other question" (deportation).

A letter was then sent to Government of India under No. D-504D dated 22nd July 1909. In paragraph 2 of the letter it was stated that "the speeches delivered by Arabinda Ghose were not such as to afford a reasonable probability of a conviction being obtained under any section of the existing law, and that the Lieutenant Governor was considering whether any further action in regard to him was possible...."

This "further action" was deportation under Regulation III of 1818.

We may note in passing that at this time, *i.e.*, the end of July 1909, the question of an appeal against Sri Aurobindo's acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Case was being actively processed. The Crown Solicitor's brief, with the comments of the Legal Remembrancer, Bengal, had been sent to Bombay for the opinion of the Advocate General whose advice, recommending appeal, was dated 10th August 1909.

On 26th July 1909, Bengal Government wrote to Government of India under Letter No. 517D. A complete set of the speeches, delivered following his acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Case, accompanied the letter as well as a brief summary of these speeches. The complete set of speeches has unfortunately been shorn of much of the little human touches by our research scholars. For example, the report on his Uttarpara speech (30th May 1909) begins and continues as follows before the actual speech starts and after it ends:

"The second anniversary meeting of the Uttarpara Dharma Rakshini Sabha came off at 5:30 on Sunday ... but the presence of Babu Arabindo Ghose was certainly responsible for the unusually large crowd which gathered at the Maidan. Babu Janaki Nath Mukherjee was in the Chair and amongst those present we noticed the following gentlemen:

Kumar Rajendra Nath Mukherjee ... (names of 15 others follow) ... Babu Ananda Nath Chatterjee, Secretary. Two amateur concert parties were in attendance. A Bengali song suitable for the occasion opened the proceedings of the meeting. Kumar Rajendranath (and 3 others) spoke in Bengali. They all expressed their joy at the honourable acquittal of Babu Arabindo as feelingly as the language at their command could help them.

The Kumar then garlanded Babu Arabindo. The garland was attached to a map of India on a handkerchief, which was presented to the Kumar by a Japanese friend of his. In garlanding, the Kumar said that the map of Mother India was a sure indication that she took Arabindo into her arms for doing her work with the least fear of any danger.

Babu Arabindo Ghose then rose amidst deafening cries of '*Bande Mataram*' to address the meeting. He said ... (actual speech). Mr. Arabindo Ghose having resumed his seat, the silence that ensued was only broken by the singing in

chorus of D. L. Roy's song 'Abar Tora Manush Ha.' This was followed by a sweet tune of Jaltaranga.

Two more speeches were delivered by two venerable old men of the locality in eulogy of Babu Arabindo.... He was then escorted to the palatial residence of the Kumar on the Ganges.... A sumptuous dinner was provided which the party took with relish. Babu Arabindo left for Calcutta in a carriage late in the evening."

The letter then states:

"The Lieutenant Governor has considered whether the speeches, though not justifying a prosecution for sedition, would not warrant him in proposing action under Regulation III of 1818 in regard to Arabindo Ghose. After careful deliberation His Honour has arrived at the conclusion that for the following reasons he would not be justified in doing so...."

Briefly, the reasons were:

(a) Arabindo has been preaching Nationalism as a kind of religion. It is the will of God that national ideals should live and grow in India and he has been specially inspired to proclaim them.

(b) His ideal of swaraj is not the independence to be obtained by physical force. He speaks of it as a sort of spiritual and moral independence. His expressions are so guarded that in a Court of Law his advocacy of strength and courage would probably be accepted.

(c) He has made many deprecatory references to violence and has exhorted the people to proceed peacefully.

(d) His exhortations for force, courage and resistance may give rise to acts of violence; but the risk is not very great.

(e) Although the language of the speeches is extremely eloquent, Arabindo Ghose is no master of oratorical effect and can only speak in English. His audience for the most part cannot understand his mystical religion and his creed of passive resistance.

(f) He has lost influence among the upper classes in view of his turn to mystical religion. Some regard him as a once splendid intellect now almost deranged.

(g) Very recently he was heard to say that he would give up politics after 27th September 1909. The reference to this date is a mystery.

The letter (dated 26th July 1909) then concluded:

"Sir Edward Baker will not hesitate to recommend preventive detention, should this be necessary. But as at present advised, he is not prepared to recommend that Arabindo Ghose should be deported under Regulation III of 1818.



Such action at present could only be founded upon his *recent* speeches and writings; and since these are susceptible of an interpretation not inconsistent with lawful aims, it is impossible to proceed upon them. Should on the one hand his style of oratory develop new characteristics or, on the other, should it appear that unlawful manifestations can be traced to its effects, His Honour will lose no time in adopting whatever course seems appropriate.”

The ‘Advice’ the Governor received was from Mr. Chapman. So about the end of July 1909, the deportation urged by Government of India was not accepted by Bengal Government. We may see here that the Governor acted in the spirit of the law as then applicable. It was Mr. Chapman, the Legal Remembrancer, whose job was to process the matter. We have earlier noted his unsolicited comments on Sri Aurobindo on the matter of appeal against his acquittal, his note of 21st May 1909.

Bengal Government, while taking this pious pose on deportation on 26th July 1909, was, however, processing the appeal against Sri Aurobindo’s acquittal. As we have seen, their high hopes in that direction collapsed finally with the High Court Judgement of 23rd November 1909.

Thus, by November 1909, Bengal Government had considered and dropped the proposals for:

- (a) an appeal against Sri Aurobindo’s acquittal in the Alipore Bomb Case;
- (b) a case of sedition based on his speeches; and
- (c) a case for his deportation.

But this was not to be the end.

*(To be continued)*

Lt. Col. G.L. BHATTACHARYA

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## THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

(We are glad to reproduce this article from the July-October 1973 issue of that interesting and instructive quarterly, The Samyukta Saraswat, which is published from Bombay and whose Editor-in-Chief is Prof. B. P. Adarkar.)

THE Bhakti movement in India has to be viewed in its historical perspective in order to gauge its strength and weakness, and to assess its potential as a factor in the religious life of the India of the future. This will also help to trace the continuity of the notion of Bhakti, right down from the Vedic times, and to correct the misapprehension that Bhakti is a late-comer in Indian religion, derived, as some scholars have suggested, from foreign sources.

The word Bhakti is derived from the Sanskrit root *bhaj* which, as is usual in Sanskrit, has a multiplicity of meanings according to the context, e.g. assign, divide, accept, resort to, observe, enjoy, experience, wait upon, serve, adore, and love. Somehow all these shades of meaning are subtly blended in the term Bhakti, with varying emphases of which we are ordinarily unaware. In common usage it signifies devotion (*niṣṭhā*), faith (*śraddhā*), and worship (*pūjā*). The secondary meaning of the word as separation or division (*bhāga* or *vibhāga*) although in the background, is nonetheless basic, implying reciprocity and participation.

The word Bhakti as such does not occur in the oldest Samhitas of the Veda, but all its implications are present there. The key-concept of the Veda is Yajna, the ritual act of establishing a mutual relationship between the deities and their devotees: *paraspara bhāvanā*, as the *Gita* phrases it. And *bhāvanā* is compounded of faith (*śraddhā*), imagination, perception and recollection.

*Bhāvanā* and *śraddhā* formed the core of Vedic Bhakti, the characteristics of which were virility (*vīrya*), energy (*tejas*), and intelligence (*medhas*), or in one word *śakti*. The deities (*devas*) were pictured as embodiments of these qualities in which the worshipper sought to participate. The tenderness of a dependent and loving relationship was occasionally in evidence, but the dominant note was one of parity of a type and a respectful friendship. Thus Indra, the chief among the gods, was invoked frequently as the "friend among friends."

The pose of surrender was not held in esteem; and the man of slavish mentality (*dāsa* or *dasyu*) was an object of contempt. In later times, however, for historic reasons, there seems to have come about a watering down and even a reversal of the Vedic values; and these came to be associated with a certain measure of impiety. *Śakti* was gradually eliminated, and *bhakti* glorified almost exclusively in terms of total surrender (*dānya*), thus making it difficult to recognise its kinship with its counterpart in the Veda and the earliest Upanishads.

It is in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* that, perhaps for the very first time, we come across the word Bhakti with its present connotation. The transition from

the old to the new is best seen in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which forms, as it were, a bridge between the two. Here, although the transcendence of the Supreme Being is sufficiently emphasized, the primary relationship between Shri Krishna and Arjuna is that of friendship and comparative equality, as in the Veda. The last verse of the *Gita* strikingly highlights their conjoint presence as the condition precedent to all spiritual and temporal welfare. It is noteworthy that Panini, the great grammarian (500 B.C.), in an aphorism explaining the meaning of Bhakti as loving devotion, refers to both Vasudeva and Arjuna as divine.

The cult of Bhakti flowered in the Epics and the Puranas and through them evolved as a popular movement. It is necessary here to remove a common misconception. Although their dates as conjectured from language and content may be comparatively recent, it is beyond doubt that their core, as the name Purana itself implies, is of immemorial antiquity. It is seen that it was the practice to recite these ancient histories during the great Vedic sacrificial sessions and the names Itihasa and Purana occur in the earliest Upanishads. It may thus be safely asserted that their kernel co-existed with the Vedas.

The themes of the Puranas as well as their modes of approach have much in common. From our angle, their distinction is that they advocate a theistic approach to a personal God, and "loving devotion" as the easy and congenial means. Each one of the Puranas gave prominence to a particular aspect of the Supreme Being, as Vishnu or Shiva or their numerous derivatives and manifestations. Behind an apparent divergence, however, they conceal an essential convergence. The *Mahabharata* is an epitome of them all, claiming proudly and not without justice that whatever pertains to the goals of human endeavour will be found therein, and that what is not there can be found nowhere else. And the heart of the teaching of the *Mahabharata* is revealed in the balanced message of the *Gita*. Some scholars incline towards the view that the *Gita* represents in some measure a reaction against the Veda. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Indian tradition can only be understood as a complex harmony which blends apparent inconsistencies in a larger perspective (*samanvaya*). As the *Mahabharata* declares: The Veda is to be interpreted in the light of the Itihasas and Puranas, if narrowness of vision is to be avoided.

The *Bhagavata Purana* is the *locus classicus* of the Bhakti canon. Although its terminology is Vaishnava in complexion, its principles are acceptable to all Bhaktas, who may all be called Bhagavatas, irrespective of whether they worship God (*bhagavān*) as Vishnu or Shiva or in any other form. The antiquity of the Bhagavata persuasion can be judged from the inscription on the Garuda column erected by the Greek envoy Heliodorus at Besnagar (2nd century B.C.) in which he describes himself as a "Parama Bhagavata, the worshipper of Vasudeva, the god of gods." The implications of this have to be reckoned with when assessing the opinion of comparative scholars that the *Bhagavata Purana* is the most recent of the Puranas, composed as late as the 7th or 8th century A.D.

It is of interest to note that the Bhagavata says that Bhakti was born in Dravida

(Tamilnad). As a matter of fact, some of the sources of popular Bhakti are to be looked for in early Tamil literature. We see here parallel streams of Vaishnava and Shaiva devotion, each tradition claiming a galaxy of mystics and saints who flourished in the 7th and 8th centuries and even earlier. They were mostly wandering singers drawn from all classes and ranks of society, who loved God to the point of madness, and praised Him in devotional lyrics composed in the mother-tongue. In due course they were followed by philosophic commentators who built up the theistic systems of thought.

The Vaishnava saints, known as Alwars and traditionally twelve in number, bridge the gap between the *Bhagavad Gita* and Ramanuja. The greatest of them were Nam-malwar and Tirumangai Alwar. The collected hymns of the Alwars, known as *Nalayira Prabandham*, are eulogized as the Tamil Vedas. Along with the Upanishads, it forms the joint basis of the Vishishtadwaita system: *Ubhaya Vedanta*.

Corresponding to the Alwars, we have the Nayanmars in Shaivism, most celebrated among whom were Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manikkavachagar. Towards the end of the tenth century, their hymns were compiled into a single collection *Tirumurai* by Nambiandar Nambi, including the *Tevaram* of the first three and the *Tiruvachagam* of the last. Between them, the *Tirumurai* and the *Prabandham* contain some of the most moving devotional poetry in the world.

About this time, the main tenets of the Bhakti school seem to have been formulated in the *Bhakti Shstras* like those attributed to Narada and Shandilya. In the twelfth century, the philosophy of Bhakti was placed on a firm foundation by Ramanuja, claiming to follow an ancient and unbroken tradition. His lead was followed, each with his own distinction, by Madhva, Nimbarka and Vallabha. It must not be forgotten that Shankara, notwithstanding his strong leanings towards Jnana and Sannyasa, was himself a great Bhakta and wrote some of the most beautiful and impassioned Stotras in the Sanskrit language, whose vogue has been so great that they must be counted among the props of the popular Bhakti movement. It may be added here that in the thirteenth century Meykandar systematised the Shaiva Siddhanta, while a little earlier Basaveswara expounded his reforming doctrine known as Virashaivism. He was followed by a great line of Shivabhaktas like Allamma Prabhu and Akka Mahadevi, all belonging to Karnataka. Their Vachanas and songs are inspired by the most intense faith and devotion.

The spread of the Bhakti cult from the South to the North was heralded by its early flowering in Maharashtra, which lies midway. It was in 1290 that the great mystic and saint Jnanadev wrote his *Jñāneśvarī*, an elaborate exposition of the *Gita* in Marathi verse, which has become the Bible of Marathi devotion. He also composed numerous Abhangs in honour of God Vitthal of Pandharpur, initiating a school of devotion which is flourishing even today. The tradition includes stars of the first magnitude like Namdev, Eknath and Tukaram.

It is of interest to note that the deity Vitthal is believed to have been imported into Maharashtra from Karnataka. Vitthala was the objective of Purandaradas's fervent

adoration. In his wake followed a brilliant succession of saintly singers (*dāsaparam-parā*) comprising Kanakadas, Vijayadas, Gopaldas, Jagannathadas and others less well known, who constitute the pride of Karnataka.

In the North, the flood-tide of Bhakti was released in the early fifteenth century by Ramananda, a Vaishnava Brahmin from the South who founded a Math in Banaras and composed hymns in the language of the people. He had numerous disciples among whom was the famous Kabir, born a Muslim. The Bhakti movement in the North was predominantly Vaishnava in complexion, and the broad division was between the devotees of Rama and those of Krishna, subdivided into many groups or Panths, including those who used names like Rama or Hari to denote the Supreme Being, but like Kabir or Nanak preferred to dwell on Him as formless, the Nirguna-panthis.

In the direct line from Ramananda was Tulsidas, author of the celebrated *Ram-charitmanas*, Nabhadas, the author of the *Bhaktamala*, a work narrating the lives of the saints, and Malukdas. Among well-known Krishnabhaktas were Surdas in U.P., Chandidas in Bengal, Vidyapati in Bihar, Mirabai in Rajasthan and Narsinha Mehta in Gujarat. Foremost among the Bhaktas in Bengal must be mentioned the God-intoxicated Chaitanya, who was influenced by the writings of Nimbarka and Vishnu-swami as well as by the songs of Chandidas and Vidyapati.

Thus the mighty river of Bhakti has flowed through the centuries gathering force and volume in its course, rejuvenating the life of the spirit which had got choked under a load of rituals and observances which had survived their meaning, and a forest of invidious distinctions like those of caste and creed. In its progress it has thrown up many humble men of genuine spiritual attainment whose names are unknown beyond their small circles of influence, and occasionally a mighty genius like Thyagaraja. All honour to them: *sab santan ki jai!* (Glory to all saints!)

So much for the past of the Bhakti movement in India. We may conclude with a few after-thoughts. Bhakti has been an important ingredient in all religions, emotional intensity serving as a unifying factor in experience. Although any type of emotion might serve equally, the most common has been that of total and one-sided dependence. As A.N. Whitehead has pointed out, even in Christian theology and the patterns of devotion, the ancient concept of a Divine Despot and a slavish Universe has been dominant. In India the orthodox relation of the devotee to God has been that of master and servant (*dāsya*), by and large. Total self-abasement and a certain unworldliness have been the *sine qua non* among the Bhakta's qualifications. Intellect has been the principal casualty. It may be said that devotion and intellect have not been on talking terms for many centuries.

But today, all the world over, the pattern of values and of human allegiances is fast changing; and servility is felt to be as much out of place in religion as in politics. If religion is to survive, it must find a place for manly independence and self-respect, vigour of intellect and zeal for the world's work (in a word: *śakti*) as integral elements in religious discipline. There is such a thing as spiritual Swarajya also.

It is India's distinction to have recognised that by whatever path men choose to approach God, He welcomes them by that very path, as all paths are His. The times seem to demand as a corrective a return to the virile mood of the Veda, with its famous Gayatri Mantra praying for stimulation of intelligence.

Such an attitude, despite appearances, is implicit in the *Gita* also, whose theme is the restoration of Arjuna's lost manliness. The laying down of the bow and the taking up of it again are symbolic: the tensed bow has always signified the energy of the active intellect. The *Gita* re-established the vanished dialogue between devotion and intellect, between surrender and independence. It appropriately concludes on the note that the ultimate good can result only from the indivisible association of both: Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and Partha, the mighty wielder of the bow (*dhanurdhara*); Divinity (*Nārāyaṇa*) and Humanity (*nara*).

K. GURU DUTT. I. A. S. (Retd.)

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# **SRI AUROBINDO AND HENRI BERGSON: TWO VIEWS ON EVOLUTION**

**A PAPER READ AT A CONFERENCE IN HONOUR OF SRI  
AUROBINDO'S BIRTH CENTENARY ON AUGUST 15, 1972**

THE idea of evolution was the great discovery of the 19th century, which left few minds indifferent. It coloured the temper of a whole epoch and determined the direction in which thought and experience were to move definitively. This truth has become so much a part of our thinking today that it is hardly possible to consider an issue except within this general framework: issues acquire their full significance and validity only when considered *sub specie evolutionis*. Some of the most eminent of contemporary philosophers, whether in India or in the West, have made such attempts and there has resulted a great crystallisation of thought and experience on the subject. Prof. Julian Huxley has very rightly stated that the fact of evolution was bound to act as "the central germ or living template of a new dominant thought-organization". Of these several evolutionary philosophies, the most complex and the most enriching is the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, to commemorate whose birth centenary we have gathered here. We would have wished to take a few of the salient features of his theory of evolution and offer a comparison, in the hope of promoting a deeper understanding of the problem, with the views of some of the most creative philosophers from the West. But since the scope of the present paper is limited, we shall restrict ourselves to effecting this very brief comparison with the most original and stimulating of the early evolutionists, Henri Bergson, and shall be content to make passing allusions to Père Teilhard de Chardin and Julian Huxley.

At the time when Sri Aurobindo and Bergson considered the problem of evolution, the ideas generally accepted on the subject were: mutation of species by natural selection, necessity of adaptation to environment. Briefly, evolution was considered as resulting from a process of action and reaction with external factors. The problem was thus viewed from a mechanistic point of view. What characterises, however, the basic orientation of Sri Aurobindo and Bergson is a total change of perspective. They do not consider the process of evolution on the basis of its external manifestations but seek to know the profound inner significance of the entire movement: evolution is seen not in terms of the 'without', but in terms of the 'within', the unseen real that is its secret origin and its moving force. There is an outer apparatus of form and species, there is an inner content of spiritual creativity and meaningfulness: it is this latter that the two philosophers seek to discover.

We shall present here just a few elements of some of the more interesting points of comparison.

1. The first point to be noted is that both Sri Aurobindo and Bergson affirm that

evolution is essentially a fact of spiritual creativity and not merely an empirical phenomenon. Thus they attribute primacy to consciousness, with the difference that this primacy is, for Sri Aurobindo, absolute. It must be remembered, however, that consciousness is given, by each one, a different range of meaning. The spiritual evolution is for Sri Aurobindo distinctly teleological. Bergson, in rejecting mechanism, rejects also teleology but a note of finalism comes in retrospectively, though even at that later stage it is present more by implication than as explicit avowal.

It is interesting to observe that both Bergson and Sri Aurobindo evince very characteristic initial attitudes on the subject of evolution. Bergson has a most vivid awareness of the "unforeseen novelty" in creation; whereas Sri Aurobindo feels a profound attraction towards the dimension of the prospective in evolution, for the infinitely richer possibilities of the future that await man. The exploration of the prospective, of the ranges of experience that lie ahead, their characterisation, the means of reaching out to them and actualising them — this is what Sri Aurobindo essentially seeks to do. Bergson also feels the pull of the future when he considers the place of man in the total process of evolution. But by virtue of both his training and his temperament, there is in him no urge to personally explore this dimension of the prospective. He feels only a great attraction for it and foresees its general character.

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

2. Both Bergson and Sri Aurobindo consider the creative force behind evolution as being a conscious, cosmic reality. Could we establish a correspondence between the 'élan vital' of the former and the triune reality of Sachchidananda (Existence,



Consciousness-Force, Bliss) manifesting itself in the world of becoming?

It must first be noted that the word 'vital' is used by Bergson with a certain amount of fluidity. In his work, *Creative Evolution*, it denotes a biological reality and it rests within the framework of a philosophy of nature. But as evolution itself progresses, the term receives a more ample definition and it refers to the spiritual in reality. This fluidity of terminology is to be regretted but must, however, be taken due cognisance of. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, distinguishes the different levels of evolution with complete clarity, as constituting an ascending scale of values within the framework of an organic totality. He makes use of a special and distinct terminology to denote each level of evolution and thus avoids the overlapping and ambiguity that we find in Bergson on this point.

If we might be permitted here a brief digression, we would like to offer a pertinent clarification. In most studies on Bergson by Indian scholars, his philosophy is considered as being merely 'vitalistic'. We should, however, draw attention to the fact that there is a very distinct evolution in this philosophy of evolution. Evolution as a biological process is the *point de départ* of Bergson, but as evolution itself progresses, it is enriched by other dimensions of reality. In the latter part of the book, *Creative Evolution*, this begins to become evident and one breathes already, one might say, a spiritual air! Between this work and the work which marks the point of culmination, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, there is an important collection of lectures delivered by Bergson and brought out under the title *L'Énergie Spirituelle*. It marks the transition, in very clear terms, between evolution viewed within a biological framework and evolution as possessing a spiritual significance and purpose. Unfortunately, this work has yet to be translated into English: it remains accessible only in the original French.

The right conclusion, therefore, is that the '*élan vital*' corresponds not to one but to several levels of Sachchidananda manifesting in the world of becoming. The reality to which the two philosophers refer is that of a conscious spiritual force, which creates for the sheer joy of creation, thus expressing the supreme felicity inherent in it.

We may observe here that Sri Aurobindo elaborates at great length on how these levels within the organic totality interact with one another and how they stand related to the whole. If we may use, for this purpose, a term from contemporary Western philosophy, this 'structurisation' of the whole is a complex, multi-dimensional fact. The two primary dimensions that can be discerned are the upward and the inward. The interaction of these two at various levels would give rise to a host of further dimensions. This fact of an organic totality in which can be discerned various levels of experience constituting an ascending scale of values, the highest being that of a complete integration of knowing, feeling and willing, would be a most interesting subject for further study.

3. Bergson and Sri Aurobindo affirm an important difference in the actual process which creative evolution pursues. For the former, evolution takes place along divergent lines. At the origin, different tendencies exist in a state of interpenetration

and they later diverge and become distinct. Bergson gives the analogy of the shell that bursts: there are divergent directions in which creative activity proceeds and the degradation of this movement is what he calls 'matter'. For Sri Aurobindo, the key-word is convergence. The one reality manifests through different levels — from matter to life, from life to mind, from mind to spirit — to recover at the summit of evolution the real plenitude that is inherent in it. This implies, in fact, two movements — that of a prior involution of the spiritual creative force in the successive terms of existence and, subsequently, an evolution upward out of the lower terms and into the higher ones. For, Sri Aurobindo offers the Vedantic solution that if consciousness were not involved in matter, it could not evolve out of it. Its latent involvement is necessary to a plausible explanation of the process as a whole. Evolution proceeds from one level to the next higher level by a process of widening, heightening and integration of consciousness. The movement is thus spiral and results in a transformation of the lower into the higher, the former is not eternally relegated to an inferior status and possibility but is taken up by the next higher level, and there assimilated and transformed. This principle of integration gives a cohesiveness and validity to the entire process of evolution as visualised by Sri Aurobindo. Bergson, no doubt, gives the analogy of the 'snow-ball,' which gathers all experience unto itself but this is at best a feeble attempt at integration. Père Teilhard de Chardin, who considers with Sri Aurobindo the process of evolution to be convergent, talks in a similar vein of 'un enroulement organique sur soi-même' (an organic coiling upon oneself). In both cases, the necessity of integration of different levels of evolution is keenly felt but the problem has not received adequate elucidation. At the hands of Sri Aurobindo, however, the principle of integration receives a very special consideration and its various implications are elaborately worked out.

4. Sri Aurobindo and Bergson maintain that evolution does not terminate with man and that it continues far beyond his present status. However, man occupies in the total process a position of critical importance. For with him, a radical change in the process itself of evolution comes into effect. It is not necessary to create other species, for the form no longer limits the potentiality of further creation. Evolution is thus pursued within the being and consciousness of man. At one stage, evolution aimed at the acquisition of a greater knowledge of and a fuller mastery over the external reality; but at the present stage of man, evolution tends towards a growth and plenitude of consciousness itself — a plenitude that means joy, freedom, totality. This would be a level of consciousness *qualitatively* different to that of the mental level, which is our present possession. Bergson visualises this further extension by use of a general term 'supraconsciousness' (supra-consciousness), whereas Sri Aurobindo distinguishes a whole ascending hierarchy of levels, which culminates in what he terms 'the supermind', and which is essentially characterised by the possibilities of whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power. He characterises, at great length, the quality of consciousness that corresponds to each of these levels and indicates the means by which man, individually and later collectively, can rise up to these levels and possess them in experience.

It is interesting to note here a corroboration offered by Prof. Julian Huxley on this issue. He insists with special emphasis that evolution tends, at the present moment, towards such a plenitude of consciousness. For the ultimate goal before man is not to arrive at a greater complexity of external organisation or a greater domination over the environment, but to realise an inner plenitude. In other words, the completest possible realisation of all potentiality, individually and, in slow stages, collectively too. Huxley introduces here a certain 'practical' dimension, which really comes to its own in Sri Aurobindo as we have had occasion to mention earlier. Huxley states that once it is recognised that this plenitude is the true and final goal of man, we would need to create "a science of human possibilities" to help us work out the long process of psychosociological evolution that lies ahead. The expression "a science of human possibilities" is intriguing! Sri Aurobindo feels for this a very special attraction and elaborates in this connection a psychological discipline of growth and evolution of the individual, which he terms "Integral Yoga". This is a fresh creation but it offers, at the same time, a synthesis of the essential elements of the traditional disciplines of yoga. It has a very special relevance for the contemporary consciousness — in the matter of terminology, methodology and philosophical basis of the entire discipline. This is largely due to the fact that the "Integral Yoga" rests within the framework of a philosophy of evolution. For Sri Aurobindo affirms that the evolution of the individual can be pursued only by remaining faithful to the processes that evolutionary nature has herself pursued in her movement upward. The two are co-terminous one with the other. The difference between them being that the latter takes place subconsciously, whereas the former can proceed in a conscious and deliberate manner, thus greatly accelerating the course of the movement. These processes of evolutionary nature, *i.e.*, the triple action which leads to the growth of consciousness — that of widening, heightening and integration — are systematised into a psychological discipline of individual self-development. It is interesting to remark upon the relevance of this discipline to the essential content of Huxley's expression "a science of human possibilities".

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

5. There is a final point that we wish to touch upon briefly.

When Bergson and Sri Aurobindo envisage a new quality of consciousness, or a whole range of future possibilities, towards which evolution tends, this further dimension of growth is seen in terms of dynamism and action, and not in terms of repose and status. It is an ideal of all-englobing, all-conquering spirituality which emerges here. The progressive realisation of this ideal is the vocation of all humanity, the individual being the forerunner.

To bring to a conclusion our brief comparison of some views of Sri Aurobindo and Bergson on the subject of evolution, we would like to state the following. What is of particular interest here is the fact that the characteristic approach of the two philosophers to the study of the problem has been different, for each has essentially pursued the line of seeking represented by the philosophical tradition to which he was born. Bergson devoted the larger part of his energies to studying the scientific aspect of the problem of evolution, whereas Sri Aurobindo's chief concern was a profound inner exploration of the higher levels of consciousness towards which evolution progresses. And yet, and therein lies a deep significance, in spite of this difference in the line of approach, there is a firm ground of sympathy with regard to some of the major issues. What the two philosophers essentially impart to us is a rare optimism about the future destiny of man — a future towards which he tends, knowingly or unknowingly. Sri Aurobindo offers us, additionally, the possibility of doing so in full awareness of both the process and the goal and of making the movement forward a fully conscious endeavour. This optimism does not merely call for a facile acceptance but requires a kind of spiritual heroism, that gives us the courage to feel out for the future that is to be and to make an attempt to actualise it. There are very basic differences too between the two philosophers and these move us to further reflexion on the problem. Their mutual accord, however, strengthens our faith in their one fundamental affirmation, as a poetic phrase from Sri Aurobindo puts it —

“Earth's million roads struggled towards divinity.”

ASTER PATEL

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# THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of May 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

(1)

TEILHARD has many moments when he believes that his Cosmic Christ cannot be conceived except in an initial relation to the historical Jesus, even though, once we reach the Universal Presence, the individual who lived in ancient Judea is of very minor importance. His importance for Teilhard lies simply in supplying the religious consciousness with a starting-point for its arrival at a Christic universality. Teilhard once vehemently underlines this importance in an assertion quoted by Emile Rideau:<sup>1</sup> "While it is indeed Christ-Omega who maintains the universe in motion, on the other hand it is from his seed, the Man of Nazareth, that (both in theory and in historical fact) the Christ-Omega draws for us his consistence.... The two terms are intrinsically part and parcel of one another and in a Christ who is truly total they cannot vary except simultaneously" (*Christiansme et évolution*, 1943). "I find myself so placed that I cannot breathe apart from our Lord — and that I realize that without the historical and traditional revelation, our Lord vanishes" (*Ibid.*).

Here Teilhard proceeds from a capital confusion. Identifying Christ with Omega Point, he has slurred over the fact that the chief drive of his masterpiece, *The Phenomenon of Man*, as well as of all those writings of his by which he hoped to reconcile Science and Religion, seeks to establish Omega Point independently of Christ. Rideau,<sup>2</sup> laying out for us the different phases Teilhard distinguishes in man's approach to God, states: "Phase I, reflection on the phenomenon of man, leading up to a transcendent Omega Point, the universal centre that brings spirit together, i.e. God (conceived as uniting the world to himself, rather than creating it). Phase II, evolutionary creation, in which God is seen as the motive force of the universe and as revealing himself in it. Phase III, the Christian phenomenon, the Incarnation. Phase

<sup>1</sup> *Teilhard de Chardin A Guide to his Thought* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 531.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 503.

IV, the living Church. It is only at this point that Christ can be identified with Omega. 'Nothing now remains of the conflict that seemed, ever more dangerously, to range against one another the majesty of the universe and the primacy of God.'” Omega is reached on phenomenological reflection and is not necessarily identical with Christ. Elsewhere Rideau,<sup>1</sup> by way of a summing-up, says: “Omega Point, which reason accepts as God, is, for faith, none else than Christ in his glory, the head of the Mystical Body.” It is reason that finds God in Omega. In another place Rideau<sup>2</sup> speaks of “Omega Point” as “what is known through rational reflexion on the ultimate significance of evolution”. Rideau also quotes Teilhard directly. Teilhard writes: “... Christ (provided he is seen in the full realism of his Incarnation) is a perfect parallel to the Omega Point our theory led us to anticipate and tends to produce exactly the spiritual totalization we are awaiting’ (*L'énergie humaine*, 1937, in *L'énergie humaine*, p. 192).<sup>3</sup> Theoretical search and not acceptance of Christ discerns Omega. We may in addition remember that, as Rideau shows in his chapter on Teilhard's Phenomenology and as he<sup>4</sup> later reminds us, Omega, as argued rationally and without any Christ-presupposition, possesses “the attributes of divinity: personality, presentness, transcendence, unity, distinctness”. So there is no question of a historical Incarnation being required for the existence of a divine pole of attraction, personal as well as universal, transcendent no less than immanent, who sets all things in motion and finally totalises them.

What the historical Incarnation does for the Christian evolutionist is to give Omega a concrete certainty over and above reasoned deduction. But, for the evolutionist as such, for the modern consciousness apart from Christianity and face to face only with the majesty of the progressive universe, there is no self-evidence of divinity in the Jesus of history and, even if he accepts the Man of Nazareth as divine, he is not bound to him as the sole divine manifestation in humanity: there could be other Avatars and Christ is not the inevitable religious datum by which to feel a triumphant touch given to the action of Omega Point. Omega by itself will surely not vanish “without the historical and traditional revelation”. What will vanish is Omega as the Cosmic Christ whom Teilhard calls “Our Lord” and considers inseparable from the Man born in Nazareth. “Our Lord” vanishes only in the sense that, if one sets aside Jesus, the name “Christ” for “Omega” will have no *raison d'être*. If Omega, being cosmic, can be named “Our Lord”, there is no vanishing. And as long as Omega stands, basic Teilhardism, which consists in bringing a fully realised formulation to the more or less amorphous religious intuition of modern Evolutionism, will stay intact.

There is also the question: “Whereas Omega's existence and function, in Teilhard's thought, are independent of any Christian religious datum, can the Cosmic Christ stand on his own, needing only the Man of Nazareth for his seed? If there were no Omega deducible on its own, would the Man of Nazareth suffice for Teilhard to think of the Cosmic Christ?” We can draw from Rideau<sup>5</sup> a very positive answer by

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 528-9. n. 83.

Teilhard: "The Christian Universal-Christ would be inconceivable if the Universe, which it is his function to gather into himself, did not in virtue of some evolutionary structure have a natural centre of convergence from which the Word, becoming incarnate, could radiate its influence over the whole of the universe" (*Introduction à la Christianisme*, 1944).

Clearly, according to Teilhard, although the Nazarene seed has to be once present for the Cosmic Christ to flower, the flowering of cosmicity cannot automatically follow from that seed. This must signify that Christ's cosmicity as visioned by Teilhard is not innate to the religion built upon the historical Jesus. It must also mean that whatever cosmicity such a religion may attribute to Jesus is different from the Teilhardian vision — for the plain reason that no "evolutionary structure" leading to "a natural centre of convergence" — that is, to an Omega — could be conceived before modern times. So, actually, the designation — "the Christian Universal-Christ" — is a misnomer: we can speak only of "the Teilhardian Universal-Christ". And then the concept cannot refer to any possible direct flowering from the Nazarene seed. A Christic flowering from an evolutionary world-seed has been wrongly linked "both in theory and in historical fact" with Jesus. The mistake has been prompted by the function Scripture ascribes to Jesus of gathering up the universe into himself. But this gathering-up is not at all related to evolution and, if we are true to the spirit of Scripture, should never be related to it: the Parousia, the Re-appearance, of Jesus for that gathering-up can come at any moment and was first expected in a generation or two immediately after his death: it is essentially a non-evolutionary expectation. The Christ of Teilhard, except for the name, is rooted outside of Christianity.

Our paradox is not neutralised by pointing out that Teilhard, after asserting the inconceivableness of the Universal Christ without evolutionism's Omega, adds a counterpoise to suggest how "evolutionism and Christianity *need one another* to support and complete each other".<sup>1</sup> He writes: "unless some universal Christ were, positively and concretely, plain at the term of evolution, as now disclosed by human thought, that evolution would remain nebulous and uncertain, and we would not have the heart to surrender ourselves to its aspirations and demands."<sup>2</sup> And Teilhard sums up: "Evolution, we might say, preserves Christ (by making him possible), and at the same time Christ preserves evolution (by making it concrete and desirable)."<sup>3</sup>

The two scales do not actually have equal weights in them. "The term of evolution" — "a natural centre of convergence", as the first half of the passage puts it — is said to be "now disclosed by human thought". It is conceivable and conceived as an existence without recourse to Christianity, and it alone makes the Universal Christ "possible": it alone affords him ground for existence. The Universal Christ, on the other hand, has no say as to the possibility of this Omega: he contributes nothing to its existential status. What he is alleged to do is really to invest it with the features we would associate with a Christ universalised from an accepted human starting-

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-6.

point: we would think of it as a magnified human being with a grandiose appealing face. Absence of such a visualisable heart-moving divinity — a historical figure amplified — at the centre of convergence is what Teilhard means by evolution's remaining "nebulous and uncertain" without "some universal Christ" and by this Christ's making evolution "concrete and desirable". The meaning is clarified in a paragraph coming soon after:<sup>1</sup> "Only to the Christian is it given to locate at the summit of space-time not merely a vague, cold *something* but a warm and well-defined *someone*; and so *hic et nunc* only he in all the world is in a position to believe *utterly* in evolution — evolution that is no longer simply personalizing, but is personalized — and (what is psychologically even more important) to dedicate himself to it *with love*." Yes, the basic meaning is rendered clear, but to give it cogency Teilhard has had to obfuscate his own vision. He seems to thrust into the background the enormous difference still left between Omega's relation to Christ and Christ's to Omega. Leave out Omega, and there is no Universal Christ: leave out the Universal Christ, and Omega is yet there. The balance tilts tremendously to one side. And even the lack seen of concreteness and desirability or, as in the clarifying passage, of achieved personalisation and loveliness is more than just exaggerated: it is fundamentally imaginary. Have we not quoted Rideau as reminding us that Teilhard's Omega possesses all the attributes of divinity, not only transcendence and unity but also distinctness, presentness and personality — attributes which essentially save it from being "nebulous and uncertain" and substantially make it both "concrete and desirable"? No "vague, cold *something*" at the space-time summit of an evolution "simply personalizing" is located by the Omega-arguer. What is located may not be so "well-defined" as the postulated universalisation of a Jesus: still, we have surely "a warm someone", fully "personalized", and therefore capable of putting us "in a position to believe *utterly* in evolution" and to dedicate ourselves to it "*with love*".

Nor can we be taken in by Teilhard<sup>2</sup> writing in his *Comment je crois*, an earlier essay than his *Introduction to Christianity*: "By disclosing a world-peak, evolution makes Christ possible, just as Christ, by giving meaning and direction to the world, makes evolution possible." A parity is asserted — at the cost of logic. What is the meaning and direction given to the world? Simply the world's moving towards the disclosure of a peak. But, if Christ effects this, why say evolution leads to that disclosure? Why not just say: "Christ makes Christ possible"? A little before his assertion of parity, Teilhard<sup>3</sup> has written: "If we Christians wish to *retain* in Christ the very qualities on which his power and our worship are based, we have no better way — no other way, even — of doing so than fully to accept the most modern concepts of evolution. Under the combined pressure of science and philosophy, we are being forced, experientially and intellectually, to accept the world as a co-ordinated system of activity

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 156

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128. We have already cited the passage in an earlier article (*Mother India*, March, 1974) and commented on it, but not in full and not in the total context of the question involved in its terms.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.



which is gradually rising up towards freedom and consciousness. The only satisfactory way of interpreting this process...is to regard it as irreversible and convergent. Thus, ahead of us, a *universal cosmic centre* is taking on definition, in which everything reaches its term, in which everything is explained, is felt, and is ordered." Well, where does Christ come in to make possible this Omega? We conceive it by "the combined pressure of science and philosophy". Not religiously, not Christianly, but "experientially and intellectually" we accept Omega Point, the evolutionary "world-peak". And, if there "everything is explained, is felt, and is ordered", evolution gets its "meaning and direction" without reference to Christ.

Teilhard<sup>1</sup> even goes on to tell us: "It is, then, in this physical pole of universal convergence that we must, in my view, locate and recognize the plenitude of Christ. For *in no other type of cosmos, and in no other place, can any being, no matter how divine he be, carry out the function of universal consolidation and universal animation, which Christian dogma attributes to Christ.*" And here Teilhard<sup>2</sup> appends the footnote: "In other words, Christ needs to find a world-peak for his consummation just as he needed to find a woman for his conception." A footnote<sup>3</sup> on the previous page runs: "Whatever may be the precise positive content of the term 'supernatural', it cannot mean anything except 'supremely real', in other words 'supremely in conformity' with the conditions of reality which nature imposes on beings. If, then, Christ is to be *able* to be the saviour and the life of souls in their supernatural developments, he must first satisfy certain conditions in relation to the world, apprehended in its experiential and natural reality."

The situation is unmistakable. Evolution's Omega, conceived in relation to the experientially apprehended natural world, is needed by Christ as a *sine qua non* for his universalising work. He would not be able to do this work unless we posit a "physical pole of universal evolution" — and to posit such a pole we resort to science and philosophy, "the most modern concepts of evolution", and are aware of no dependence on Christ. Within Teilhard's own scheme it is illogical to think of Christ making evolution possible by giving meaning and direction to the world. As regards "possibles", no parity can be set up between Evolution and Christ. In Teilhard, the Universal Christ is rooted in Evolutionism and not *vice versa*. And, if so, this Christ cannot be rooted inside of Christianity. Our paradox stays unneutralised.

Perhaps it will be objected: "Has not Teilhard, at the end of his most famous book,<sup>4</sup> written about Christ: 'By a personal act of communion and sublimation, he aggregates to himself the total psychism of the world.... The universe fulfilling itself in a synthesis of centres in perfect conformity with the laws of union. God, the Centre of centres. In that final vision the Christian dogma culminates. And so exactly, so perfectly does this coincide with the Omega Point that doubtless I should never have ventured to envisage the latter or formulate the hypothesis rationally if, in my consciousness as a believer, I had not found not only its speculative model but also its

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp 127-8      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 128, fn 11.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127, fn 10

<sup>4</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man* (Collins, London, 1960), p 294

living reality'?" We may be told that this reference of Teilhard to the Christian dogma indicates the rootedness of Omega Point in the Universal Christ rather than the other way around.

But all we have here is Teilhard's autobiographical admission that he thought of Omega Point in the wake of his religious faith in a Christ who gathers up the universe's psychisms. What we must note in the first place is the word "rationally" when Teilhard says he has been prompted by the feeling of this Christ "to formulate the hypothesis". Omega is accepted because Teilhard has arrived at its concept by means of logic, by a rational reflection on the facts of evolution. At the end of his most famous book he<sup>1</sup> has clearly said of the need of Omega if reflective life is to continue to function and progress: "That is the postulate to which we have been led logically by the integral application to man of the experimental laws of evolution." And, if "the experimental laws of evolution" were involved, the logical process had nothing to do with the Christian religion. This religion provided no *reason* for Omega — and if Teilhard could not have reasoned out Omega he would never have accepted it.

Secondly, he accords so much importance, such primacy, to his scientific logic that when he comes to talk of "the Christian phenomenon" at the end of his most famous book he<sup>2</sup> tries his best to banish suspicion of a religious bias by assuring us: "As I am living at the heart of the Christian world, I might be suspected of wanting to introduce an apologia by artifice. But, here again, so far as it is possible for a man to separate in himself the various planes of knowledge, it is not the convinced believer but the naturalist who is asking for a hearing." These phrases unequivocally imply that the coinciding, in Teilhard's mind, of the Parousiac Christ of faith with the Omega Point of reason guided by experimentally found evolutionary laws makes for him no odds to the truly scientific character of the latter discovery. As a "naturalist" he would accept Omega even if it did not coincide with the Parousiac Christ.

Thirdly, we may well question: "Would he accept Christ if Christ did not coincide in his mind with Omega?" The answer can only be "No". For, he is an Evolutionist or nothing. He<sup>3</sup> has laid it down about Evolution: "it is a general condition to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must bow and which they must satisfy henceforward if they are to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light illuminating all facts, a curve that all lines must follow."

In the fourth place, before Teilhard formulated Omega he was not merely a Christian: he was also a World-worshipper. And he was instinctively a World-worshipper before he was consciously a Christian. In *La Table Ronde* of June 1955 Claude Cuénot has reported: "From the age of four or five — so he told us in a conversation (12 July 1950) — he already had a 'general cosmic sense (the consistency of the whole)'. And later 'the cosmic came to be concentrated in the human, in the Christy'."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p 291.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p 292

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p 218

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: His Life and Spirit* by Nicolas Corte (Barrie and Rockliff, London, 1960), p. 3.

Teilhard himself has written in *Le Cœur de la matière* (1950): "I was certainly no more than six or seven when I began to feel myself drawn by Matter — or more exactly by something that 'shone' at the heart of Matter. At this age when I suppose other children feel their first 'sentiment' for a person or for art or for religion, I was affectionate, well-behaved, even pious. That is, catching it from my mother, I loved 'the little lord Jesus' dearly. But in reality my genuine self was elsewhere."<sup>1</sup> Then Teilhard speaks of "this instinctive movement which made me truly speaking *worship* a little piece of metal" and he adds that in this movement "there was a strong sense of self-giving and a whole train of obligations all mixed up together and my whole spiritual life has merely been the development of this".<sup>2</sup> At the back of his discovery of Omega lay his pantheist tendency, his "general cosmic sense", to whose developed form the entire structure of his belief has been traced by him in the famous declaration we have discussed elsewhere<sup>3</sup> of his fundamental faith: "The world (its value, its infallibility and its goodness) — that, when all is said and done, is the first, the last, and the only thing in which I believe."<sup>4</sup> This faith "in a world that is one and infallible — wherever it may lead me"<sup>5</sup> is the background and basis, even more than the Parousiac Christ, of his search for Omega after he realised the essentially evolutionary character of the World he had worshipped for "something that 'shone' at the heart of Matter". The role of Christianity is really minor, if not marginal. Omega has its source beyond the Christian religion and deeper than it. So the objection raised has to be overruled on a number of counts.

In the face of our four arguments we may well wonder what precisely Teilhard could have intended by his palpably inapposite autobiographical admission about Omega. We need a bit of subtlety to see through it. On the one hand was his oft-expressed desire to equate Pauline and Johannine Christianity with his own concept of the Universal Christ. On the other was his occasional truth-sense that his concept was at bottom a novelty, as well as the fact-sense he had throughout his life that the Church looked askance at his Omega-Christ as a camouflaged Neo-Pantheos. He wished intensely at the same time to be regarded as assimilable to orthodoxy and to stick fast to his own conviction of what should be deemed orthodox. Naturally he endeavoured both to auto-suggest that his Omega-Christ was not un-Christian and to induce, by repeated Christification of Omega, the Church to take him as a genuine interpreter of Pauline and Johannine Christianity.

Our paradox has met with no authentic challenge. And it can be sustained no matter if Rideau<sup>6</sup> has a Teilhardian statement like: "If you take away from Christ the quality of having existed as a real element, the Christian movement collapses. The historic Christ constitutes an element of reality, of a concrete involvement in the cosmos" (Cuénot's notes of a conversation on 3 September 1950). Of course, the movement historically called Christian must fail and lose sense of reality without the acceptance of a historic Christ, but a Christ like Teilhard's should not require the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5

<sup>3</sup> *Mother India*, December 5, 1973

<sup>4</sup> *Christianity and Evolution*, p 99

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p 103.

<sup>6</sup> *Op cit.*, p 531

Man of Nazareth to give Teilhardism a sense of God's concrete involvement in the cosmos. And in fact we get glimpses from Teilhard of a different source for such a sense. Does he<sup>1</sup> not speak of "the absolute value of a cosmic drama, in which it is just as though God, even before his incarnation, were ontologically involved"? Has he<sup>2</sup> not written: "The prodigious expanses of time that preceded the first Christmas were not empty of Christ: they were imbued with the influx of his power"? Have we not Rideau's mention<sup>3</sup> of Teilhard's belief in "a spirit that since all time, but more particularly since Christ, has animated the world and man in order to advance them towards their transition [into the Pleroma]"? To be sure, everywhere here Teilhard brings in the historic Christ, but that is because he keeps connecting his Cosmic Christ with the Christian movement. What we have to mark is how in each case the Christic is extended backward beyond the life of Jesus and made out to be a spiritual force, a divine presence, from the beginning of the world, a cosmic *dramatis persona* ontologically involved and therefore "an element of reality, of a concrete involvement in the cosmos". It is as if there were already the flower of a Christic cosmicity at work prior to the life of Jesus and as if this pre-existent flower gave rise to a special seed of itself in that life and then became more intensely flowery. Thus, while the historic Christ is retained and even endowed with importance, the real Cosmic Christ does not depend on him for his seed and has his original subsistence elsewhere than in the life of Jesus and is connected with Christianity not essentially but accidentally — that is to say, purely because for Teilhard, with his peculiar narrowness of approach to a sense of divine world-wideness, Jesus was the sole possible God-Man and St. Paul's doctrine of a Christic Mystical Body as a universal gatherer-up gave the sole possible revelation of a Cosmic Personal Godhead holding all things together and enfolding all beings in His Light and Love.

Yes, the Teilhardian Christ, however Christian he may look, has really his roots outside of Christianity. Discerned in depth, he is basically Omega under a Christic nomenclature. Consequently, it is Omega who is in the last analysis Teilhard's "Our Lord". And it is with our eyes fixed on Omega and not on a Universal Figure enlarged from the historic Jesus that we can penetrate to the ultimate heart of an exclamation like the one in Teilhard's letter of January 10, 1926:<sup>4</sup> "If I cease to believe desperately in the animation of all things by our Lord, ... the world, that hitherto has held me up, will engulf me or crush me, or simply fall into dust in my hands." This exclamation means just that a world which is not felt as evolutionarily infused with Omega and drawn ever higher towards an all-consummating unification in Omega's personal no less than universal divinity is not the world Teilhard has always held as an absolute — "that of experience", equal to that which "Revelation" claims: "the transcendent God"<sup>5</sup>—and has considered wonderfully worth living in and adored ever since he was a child. To interpret the exclamation merely in the Christian

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 532

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 649

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>5</sup> Rideau, *Op. cit.*, p. 328 quoting from *Ecrits du temps de la guerre*, p. 278.

sense which at first it suggests is to read the Teilhardian Cosmic Christ on his surface instead of in his profundities.

A point necessary to stress here in order to de-Christianise "Our Lord" in the ultimate view with a glance backward as well as forward from Jesus, is that the Cosmic Christ *à la* Teilhard is inconceivable not only if the cosmos lacks an "evolutionary structure" leading at the end to a supreme centre of convergence such as Christianity does not organically imply: he is "inconceivable" also if the cosmos is wanting in an "evolutionary structure" maintained from the very beginning by a gradually formative act of God such as Christianity does not organically require. Catholic theologians seem ready today to accept the "creation" by God of an evolving world rather than of a world static and all-at-once, but they shy away from going the whole course with Teilhard in this respect. Thus N.M. Wildiers, D.D.,<sup>1</sup> discussing Teilhard's treatment of the problem of Evil, explains his case approvingly as follows: "We live in a universe of evolution.... In a world of this sort evil is no fortuitous occurrence.... On the contrary it is an essential aspect of an evolutionary process which has to pick its way through a maze of errors and miscarriages of effort. Since God willed to create a world that must grow to its completion via an evolutive process, imperfection and evil were bound to occur in this creation." The implication of Wildiers's concluding sentence is: God created an evolutionary universe by His will but He could as well have willed a non-evolutionary one. In other words, within the Christian sphere of discourse, evolution is not intrinsic to the very creation by God of a world. But is this Teilhardism? Teilhard<sup>2</sup> unequivocally affirms: "creation can be effected only by an *evolutive process*.... God cannot create except evolutively." And the reason why he does so is: Teilhardism departs from Christian theology in conceiving the "nothingness" out of which the God of Christianity creates. In orthodoxy, this nothingness leaves God totally free to exercise His will: it does not stand in the way of any type of world-making: it affords Him scope for an evolutionary or a non-evolutionary world. Naturally, then, that sentence of Wildiers has the implication we have read in it. But Teilhard<sup>3</sup> declares: "Not from any lack of power, but in virtue of the very structure of nothingness upon which he will act, God, in order to create, can proceed in only one way: by arranging, by gradually unifying, a multitude of elements...." And He can so proceed because Teilhard's nothingness, which is defined not as pure non-being but as "positive non-being", a completely dissociated multiplicity, will give only a small initial purchase-point for development. By a slow series of such diminutive holds evolution accumulates. Thus creation becomes a long-drawn-out continuous instead of an instantaneous single act. All in all, when we look backward from Jesus, we find Teilhard's Cosmic Christ in a context of world-beginning with an entirely evolutionist rather than a completely Christian

<sup>1</sup> *An Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin* (Collins, The Fontana Library, Theology and Philosophy, London, 1968), pp 142-3

<sup>2</sup> *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> Rideau, *Op. cit.*, p. 541 quotation from *Comment je vois*, 1948, No. 30.

theology. "Our Lord", to Teilhard, is not really identifiable with any aspect of the Holy Trinity in world-making action. At Creation as at the Parousia, He is a non-Christic Omega with a Christian exterior lent by the limited focus of Teilhard's religious devotion.

Doubtless, Teilhard wants to believe he can legitimately Christianise his natural World-worship and his later-developed religion of evolution. He cherishes the sense that the universalised Christ whom he parallels with Omega is truly there in the religion in which he was brought up. Thus he<sup>1</sup> writes of "the psychological process by which, ever since I have known myself (seven or eight years [old]) a certain obscure attraction for the Earth and Matter has, in conjunction with my religious training, gradually changed into a well-defined and all-consuming love for some 'Universal Center' whose type and reality are provided for me by the Christian God." But quite often Teilhard lets us have the impression that his Christianity is all his own and falls outside his Church's understanding of its religion even in its most liberal moods. As late as October 12, 1951, by which time several Biblical exegetes have with the Church's blessing expounded St. Paul's cosmic Christianity and, as de Lubac<sup>2</sup> notes, Père Emile Mersch, belonging to Teilhard's own Jesuit Order, has written "his books on the mystical body bringing out, in accordance with tradition, its physical and not simply its moral reality", and Pope Pius XII has himself issued an Encyclical on the Mystical Body to emphasise the more-than-moral significance of that doctrine of Christ's universal gathering-up of Creation — as late as October 12, 1951, Teilhard finds himself still playing a lone hand and moving under the suspicion of heterodoxy. For, he writes to the Very Reverend Father Janssens, General of the Society of Jesus: "... obviously I cannot abandon my own personal quest — that would involve me in an interior catastrophe and in disloyalty to my most cherished vocation; but (and this has been true for many months) I have ceased to propagate my ideas and am confining myself to achieving a deeper personal insight into them."<sup>3</sup> And in the same letter Teilhard alludes to his natural World-worship, which grew subsequently into his religion of evolution, as having been the continuous stumbling-stone for his ecclesiastical superiors: "What might have been taken in my attitude for the last thirty years for obstinacy or disrespect, is simply the result of my absolute inability to contain my feeling of wonderment."<sup>4</sup>

This feeling leads Teilhard along such ways of thought that the Christianity he preached fails to tally with any modernisation the Church allows itself. Whatever Universal Christ emerges from the sanctioned Roman Catholic theology of his time or even from Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis Christi* does not answer to the cosmic dimension and involvement of his Christ. Else, with all that contemporary authoritative religious literature behind him, would he write, as Rideau<sup>5</sup> reports him doing, to the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Two Friends* (Collins, The Fontana Library, Theology and Philosophy, London, 1972), p. III.

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit*, p 353, n 24

<sup>3</sup> Rideau, *Op cit*, p 257

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 626

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p 295, n. 49.

Abbé Breuil on December 13, 1952: "If only I were Pope for just long enough to write *one* encyclical on 'the universal Christ'?"

Nor is his isolation surprising when we see how his Christ's peculiar universality made the immanent universe more and more urgent in his view than the transcendent God in spite of neither having complete justification without the other. On October 16, 1947, he<sup>1</sup> writes from Paris to an American friend: "As I have been repeating constantly for the past year, the great event of modern times is the discovery that for Man, imprisoned within himself, there is a way out *ahead* (by self-development of something beyond Man), whereas previously the only way out we saw was *above* (by escape into God). It is the dawn of this 'faith in Man' that appears about to eclipse the traditional faith in God. Under these conditions, my conviction is that if 'ahead' (carried to the limit) cannot be understood without 'above', conversely 'above' is even less understandable without 'ahead', which means that the Christian faith can recover and survive only by incorporating faith in human progress."

Still more radically in the same direction is Teilhard's statement<sup>2</sup> from Peking on August 5, 1941, after the typescript of *The Phenomenon of Man* "has been under consideration in Rome (!) for the past three months": "Fundamentally, the only thing I believe in, the only thing I have chosen, is that one must believe in a Future of the Earth which will coincide with a 'totalization' of Humanity."

A "neo-humanist mysticism of an ahead",<sup>3</sup> with its vision "essentially pantheist because evolutionist",<sup>4</sup> but lit up in its depths by the onward attraction of a supreme "pole" at the same time personal and universal, an Omega Point pulling towards a future in which a super-organic super-conscious unification will take place on earth of a mankind converging upon a "Soul of the world"<sup>5</sup> that is both a Divine Centre and a Divine Milieu, a God who is, as Rideau<sup>6</sup> tells us in a phrase from Teilhard, "complete in himself while for us he is continually being born" or, as Rideau<sup>7</sup> puts it in his own words, a God whose "eternity coexists with a temporal act of emergence" — there, variously viewed, we have Teilhardism in its basic form behind the appearance of a pan-Christism wishing to be in tune with but actually divergent from traditional Christianity.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Two Friends*, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Rideau, *Op cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>4</sup> *Human Energy* (Collins, London, 1969), p. 67

<sup>5</sup> Rideau, *Op cit.*, p. 319,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*,

p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150

# LAKSHMI'S ADVENTURE\*

## A SHORT STORY

WHEN the noon descended on the suburban hamlet like an ancient school teacher and put the trees and houses and the tea-stalls under a spell of fright and when even the indefatigable pedlar of hot groundnuts kept temporarily quiet, Lakshmi would steal out of her house and peep into the temple from the shadow of the *Krishnachura* tree.

She liked very much to enter the temple — to run straight to the deity. But she was extremely afraid of the old priest. Being a pundit, he could not help asking a child, whenever he saw one, the meaning of some important word or the solution to some arithmetical problem. Besides, as the confidant of the deity, it was his duty, naturally, to keep the periphery of the temple clear of kids.

It was after many a noon that the priest had been found soundly asleep, snoring lustily. Lakshmi crossed over him and immediately touched her forehead with her right hand as a mark of penitence for jumping over a sacred being.

She sat down inside the sanctum sanctorum, before the deity, and gazed at the beautiful image and the floral decorations in silent awe. But soon she began to murmur:

“You know me, don't you, God? I am Lakshmi, of course! Good God! How many times have I tried to sneak into your presence, alone! But the priest would always find out. Luckily, he is asleep today. Well, God, does the priest snore like this at night too? How do you sleep then? Our teacher also snores — although his style is different — while we sit memorising a verse. It is rather funny, isn't it, but great pundits cannot do without snoring. Tell me, God, if I learn to snore, will that make me a pundit? Please, God, do not give me any boon in haste. I am not sure if I will like to be a pundit if I have to snore on that account.

“But I can ask you for a boon, can't I? Before I forget, will you please repeat what you told me in my dream nearly a month ago? Why I do not play with you — why I forgot you — you certainly complained of some such thing, didn't you? Believe me, I have been trying my best to meet you since. But what can I do if I do not succeed!

“Well, well, who has given you such a huge bunch of bananas — and with so many of them ripe at a time? How do you propose to eat all of them? Mind you, God, do not eat more than you should. One, two, three, four, five — there are twelve bananas already ripe. You can eat two a day. Oh, you will like to eat more, is that so? All right, eat four a day, but no more. So, you will take four days to finish the twelve.

\* From *The Crocodile's Lady and Other Stories* by Manoj Das, which is to be published by Sterling Paperbacks, New Delhi. Acknowledgements are due to All India Radio, Pondicherry, and *Akashvani*, New Delhi.



I am sorry, you will take three days. This is the trouble, God! I do not have any talent for arithmetic, you know!

"Yes, I wanted to ask you, can't you do some miracle overnight? How wonderful it will be if one fine morning all the people wake up with arithmetic clean gone from their memory!

"But, wait, God! Just do not say all right to that. Perhaps arithmetic is good, after all. Perhaps I'm not old enough, although I'm already six, to realise that.

"But, God, if you will be pleased to grant a boon, then grant that people should convey their devotion to you with less noise. The other night, towards the last part of it, I was dreaming of you when the prayer from the temple woke me up with a jolt. Prayer is good and good also is the gramophone which plays it. But must they send the prayers to you through the loudspeakers?

"Behind our house there is another shrine belonging to the people of another religion. They too would call you with loudspeakers. Tell me, God! Can't you really hear unless called so very loudly? I asked mummy the other day: 'Do you think, mummy, that Dhruva and Prahlad sang their prayers with loudspeakers?' Mummy thought a little and said: 'No.' And mummy always speaks right, doesn't she? Now I am talking so low and still you can hear all right, as I see. So?

"But, God, if I am wrong, you will please pardon me. If you are fond of noise, then you need not stop them only because I dislike them. To be frank, I am a timid girl. Noise frightens me. And I believe papa is no different. You know, he had a high fever last week. The neighbours played music at a very high pitch with the loudspeaker pointed towards our house all through the day. Poor papa wriggled in disgust. He took my hands and tried to plug his ears with them. God! Please make my papa a little more brave

"And, God, can't you arrange for some money for papa? Do you know what happened the other day? I whispered to papa that I needed a new frock. Papa told mummy: 'My daughter never asks me for anything. Since she desires to have a new frock I will buy one for her at any cost.'

"Mummy rarely goes out anywhere. It was after a long time that she got ready that day to accompany papa and myself to the bazar. She would buy me a frock and we would together enjoy the bazar and the people and the breeze by the lake.

"But, O God! We had just come out to the veranda when a tall, stout and terrible-looking man confronted us. With a sigh papa quietly emptied his purse. Do you know why? Papa had borrowed some money from that fellow. Once a week the fellow appears for collecting the interest, but he appears with a huge *lathi* in his hand. Papa says that the fellow has already collected as interest more than what he had loaned. Don't you think, God, that he should stop asking papa for more?

"I told papa: 'If borrow you must, then please take care to choose a shorter money-lender with a shorter *lathi* and a less violent moustache.'

"For your information, God, we did not go to the bazar, for who will give me a frock without money?

"I told mummy I had no desire really to buy a frock from the bazar. All that I wanted was to make a frock out of a torn but beautiful saree which I had seen lying useless in her trunk for a long time!

"You can certainly guess, God, that I lied to mummy. I had in fact seen a beautiful frock displayed at the window of a shop in the bazar which I would have loved to put on.

"Mummy sat down to make a frock out of her saree that very evening. She tried her best to hide her tears from me. Only once before had I seen mummy weeping. That was when papa was sick and the man with the *lathi* banged on our door. Mummy opened the door half and told him that papa was away and would return after a week. After the money-lender left, I whispered my surprise to her: 'Mummy, didn't you tell me that it was wrong to tell a lie?' Mummy answered: 'It is wrong. I am unfortunate that circumstances compelled me to utter a lie.' She then took me into her lap and said: 'But you will grow up to be a much better woman. You will not tell a lie under any circumstance.'

"But, God, I saw mummy, after a while, weeping secretly. And should I tell you what I realised then? My mummy might have uttered a lie, but she was never a liar. All the rest in the world may be liars, but not my mummy. She is above all.

"And you know, God, don't you, that if I told a lie in regard to the frock it was to solace mummy. However, I expect you to pardon me and mummy in case you consider our faults as very grave. I know you will be kind, for you are so good!

"But, God, if it is trouble for you to arrange some money for papa then forget about it.

"I am sorry, God, I have talked a lot. But I have not yet spoken what really matters. I saw you in a dream the other night and was so excited! But I could not follow what you said. Will you please, when it will be convenient to you, appear once more in my dream and tell me what you wanted me to understand? That is the boon I wanted. And if you would somehow lull the priest to sleep every day at noon I could visit you often.

"O God! The priest is snoring no more! Does this mean that he is going to wake up soon? I must be off then.

"And to remind you again, do not eat all the bananas at a time. I expect you to remember this. And did you say something? Oh, you want me to take a couple of them, do you? But why? Well, then, I will take. But no more than two — well?"

Lakshmi plucked a couple of bananas from the bunch and prostrated herself before the deity and came out into the open.

It was scorching sunlight outside. She had lost the sense of time. She had been too dazed to walk steadily.

Suddenly an angry voice surprised her: "Stealing from the temple in broad daylight, is it not so? Audacity!"

The priest was rushing at her. She stood dumbfounded for a moment. Then she began to run.

And the priest pursued her.

There was a pond across the road. Lakshmi had probably lost her sense of direction too. She dashed into the pond.

The priest's screaming had begun to attract people. They gathered on the road — their number rapidly swelling — and stared into the pond, amazed.

Lakshmi stood in the water, waist-deep, and held the two bananas close to her chest.

"Come out!" commanded the priest and "Come out!" bellowed many more voices. But Lakshmi did nothing except cast a blank look at the crowd.

Soon her papa elbowed his way through the people. Lakshmi then began to cry. Papa entered the water without a word and lifted her up.

The crowd commented excitedly: "What a daughter!" "Virtue personified!" "The issue is not a couple of bananas, but the character of the girl."

Papa gently took the bananas from Lakshmi's hand and handed them over to the priest and moved away from the crowd, holding Lakshmi in his arms.

Lakshmi did not speak any more. She had an attack of fever within minutes. After silently suffering for three days, she died.

Devout people who collected at the temple the next Sunday to hear the weekly reading from the scriptures were all praise for the deity. The deity whom they had nourished and sustained was alert indeed! How could anybody escape his vengeance after stealing the food meant for him!

Among those who participated in the lively discussion were the local leader who had pickpocketed the deity at the installation ceremony itself, and two of the trustees who had from the temple funds a regular supplement to their even otherwise fat income. Not being sure whether the deity had any knowledge of their deeds, they were most loud in their praise of the lord and hoped that the lord heard them all right.

The priest alone sat quiet. At last when all the people raised a slogan congratulating the deity, the priest felt as though the soul of the deity suddenly departed from the shrine and what remained behind was only a form, dull and useless.

"What is this, punditji! You seem to be having high fever!" exclaimed a *sevak* of the temple who happened to touch the priest. But the priest did not speak.

For the remaining days of his life the priest often mumbled a rather strange prayer: "God! Next time let this sinner be born without a tongue!"

MANOJ DAS

# AS LIFE IS

## A SHORT STORY

SATURDAY evening train. On top of that, the eve of Durga Puja. An unbearable pressure had been created in the Calcutta-bound train by a swarm of people returning from their offices or holidays. But fortunately Chinmoy had found a seat and that, too, just near the window!

Among the victims of that day's hellish crowd, he was very lucky. Comfortably seated and well satisfied, he looked out of the window with an air of cool confidence. In front of him, a rickety old man somehow managed to keep his footing, clutching the corner of a bunk, jolts and jerks notwithstanding. But Chinmoy was not concerned at all. The old man perhaps had been expecting every moment that Chinmoy would get up and request him to sit; but Chinmoy did not care a straw about anything.

After some time a slim, beautiful young woman boarded the compartment. All of a sudden Chinmoy looked back and his eyes were riveted to the woman's face. Perhaps the mild fragrant whiff of her light make-up also had a secret hand in this.

With speechless wonder Chinmoy gazed on at that face. Then suddenly there dropped from his lips, "Please excuse me, I am eager to know one thing."

Putting Chinmoy at ease with a smile she asked, "What?"

"Are you by any chance the famous cinema artiste Tanushree Debi?" Chinmoy questioned after a slight hesitation.

The woman eyed him narrowly, then with the flush of a tender, silent smile and a slight nod of her head she confirmed that it was she

"Do sit down!" Chinmoy stood up with alacrity and vacated his seat.

"Please sit!" repeated Chinmoy noting her shyness

Again there appeared the flush of a smile on her lips and her eyes lit up and expressed a gratitude mixed with sarcasm. But she herself did not sit; pointing to the vacant seat she said to that old man near her, "It is vacated, please come and sit here."

The old man lifted his misty eyes to look — through the thick lenses of his spectacles — once at Chinmoy then at Tanushree. A gentle smile flickered on his lips. Perhaps he was hesitating to sit; but the fatigue of old age pulled him down to the vacant seat. Chinmoy was a little shocked. The train hurtled on, continuing its journey as before.

And then Tanushree, pointing to the old man, whispered softly, "He is the famous poet Nimai Chakravarty." Chinmoy shot a glance at the face of the old man, who was looking out of the window self-rapt, and then turning back to Tanushree he enquired, "Is he any relation of yours?"

She nodded her head. But it was not clear what exactly she meant. Chinmoy, however, said rather guiltily, "If I had known that, I would have got up earlier."

Again there was the radiance of a smile on the woman's lips. Perhaps its light had also fallen on the old poet's face, but, his head being turned outside, one could not say definitely.

Now the train was slowing down. While pulling her umbrella from the rack, the woman smiled a little, looking once at Chinmoy, and began, "Please don't mind my saying it, but you have made a slight mistake."

"No, no, why should I mind at all? What is it?" Chinmoy quickly asked.

"Well, I am not your Tanushree Debi. I am Sharbani Sen, a teacher in Jadhavpur Girls' School." Then again with a sparkling smile she stepped down from the train.

The train started moving once more.

JOYKRISHNO KOYAL

*(Freely rendered by Gurudas Banerjee from the original Bengali)*

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# SEVEN LIVES

## A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

*(Continued from the issue of May 1974)*

### Chapter VI

#### Part 5

FROM the day Sadhana died, a tension came into the air that did not disperse. It appeared like a grey tautness that suspended objects and people in a cool, thick density despite the summer heat, settling particularly around men's jaws and neck muscles, tending even to haze their vision or mask it with a stark, bleached greyness in which colour and tone became muted as in a dream. Shortages began to appear, of food, of water, and even of forage for the beasts, while dysentery and untreatable wounds took their toll of the men. Yet neither Shankaradev nor any of his followers or kinsmen spoke of capitulation. Nor did any word of complaint come from Kamal Rani. For each one was determined to play history's drama through to the end and the source of the courage it took to do so unquestionably came from some vast reservoir in Shankaradev himself.

He walked among his people powerful, majestic and unshakable as the white lion within him, and with a sense of strength and inner purpose that transcended all limits of ordinary human knowledge. Once he was even heard to tell his nearest associates, who listened to him as spellbound as the Vaidya had been the morning of Sadhana's capture: "I do not live for victory or defeat. Nor do I care for life or death. In the battle that we will be forced to fight when we can hold on no longer, I will fight for a divine truth that seeks to permeate and enrich the soil of this earth as do the rays of the sun, so that it may live and shine there as the Divine One wishes. Indeed all of us will fight that this light may strike the dark beast before us in his heart's centre and do its work there as the Divine One would have it done, even though we, in the meantime, may be trampled into the dust of the plain. For it is not our physical bodies that must be saved, it is the banner of the divine splendour and the divine joy that must be carried forward and plunged into the very core of the adversary. To this end I live and to this end we shall fight, and in this shall be our glory."

So did the beloved King become more luminous in thought and bearing with each day that passed, while Kamal Rani too kept pace in her own growing realisation. Her days of innocence that Shukratma had spoken of were quickly passing and the goddess within was gradually coming forward for the final act.

From the Queen in her moments of solitary silence a white fire blazed at first like a candle and then more and more like a great wind-ruffled beacon that flamed from

the summits of Deogarh. It rose towards the sky and sent its tiny sparks flying out in all directions on the wings of the tireless wind — sparks of defiance against all darkness, sparks of life that like minute warriors confident of their immortality fanned out to bury themselves in the obscurity of matter. There they would plant their indestructible emblems of hope and faith, joy and triumph, not to speak of that divine gentleness that had the power to cut through the din of every sorrow, pain or terror. The Fort itself seemed frozen in time beneath the brilliance of that beacon—a little time snatched from eternity before fate and history would turn the page on Shankaradev's Deogarh.

Outwardly, the routine of the royal pair had not changed and the evenings still found them together on the parapet outside the royal quarters. To the observer, that evening too would have appeared like the rest with the two standing close together looking out upon the countryside and Kafur's camp on the plain, their talk low-pitched and interspersed by long silences. But it was indeed an evening of decision when much was said that had not been said before and much transpired between them that had hung back in the realms of unarticulated possibility.

During the first ten minutes, Shankaradev scarcely spoke, while all the hubbub of the day's activity sank away within him, and he became increasingly aware only of the white figure beside him, of her frail, indescribable beauty and of the utter tenderness of her nearness to him. For as she stood by him she seemed to him to have no physical bodily reality, but only that of a liquid, flowing column of love and delight in his presence. For her part, she recognized and welcomed in him the pure splendour of the white lion, the strength that stands like a wall before every onslaught, and the power of his synthesized wisdom and love that embraced all things in its passionate ardour. Once more their eyes met—and lion and beacon flame, passion and infinite tenderness, power and delicacy fused in the enraptured air between them. The invisible, multi-coloured flowers and butterflies of exuberance, that had withered in the black, noxious smoke from Kafur's camp fires, momentarily bloomed and fluttered again. The earth seemed to rest again in a great tranquil peace. And the crimson sun seemed to rejoice once more in the symphony of its setting.

Lightly she rested her head on his shoulder, their arms entwined, and a lifetime of love that was not to be was poured out in the brief eternity of a few seconds. At last he turned, held her against his chest and whispered, "Oh, my love, the time is so short. Soon we must start to slaughter the horses for meat." He felt her flinch but she said nothing. He went on. "But it is the water that will decide the issue. The elephants and other beasts will die from the shortage of it first, and then the men."

"We will fight before then," she answered quietly.

"Yes, we will fight," he rejoined. There was a protracted pause before he added, "And we will die in the pincers of the scorpion."

She did not move but remained perfectly still as Shankaradev continued. "Their horses move like devils in the wind. Their archers pierce the hides of our elephants till they flee the field screaming with pain, their heavy cavalry move upon us like

massed locusts, and Hindustan surrenders before the onslaught.”

“Yet it is Hindustan’s light and love and joy that must penetrate the hard heart of their barbarian technology.”

“With a little human sacrifice thrown in?” It was the lion smiling at himself and at circumstance—a curious capacity peculiar to that divine creature.

“Of course,” she said. “For without the blood of heroes upon the soil how would the little flowers grow?”

They laughed delightedly, and death fled to some distant corner from the offending sound, as the two laughed on, intoxicated and infected by their own mirth at the paradoxes the Divine One seemed to manufacture throughout his universe in such profusion.

But there was no matching jollity in the central tent of the Turkish camp. There, festered only the growing tension of a leopard who feels in its bones that the time of the kill is drawing near. For Kafur had had no news of conditions within the Fort. No spy had succeeded in penetrating its gates, and of course there had been no possibility of kidnapping the Queen as had been both the bluff and boast of his letter. And yet he knew. For he had retained the instincts of a predator and they did not play him false. His mind started to fill with vainglorious dreams. But they were the dreams of a beast that sought to acquire the gazelle’s airy beauty by swallowing the gazelle. He still dreamt of Kamal Rani and her soft perfection, and dreamt further of the moment when he would capture and possess it. He still wanted to trample and satisfy at once the strange, despairing passion she stirred in him when he thought of her—trample because he hated to feel such things, and satisfy because the passion lived a life of its own and cried loudly and persistently for its distant, exotic object.

As for Shankaradev, Kafur loathed him with all his heart, and dreamt, ate, and slept thoughts of his destruction. He loathed his nobility, the loyalty he inspired in his men, and the infernal pride that prevented him from humbling himself in surrender. He loathed him with all the furious envy of a man who hates and fears his own soul and everything to which it aspires in its unawakened divinity. Indeed he loathed him deep within the caverns of his heart to the extent that at some ultimate point his hatred metamorphosed into a terrible love whose bitter tears kept flooding into his metallic being and corroding it like brine. So he was more sure than ever that he would take Shankardev’s life with his own hands if need be, for he would permit no man to stir him to his depths as Deogarh’s king had done, and let him live.

Besides, beyond Shankaradev lay Deogarh, splendid, proud, beautiful and fabulously wealthy, and he dreamt restlessly and covetously of possessing it. For how many months now had he looked up at the regal towering rock with its grey bulk outlined against the white-blue summer sky during the day, and its black mass against the stars by night. He had felt the quiet defiance it emanated penetrate his animal heart until he could almost hear himself snarl like an irritated lynx. And he could



also feel in that same heart a light, indefinable exuberance in Deogarh's air that was foreign to him, and that, as with all things with which he was unfamiliar, he hated and coveted at once.

No, he had avowed time and again, Deogarh with everything in it would give itself up to him unconditionally, so that he could take Shankaradev's place and drink the nectar of his royal cup. All Shankaradev's enjoyments he would acquire as his own, all his authority he would assume, and all his treasures, material and otherwise, he would consider his own property rightfully gained by conquest. Once again his animal heart felt sure that all the panther had to do to become a bird of paradise—as also a gazelle—was to eat its meat. Only the moment of the kill remained, and that was close, the smell of blood already hanging in the air. Kafur looked forward to it with an intense pleasure, his muscles taut, his teeth bared, and the hackles on his back raised to their full, bristling height.

Within the Fort, Shankaradev had already begun the final preparations. To start with, he would not lead a starved and dessicated army into battle. He would face the enemy having each man replete with his last full meal, and each animal fat on the last bales of hay and sacks of grain in the stores. Nor would the King of Deogarh appear at the head of any desperate rabble. Each livery, each spear and sword, each saddle, bridle, harness and suit of elephant mail would go forth as though in the service of the gods themselves. And so for many days the confines of the Fort wore a festive air. Gay with thoughts of glory and a warrior's death, the men polished their armour and weaponry till the sun blindingly mirrored itself in every boss and metal spear tip. The mahouts washed and oiled the war elephants with special diligence and cleansed the animals' splendid sabre tusks till they gleamed. And the women laundered their finest clothes, for when one sacrifices to the Divine One one must do so in one's best array, and they would step into the fire of their immolation dressed as they would wish to be when going to meet the ultimate, all-powerful Lord of their destiny.

The Queen and Shankaradev appeared the most tireless of all, she ever more and more conscious of the white beacon that burnt within her and that fanned out over the countryside with its cool, all-healing fire; he equally conscious of the divine thunderbolt he must plunge into the enemy's heart with the manifest perfection and splendour of a divine act knowingly done. Yet to whom would it be known? To men and history and earthly opinion? Never — but to the wide air, to the divine spirit of the earth, and to the secret soul of man and God that knew all things in their true essence — a knowing that to Shankaradev was recompense enough, because it was the only knowing that mattered.

He became preoccupied with perfection. He would permit no stain to mar the final performance. In the small shrine of the Fort where his men worshipped, he had the palace priests perform a rite of purification, and incant:

“May the great gods grant that we may join battle free from blemish.  
May we be as Shiva's sword and armour in the fray.

May the conches of the celestial ones blow as our heroes fasten upon the  
enemy.  
May the Divine One, and all the gods of the elements embrace the warriors  
who have fought for them.  
May the great gods reward their steadfast defenders with immortal liberty.  
May each man bear the white sun, emblem of heaven's brightness, in his heart,  
And may no thought or act before the onslaught of Death's black chariot  
mask that perfect light.  
May each man and woman and child who is to die know that death is but a  
phantom that comes and goes like the hurricane  
But that the embrace of the immortals rushes upon the untarnished human  
soul  
As soon as the dust behind death's passage has settled and the darkness of  
its fleeting moment has passed."

So did the priests chant as Shankaradev had instructed them and inspire the people with courage, where no dimension of human hope would have sufficed, because in mortal terms there was none.

Shankaradev himself spent hours in meditation as he had never done before. Shukratma came openly to him now, as concrete in presence as he had ever been in the hermit valley, and the Divine One in the form of the statue at the back of the cave came also with the full mass of his dignity and splendour of compassionate power. The white lion too expanded within Shankaradev till its aura swelled into a great white sea — as Shukratma had foretold — that had no limit and spread to meet every horizon. In that sea the goddess of love and the god of an immortal ananda emptied their intoxicating nectar until the vessel that was the human Shankaradev threatened to burst with the ever-magnifying elixir and presence of its divine guests.

Kamal Rani, for her part, in the silence of her room, assumed the full panoply of the goddess. Young and beautiful she still seemed, and perhaps even fragile and transparent, but she emanated a stunning, silent power that would have made men quail had they been present to experience it. It was a power born of the white fire within her, and that now blazed out in its true and pristine fury. It was a fire that spoke wordlessly of courage as the gods know it, of beauty and brilliance, and human splendour as the heart and soul know it, of the love that accepts no price or reward, and of the sacrifice that sings only of the abandon and delight of giving.

The whole Fort tingled with Kamal Rani's flame as it did with the white force emanating from Shankaradev's meditation, without being conscious of the source of either. All the men felt and saw was that the King seemed to have a greater power of command than ever, and that everyone unaccountably felt a greater love for him than they ever had before. As for the Queen, she had indeed changed and some could not look her in the face, so deep and piercing had her eyes become, and so grave and stately her manner. Yet they were drawn to her by an inexplicable fascination, and

left her when they were compelled to leave, with strange indefinable intimations that stirred within their innermost hearts like unborn dreams.

Despite the metamorphosis in the royal pair and the solitude they required for it to unfold, the two spent more time than before supervising and overseeing every aspect of the Fort's life, their influence and presence pervading every moment of their people's lives. Even the elephants entertained visits not only from the King but also from the Queen, as did the horses, and most especially Vir Bahadur. The royal couple saw him almost every second day in those last few weeks, usually at night when there was no fear of attack at the lowest level of the Fort where the animals were housed. And towards the end it seemed that Vir Bahadur had gathered much that humans foolishly do not expect beasts to understand. For just as the instinct of Kafur had caught the scent of battle in the air, so had the proud and regal Arab — bred and trained over generations for war — understood that the day of trial for him and for his master was drawing near.

The steel of anticipated combat had hardened the soft brown warmth of his eyes. He no longer playfully vaunted his own beauty in showing off his paces. Instead, a subdued and latent ferocity lurked beneath his shining coat, his fluid muscles, his restless ears, and his nostrils that flared with the slightest tremor of excitement. An invisible spring in his body seemed to coil tighter and tighter with the tension, until four days before the gates of Deogarh were to open before their King for the last time, both Shankaradev and Kamal Rani, who had come as usual to visit the stables, had the briefest glimpse of the equine fury Vir Bahadur had been damming up within himself ever since he had had wind of the approaching dénouement.

It happened when a stable boy had been leading the horse back to his stall during the momentary absence of his usual groom. The boy had unnecessarily jerked the bridle while the Arab had been walking behind him in a perfectly orderly manner. The reaction to this insult, for so it was, was instantaneous. With one violent convulsion, Vir Bahadur reared into the air. He bared his teeth and rent the night with a piercing scream. His sharp forehoofs flailed out like flying spear points, and his head plunged forward with ears and nostrils flattened and his lips drawn back in a snarl like a wolf's. The boy released the lead rope and ran. And then it was over as quickly as it had begun. Vir Bahadur dropped back to the ground, recovered his composure and, like the perfect gentleman that he normally was, trotted back to his stall unattended, trailing his rope behind him; and remained there without further ado.

"So he knows how soon it is going to be," Kamal Rani said as she and the King turned to leave and go back to their quarters in the Fort.

"Yes. He is as unbearably taut as a bow-string, before either the arrow flies from it or the wood cracks in the archer's hand ..."

"If only he could gallop each day across the open plain."

"No, my love. He has nothing left in him for games or diversions. He has prepared himself for war, as the most beautiful of beasts prepares according to his nature

and has prepared over all these ages when stallion has challenged stallion for the leadership of the herd. He will not be satisfied until he has completed his dreadful task. Mean while," he added turning to one of his courtiers, "see that no one so much as approaches Vir Bahadur except his old groom, Ram Dev. We have seen that the horse is in no mood for bunglers. The same goes for the elephants. None but the more experienced mahouts are to go near them. They are all dangerous before battle as we have learnt and forgotten in the past to our cost."

"I will see to it immediately, my Lord." The courtier hurried off and the royal party returned to the inner confines of the Fort.

*(To be continued)*

BINA BRAGG

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## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Jesus the Jew** by Geza Vermes. Pp. 286, Collins, London, 1974, £3.15.

“JESUS was not a Christian, he was a Jew.” So wrote Julius Wellhausen in 1905. The proposition has not won universal acceptance. Ordinary Christians, when they have not ignored or rejected it, have been inclined to qualify it: either by maintaining that, although born a Jew, Jesus went beyond Judaism, or by asserting that, although *humanly* he was a Jew, he was more than human. Scholars, on the other hand, have tended to bypass the issue on the ground that it is no longer possible to disentangle the Jesus of history from the Christ of Church doctrine.

If Geza Vermes, Oxford’s Reader in Jewish Studies, is right, all these reservations may now be dropped. In his painstakingly researched, meticulously documented, cogently reasoned and eminently readable new book, *Jesus the Jew*, he demonstrates that the essential outlines of the historical Jesus are, after all, recoverable and that they reveal unmistakably the portrait of a particular kind of first-century Galilean Jew.

Dr. Vermes begins by ransacking the intertestamental and rabbinic literatures (especially the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Targumin and the Palestinian Talmud) for every scrap of information bearing on the religious and political circumstances of the time and place. One fact that emerges is the reputation which the North-Palestinian Jews had in the South of being religiously ignorant and politically volatile which helps to explain the mixed reception accorded to Jesus, as a Galilean, in Jerusalem.

More importantly, it emerges that there flourished in Galilee a certain kind of charismatic figure reminiscent of Elijah: holy men who cared little for law and ritual but who were master-practitioners of the art of prayer, on intimate terms with God, able to exercise supernatural power as exorcists, healers and wonder-workers. These were the Hasidim (such as Honi the Circle-Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa, known from rabbinic sources) who were regarded as “the willing or unsuspecting heirs to an ancient prophetic tradition” and “venerated as a link between heaven and earth independent of any institutional mediation”. It is among them — rather than the Pharisees, Zealots or Essenes — that Jesus belongs; for the most securely attested traditions concerning him witness that he made the impression of Elijah *redivivus*, that he seemed to have “authority” over evil spirits, and that his chief activity was the curing of physical, mental and moral sickness:

Once the Gospel report concerning his person and work is analysed, the secondary traits removed, and the essential features inserted into the context of contemporary religious and political history, Jesus of Nazareth takes on the eminently credible personality of a Galilean Hasid.

The question arises, however, whether Jesus was *more* than that. In the second part of his book Dr. Vermes examines, one by one, the more exalted claims apparently made by Jesus or on his behalf. For example, did his disciples address him as "Lord"? Very probably, says Dr. Vermes, but this was a common way of showing reverence to holy men and has no Christological implications. Did he claim to be the Messiah? Almost certainly not. (Though this is the view of a growing number of New Testament Scholars, the reviewer is not yet convinced.) What about the "Son of Man"? Here Dr. Vermes restates and defends a previously published thesis that Jews used the term only as a circumlocutional self-reference (to avoid, for one reason or another, the first person singular) which was only subsequently interpreted as a messianic title in allusion to Daniel vii, 13.

Finally, did Jesus claim to be divine? Definitely not, says Dr. Vermes. To the Jews of the time "son of God" meant either an angel or a human being "adopted" by God for a special mission. The Incarnation doctrine (as crystallized at the Council of Nicea) "would have been inconceivable to a first-century A.D. Palestinian Jew". Jesus himself would have reacted to it "with stupefaction, anger or grief". It "drew its inspiration, not from the pure language and teaching of Galilean Jesus, nor even from Paul the Diaspora Jew, but from a Gentile Christian interpretation of the Gospel adapted to the mind of the totally alien world of pagan Hellenism".

Dr. Vermes arrives at this conclusion as an objective historian, not to belittle Jesus, whom he admires greatly. He speaks of his "incomparable superiority" (presumably over other recorded Hasidic personalities) and remarks:

Second to none in profundity of insight and grandeur of character, he is in particular an unsurpassed master of the art of laying bare the inmost core of spiritual truth and of bringing every issue back to the essence of religion, the existential relationship of man and man, and man and God.

To substantiate this assessment would require an analysis of Jesus's authentic teachings, an "enormous task" which Dr. Vermes hopes to undertake in the future. *Jesus the Jew* is concerned with the status of the man rather than the content of his message. But, even so limited, it represents an important step forward in New Testament study which henceforth scholars, even if they do not wholly agree with it, will not be able to ignore.

It also poses a challenge to Christianity, though that may not be its primary purpose, or intended at all. The implied challenge is that, if Christians wish to return to the historical Jesus, they must also return, in some measure, to the Judaism in which he lived and moved and had his being.

*(The Times Literary Supplement, December 7, 1973, p. 1516)*

**Secrets of the Great Pyramid** by *Peter Tompkins*. Allen Lane, London, 1974, £5.

How clever were the ancient Egyptians? Very much cleverer, it would seem, than most Egyptologists would allow them to have been. In particular, their abilities as mathematicians, astronomers, geodesists, were far in advance of anything demonstrated by modern man until — shall we say? — the advent of Newton. The proofs of the advanced character of their knowledge lie encapsulated in the Great Pyramid of Giza. There can be no denying the fascination exercised on men's minds by this extraordinary structure. Its size and situation command attention; the precision of its construction suggests methods of stone-working far in advance of anything known for antiquity; the accuracy of its orientation, and the significant analysis of its measurements, prove to those who cannot resist the magic of numbers that in its building the Egyptians incorporated what they knew about advanced astronomy and the nature and measurements of the surface of the earth.

Peter Tompkins is not concerned with the side of pyramidology which deals with prophecy. His interest lies in the investigations which, through the centuries, have proved to the satisfaction of some that the Great Pyramid enshrines a lost science. Progressive studies have revealed ever more remarkable "facts" about the structure:

The Pyramid has been shown to be an almanac by means of which the length of the year including its awkward .2422 fraction of a day could be measured as accurately as with a modern telescope. It has been shown to be a theodolite, or instrument for the surveyor, of great precision and simplicity, virtually indestructible. It is still a compass so finely oriented that modern compasses are adjusted to it, not vice versa.

It has also been established that the Great Pyramid is a carefully located geodetic marker, or fixed landmark, on which the geography of the ancient world was brilliantly constructed; that it served as a celestial observatory from which maps and tables of the stellar hemisphere could be accurately drawn; and that it incorporates in its sides and angles the means for creating a highly sophisticated map projection of the northern hemisphere.

The exposition of the many mathematical examinations, and of the subsequent interpretations which have determined the infinitely varied potentialities (if not purposes) of the Great Pyramid, occupies most of *Secrets of the Great Pyramid*. In a long appendix Livio Cattullo Stecchini, Professor of Ancient History at William Paterson College, New Jersey, examines in detail the measurements of the Great Pyramid. He has shown to his satisfaction that the basic Egyptian linear measurements embody a kind of universal system. The Egyptians further had apparently "found an easy and reliable method to coordinate length with time". This discovery (and much else) is set out with a wealth of calculation and involved exegesis which leaves one overwhelmed with wonder at what the ancient Egyptians had been able to comprehend.

Not only had they comprehended so much, they had also incorporated their knowledge in a single building (apparently multi-purpose), a capsule of hermetic science to be digested and understood only by those who had advanced mathematical ability and a disregard for the simple interpretations of the talents of the ancient Egyptians put about by academic Egyptologists

If a well-constructed carefully planned, mathematically coherent building has characteristics which suggest that it is the repository of the secrets of a hermetic science, who is to be the judge of the issue? Numbers have always been seductive, their fascination unique, the significance of their magic beyond the sphere of mathematics, a snare and a delusion. Why should the Egyptians conceal their knowledge? Why should they not expound it, or even allow it to leak out over the centuries? How devious of them, in spite of having apparently such great knowledge, to bequeath to posterity pseudo-scientific texts of such modest character that not only academic Egyptologists but also conventional students of ancient science have been unable to see them as possessing more than the simplest grasp of mathematics. Much more than inspired numerological analysis of a remarkable building is needed before Egyptologists and, it is hoped, others will have to modify these judgments:

The truth is that Egyptian mathematics remained at much too low a level to be able to contribute anything of value (to Greek mathematics). Its interest for us lies in its primitive character, and in what it reveals about the minds of its creators and users, rather than in its historical influence. With mathematics remaining at such a low level, it was impossible for the Egyptians to develop theoretical astronomy to a significant stage. (G.F. Toomer in *The Legacy of Egypt* edited by J. R. Harris, Oxford, 1971).

The effect produced by a reading of *Secrets of the Great Pyramid* is unusually depressing. That so many, undoubtedly clever, men should observe extraordinary mathematical phenomena in the measurements of the Great Pyramid is not surprising. That they should proceed to extravagant interpretations which take little account of all the rest of Egyptological knowledge seems foolhardy. Mr. Tompkins sets out the observations and the interpretations remorselessly; in totality the result is an indictment of human judgment — a prime demonstration of human gullibility. The gloom, happily, is relieved by a large collection of illustrations, many of them unusual and little known, taken from many sources.

(*The Times Literary Supplement*, February 8, 1974, p. 139.)



## **“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”**

*(Continued from the issue of May 1974)*

### **MASS EDUCATION AND ITS LEADERS**

DR. J of Lucknow University believes that the future lies with Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy. Education is about life, of life and for life. A new life is not likely to emerge from a weak and lifeless literature. In order to make new ideas familiar to the teachers and the taught, small booklets should be brought out.

There are many incidents in his life which give one reason to believe he is gifted with an intuitive faculty for doing the right thing at the right moment. He has built for himself a career almost by self-education from which our youth—the rising star of India's horizon—must draw inspiration.

It was the powerful personality of Dr. Sampurnananda which made him rise to eminence. When Sampurnananda asked him to write a book he said in wonder:

“I am so young, only 22, how can I write, what shall I write?”

“If young men like you do not write, then who will?”

Thus the curtain was raised on an unexpected phase of his life and he turned out to be a writer of the first grade.

His father was not so enthusiastic about his education but his mother did all in her power to support him by saving as much as she could. Right from class IX he began to get a scholarship and finally became a gold-medalist and also obtained foreign degrees.

Almost the same was the case with a student who came seeking his help to improve his lot. The student's father, though well-to-do, was not very keen on giving him education. His argument was: “How disgusting was the condition of those in the field of education!”

One day the student approached Dr. J for an appointment.

“Appointment? What for? Why don't you tell me now?”

“Please grant me the favour of an appointment,” he entreated.

“Come on Sunday.”

And this interview proved to be unforgettable. The student frankly confessed that he was in the habit of telling lies and was a victim of other vices too. He needed the help of someone who would set his feet on the right track. He added further that he had a great desire to pursue his studies but stood helpless.

The Doctor did all in his power to encourage his resolve. The boy on his part by his devoted services not only won the heart of J but became like a family member. He set himself to cleaning the Doctor's room, putting the books in order, rearranging furniture. The beauty of it is that the doctor never asked him to do anything. Of his own accord the boy looked to his personal needs and knew how to do it. He did not

hesitate to wash his clothes and even polish his shoes. By his delightful manners the boy so endeared himself that the Doctor did all that was possible for his well-being.

The boy had passed his B.A. examination in the third division. With the Doctor's coaching he secured 50% marks in his final M.A. and received a scholarship of Rs. 300 for doctoral research. For higher studies he went to America and later accepted a job there.

What better service could there be than turning the waste land of the human heart into a flower garden? Another boy who later rose to a prominent position was in the First Year when he came in touch with Dr. J. The boy appeared to him very promising and so he spent Rs. 100 a month for his education. The student took his M.A. and is now a lecturer.

Good manners spring from self-government. To satisfy his spiritual craving the boy often went to the Himalayas during the summer vacation. There, once he met a great sage who was 150 years old. This meeting opened a new facet of the boy's character. He acquired the strength to pass his days on the snowy peaks almost without food, without clothing. On the twelfth day the hermit asked him to hurry home as his grandfather would expire after two days.

"When it took me a hundred days walking on foot to reach this place, how can I go back home within a couple of days?" he wondered.

As if by a miracle he got down to the plains in a very short time, was able to catch a train at Hardwar station and stand before his dying grandfather just in time. Ancient India is still alive in the person of yogis like his Guru.

Though on return the boy fell ill yet he found that there had awakened in him a miraculous *Shakti* with which he could read the inner state of a person by simply looking at him, and could cure people of their diseases; and he cured a number of them.

Once he cured a person bitten by a snake by sucking the victim's finger. The man was saved but the boy suffered for six months. Finding himself unable to hold the *Shakti*, he invoked the sage to withdraw the power. He is a man of very high character. Though 30 years old, he has not yet married. He was so poor that he had to live on bare bread and water but now earns Rs. 500 a month.

Let us analyse why he could not hold and regulate the *Shakti*? To this question the answer is that the vessel was not ready. It was only half-baked.

Two teachers came into his life — one made him stand on his own legs, the other wanted him to rise to the status of a god but forced feeding did not do him good. He did not know how to use the power gained.

This clearly shows two kinds of teaching are needed to bring beauty into life and endow it with power. One for outer progress and the other for inner progress. Hence the stress of the Ashram school on the acquisition of both. "The breath of the Spirit alone is not sufficient," says the Mother, "the instrument also must be able to manifest it."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, Vol IX No 3.

According to his horoscope a new turn was expected in Dr. J's life when he was 55. Just when he was 54 he had the first touch of the Mother in August 1972 and it proved to be the last. On the way back, the Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Society who was also travelling by the same train, requested him to secure a job for G. He told him that the test for the B. A. was to be held soon. Out of 800 students only 50 were to be selected. He proposed that G be permitted to take the test. When G went to him he told him, “You may stay in my house, share my food and I shall try to give you all possible help in your studies.” G happened to be one among the 50 chosen. He has now opened a Sri Aurobindo Centre in his village.

Ninety per cent of the world population are peasants and factory workers.<sup>1</sup> They are illiterate. The educated class must lend a helping hand to improve the mind and ideas of the masses, for their mode of thinking is very low.

Sunimal Fernando of Ceylon was only 16, when he became one of the founding members of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's young wing, which attracted rural youths. For higher studies he went to Cambridge. When, after obtaining the Master's Degree, Sunimal returned he preferred to go and live among the rural populace rather than become one more white-collar worker in Colombo and he spent five years studying their problems. In 1970 when he was 33, Mrs. Bandarnaik picked him out to be her Co-ordinating Secretary. This is how he built his own career. These are individual efforts for the awakening of the mass consciousness.

The Four-H Club was started in America in 1927. Its motto is: “To make the best better.” Its members have to pledge, “My Head to clearer thinking, my Heart to greater loyalty, my Hands to larger service and my Health to better living for my club, my community and my country.”

It was started to improve the nation's young farmers. It has a membership of some four million young people between the ages of 10 and 21, the movement has spread to 60 countries of the world.

The original purpose of the 4-H Club was to serve as part of a broad educational programme designed to improve farming techniques and the quality of rural life in general, to promote high ideals of civic responsibility, to provide training for community leadership.

In Tunisia the youth movement is trying a new direction. Every branch of the Destourian Party has a youth section. After independence the youth of Tunisia switched on their energies to building roads, schools, health clinics that the new nation badly needed. Then the Party set up the Tunisian Union of Youth and charged it with three main responsibilities. One of them was to unite the young people of the nation. The members came to be known as “Pioneers of the Republic”.

However gratifying the result of these movements, they do not even touch the real issue. The real issue is: how to imprint upon the young minds the necessity of leading a disciplined life both outer and inner? It is this that will go a long way in the formation of character.

<sup>1</sup> *Prospects*, Quarterly Review of Education. UNESCO Vol. III No. 2

Some oft-repeated lines of Sri Aurobindo are: "The future belongs to the young. It is the young who must be the builders of the new world."

Our Government is busy devising means for birth control. Will that lead to the building of character? The ideal of celibacy, self-discipline is not unknown to India. If children are brought up in an atmosphere where good manners, sincerity, and purity are the rules of life they will automatically rid themselves of the many vices with which modern life is afflicted. If from an early age a new spirit is infused in the students we shall soon have a new generation whose outlook on life is likely to be quite different from the old. For instance, if it is firmly established in the head and heart of the students that sublimation of sex-instincts ensures more abiding happiness than the present-day sex-obsession, there may develop in them new faculties, new qualities, making them enjoy the fragrance of a new life. Here are the Mother's own words:

"The energies in human beings that are utilised in reproduction and occupy such a dominant place in their life should on the contrary be sublimated and used . . . to prepare the coming of the new race." (31-1-1972)

During my long conversation with the Principal of a Girls' School run in my home province, which has an enrollment of 1100 girls, I put forth the proposal that if each teacher should undertake to build the character of at least five students it would be a great thing for the country. These five might set an example to a group of their age and grow to be the nucleus of a mass movement.

"That's what I have been trying to do," she said with emphasis and added, "I have chosen a few and we meet daily in the evening and conduct cultural programmes on off days or on special occasions as is done in the Ashram."

"Forgive me for putting an odd question: What prompted you to have your only son educated in the Ashram?"

"The education of my son suffered because I was transferred to different places. I was in earnest search of a place where I could put him. When I came to the Ashram I grew eager to have him admitted here, for where could I find an institution which takes so much care for the all-round growth of the child? The admissions list was closed, but I didn't return disappointed. Did the Mother read the future of my son or was it a special concession, never to be forgotten? I don't know. When I went for Pranam I approached the Mother through Champaklal. She gave a penetrating look to my son and said in a very lovely tone, 'I shall speak to Kireet Joshi.'"

When she met Kireet he took the boy in his arms and said, "Who can be more lucky than the boy whom the Mother herself has chosen?"

Towards the end she related something very amusing but significant: To her mind the most amazing aspect of the Ashram was its strict sense of discipline along with a freedom almost impossible to conceive:

"Nothing is done here to invite public appreciation. So one may not mark this aspect of the Ashram but to me it is very surprising. Once, you see, someone started talking nonsense about the Ashram. There are all sorts of people in the world. I refused to be caught in his vibration. Finding me unperturbed he remarked: 'I used

such strong words against the Ashram; how is it you didn't show the least annoyance?

“‘This is what I have learnt from the Ashram,’ was my answer.

“‘This is a lesson to me also,’ the critic commented ruefully.”

A college-student said, with a sad face to me:

“My father's connection with the Ashram begins from 1948; the one ache in my heart is that he didn't give me education in the Ashram right from the beginning. The great consolation is that my father keeps the house flooded with Sri Aurobindo's literature and I pore over its pages as much as I can.”

All this makes happy reading but India today needs dedicated workers who live not for themselves, not for the glorification of their desires but to be fit to manifest the Divine Glory.

Let us not forget that mass miseries cannot be reduced unless man is pulled out from the dungeon of ignorance. We have first to rouse ourselves, then go round to rouse those still in slumber — the dead souls. The start should be made with students devoted to the inner life. The task of education is to understand the ruling condition and formulate schemes that will fire the enthusiasm of juvenile hearts and rouse the spirit of dedication.

Teachers are said to be the builders of the nation. But only a realised soul has the power to charge dead batteries. Our saints and sages were mass teachers. One of them could give a new turn even to the mass life. Guru Govind Singh gave birth to the Sikh community, which even today remains in the forefront whenever there is war.

Education must meet the challenge of time. It must prepare students who are “living souls in a living body”, as the Mother puts it.

In the beginning of the First Plan there were four lakhs of college-going students. Today our universities have 30 lakhs. If on spiritual principles an association is formed such as the 4-H Club, or a movement is launched on the lines of, say, “The Boy Scouts” under some such inspiring name as “Soldiers of Light”, “Children of the Future”, or “Torches of Truth”, and if even five enroll themselves in each town or in each educational institution they will carry the message of truth to the masses. They will be the pioneers of a spiritual civilisation which is struggling to be born.

*(To be continued)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

# TEACHERS' TEACHING WORKSHOP

BASED ON SRI AUROBINDO'S AND THE MOTHER'S APPROACH

Organised by WORLD UNION INTERNATIONAL Pondicherry

SRI AUROBINDO, in his message of August 15, 1947, revealed the tasks India has been entrusted by the Divine. One of these tasks is to bring about world unity. As world unity is intimately dependent on education, dedicated teachers are offered an orientation and training workshop to help them assist their students to

contact their soul and organise their educational development around it

become aware of the group consciousness and hidden unity of their school class

become aware of the underlying unity of their nation and the world.

The methods used in the workshop will be:

Socratic questioning                      role play                      discussion  
group exercises in physical movement, meditation, and music  
short lectures                                      concentrated reading  
observation of and participation in educational experiments.

Dr. Sitaram Jayaswal  
Reader in Education  
Lucknow University

and

Ronald Jorgensen  
(educational consultant  
formerly, New York City)  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram

will be the leaders  
of the workshop.

Those interested must be teaching elementary or secondary classes and have a good knowledge of English. They should be graduates in Arts or Science and be 30 years of age or below.

The workshop will run for a period of one week: 24-30 October 1974. Although all participants will have to meet their own travel expenses to and from Pondicherry, their room and board expenses during the workshop will be sustained by World Union.

Those who wish to participate may write within 30 days to

Ronald Jorgensen  
Teachers' Teaching Workshop  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram  
Pondicherry 605002

# *Students' Section*

## THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

### TWENTY-NINTH SEMINAR

24th February 1974

SCIENCE, REASON AND YOGA

*(Continued from the issue of May 1974)*

Speech by SACHCHIDANANDA MOHANTY

It is ironical that in an era of interplanetary travel, an increasing mass of mankind should continue to languish under the frightful spectre of poverty and death, that instead of a "generation of Peace" man should witness a diabolical race for lethal armaments: better and handier tools for mass annihilation. "Battle and rapine, ruin and massacre are still the fierce pastimes of man's warring tribes." Concepts like "humanism" and "altruism" have become mere words that exist in the dictionary of idealistic cranks to be used selectively for some moral or psychological expediency to hoodwink millions of starving automatons. The ever-widening gulf between a vulgar, ostentatious living on the one hand, and a life of perpetual misery and scarcity on the other, seems to stare at the conscience of man. At the same time, the cherished goal of dialectical materialism appears to have got stuck somewhere in the alluring mire of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". An unbridled economic growth, without a parallel growth of human character and values to sustain it, has thrust the world virtually to the verge of a precipice. An indiscriminate "ransacking" of the earth's valuable resources has led to an unprecedented ecological crisis which is fast turning this beautiful green planet of ours into some forbidding martian landscape. Gone is the myth of science as a universal panacea! Its twin high-priests, Materialism and Commercialism, are crackling like a dying flame with an unusual ferocity before being blown out forever in the dim corridors of time. But there is something which never seems to be lacking — an endless source of human stupidity! Yet beneath the seemingly placid crater of self-deception and complacency, there is an ominous rumbling. For men clinging to a convenient *status quo*, this spells disaster and turmoil but to the progressive vanguard of humanity, it only symbolises the creative labour of a New Age.

This is "the hour before the Gods awake" — a twilight hour that announces the death-knell of a decadent past but also the birth of a New Age in human evolu-

tion. Man, science, reason all will have to pass through that mighty spiritual ordeal and then realise their loftiest perfection in that New Age, the Age of Truth.

In this paper, I shall briefly examine and try to trace out the destined role of Reason, Science and Yoga in the future evolution of humanity.

What is science in its essence? Is Materialism an inevitable outcome of science or is it simply an accident of history? Why has science failed as a magic formula? Is there a basic contradiction between the scientific quest and the spiritual pursuit?

Science can be described as a body of systematized knowledge arrived at by the collection, observation, classification and causal explanation of phenomena in any sphere of existence. Since the very ground of physical science is Matter, it has initially to understand the physical universe in terms of Matter and the material senses alone. Like the Upanishadic seeker Bhrigu, man in his evolutionary progressive ascent has first to affirm Matter as the sole reality — *annam brahma*.

Now this view that phenomena are valid only if they have a recognisable and verifiable relation to the truth of external things leads to certain partial and misleading conclusions. The Infinite is reduced “to square and cube”. As Sri Aurobindo observes: “pushed to its extreme, it would give a stone or a plum-pudding a greater reality”<sup>1</sup> than to thought, love, courage, genius and greatness of the human soul. Or as it is more magnificently portrayed in the immortal pages of *Savitri* :

“An ancient wisdom fades into the past,  
The ages’ faith becomes an idle tale,  
God passes out of the awakened thought,  
An old discarded dream needed no more:  
Only she seeks mechanic nature’s keys  
Interpreting stone-laws inevitable  
She digs into Matter’s hard concealing soil,  
To unearth the processes of all things done...  
Of soul or spirit we have now no need:  
Matter is the admirable Reality...”<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to science that seeks to unveil the mysteries of Matter, Yoga seeks a union with the Divine, the Absolute and the Transcendent. Says the Upanishad: “There sight travels not, nor speech, nor the mind.”<sup>3</sup> न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग् गच्छति नो मनो

Thus unlike the scientific quest which proceeds by intellect and logical reason, Yoga by its very nature must be subjective. “Thou Hassan hast found Him by reason and through means,” said Rabia, the Sufi poet to the philosopher, “but I, immediately without mode or means.” Yoga does not aim at intellectual knowledge but seeks a higher knowledge, *parā vidyā*, and a radical change of consciousness that will affect

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine* (American Edition, 1949), p. 577

<sup>2</sup> Centenary Edition, Book Two, Canto Ten, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> *Kena Upanishad*, I.3. Sri Aurobindo’s translation



the very stuff of our phenomenal existence. Its methods are threefold: purification, concentration and identification. Vision and experience are its bedrock.

“Sheer blind faith,” scoff the votaries of science. The mystic replies, “Faith, yes, but it is far from being blind. Illumined by a spiritual glow, it is very concrete, even more than ‘the Intellect’s hard and lustrous lid’.” An apt description of this we find again in *Savitri*:

“A million faces wears her knowledge here  
And every face is turbaned with a doubt....  
Her thought is an endless march without a goal.  
There is no summit on which she can stand  
And see in a single glance the Infinite’s whole.

An inconclusive play is Reason’s toil,  
Each strong idea can use her as its tool; ...  
Its rays are a lantern’s lustres in the Night;  
She throws a glittering robe on Ignorance...  
A master and slave of stark phenomenon,  
She travels on the roads of erring sight  
Or looks upon a set mechanical world  
Constructed for her by her instruments.  
A bullock yoked in the cart of proven fact,  
She drags her huge knowledge-bales through Matter’s dust  
To reach utility’s immense bazaar.”<sup>1</sup>

“In any case,” argues the Yogin, “does not the rationalist himself depend on faith, even if it be faith in his reason?” But the attacker with his characteristic shrewdness has evaded the objection by firing another question: “The Yogic knowledge is subjective, therefore unverifiable and vague.” To this Sri Aurobindo has an exquisite reply:

“When the Peace of God descends on you, when the Divine Presence is there within you, when the Ananda rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine Force, when Love flowers out from you on all creation, when Divine Knowledge floods you with a Light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was before dark, sorrowful and obscure.... everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine. Then you can much less doubt it or deny it than you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven ... in the concrete experiences of the Divine, doubt is impossible.”<sup>2</sup>

Like the swinging of a pendulum, Nature attains her ends by a constant oscillation between the opposing extremes and thereby arrives at an eventual synthesis. Thus the great service of rationalistic materialism has been to remove the hard crust of superstitious obscurantism, conventionalism and the outdated doctrines that cling parasiti-

<sup>1</sup> Centenary Edition, Book Two, Canto Ten, pp. 251-52

<sup>2</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Centenary Edition, Vol 22), p. 168.

cally to the unblemished Spirit. It came as a reaction against the past religions that had laid an unnatural stress on the individual, seeking a solitary salvation not in this world but in some remote other-worldly “Vrindavan”, “Brahmaloka” or “Nirvana” at the cost of the growth, well-being, progress and prosperity of the collective life on earth. Besides, the greater our knowledge of the physical world, the surer becomes our foundation, for indeed, as Sri Aurobindo says, “the touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge”.<sup>1</sup> It would therefore be too rash and premature on our part to condemn the rationalistic experiment outright as “a reckless and presumptuous adventure” and reject the powers of the logical reason and intelligence because until we are elevated to a higher realm and can replace the present imperfections with higher suprarational substitutes, they have their role to play in our human advancement; for indeed in our imperfect world “error is continually the handmaid and pathfinder of Truth”.<sup>2</sup>

Since the urge of Materialism is a dispassionate search for Truth, it is likely to cross beyond the physical frontiers into the untrodden promising regions beyond; the materialistic gospel carries its own cure in the form of agnosticism, which, while admitting the unknown, proclaims that the physical senses are too inadequate to grasp it. For verily, sense-knowledge is only “the science of appearances” and, as in the Platonic allegory of the cave, even the appearances reveal little until man emerges from the dark caverns of ignorance to face the Sun of spiritual Truth. Then the result may be pictured as in these lines of *Savitri*:

“All staggered back into a sea of doubt;  
This solid scheme melted in endless flux:  
She had met the formless Power, inventor of forms;  
Suddenly she stumbled upon things unseen:  
A lightning from the undiscovered Truth  
Startled her eyes with its perplexing glare ...  
Once more we face the blank unknowable  
In a crash of values, in a huge doom-crack,  
In the sputter and scatter of her breaking work  
She lost her clear conserved constructed world.  
A quantum dance remained, a sprawl of chance  
In Energy’s stupendous tripping whirl: ...  
All grew a chaos, a heave and clash and strife....  
All reeled into a world of Kali’s dance.”<sup>3</sup>

Today Matter is no longer considered *jaḍa* or inconscient, but “a structure of Energy” and what is Energy if not motion of power of a secret consciousness? Already

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine* (Centenary Edition), p. 11

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12

<sup>3</sup> *Savitri*, Book Two, Canto Ten, pp. 254-55

remarkable discoveries are being made “that thin the wall between soul and matter”.<sup>1</sup> More and more of supra-physical phenomena like telepathy and clairvoyance are acknowledged, however reluctantly, proving beyond doubt the existence of subtle supra-physical senses.

The question is: How far can science take us in this new adventure? It is, no doubt, possible to arrive at subtler truths of Matter with the help of more refined and sophisticated gadgets, but by themselves they cannot decipher the subjective script. As Sri Aurobindo says, “One can’t dissect God or see the soul under a microscope.”<sup>2</sup> Like the intellectual perception of Energy as the prime-moving Force, a certain line of rigorous analysis can arrive at the intellectual conviction of the Self. But by the very shortcoming of the logical reason, this will always be precarious, for indeed “‘the spirit of doubt’ is insatiable and unappeasable”.<sup>3</sup>

In its attempt to understand and explain Yoga, Reason adopts one of two methods: either it dismisses the whole thing as “a mystical nonsense” or, as Sri Aurobindo describes, it prattles like “a child who is trying to shape into the mould of his own habitual notions the life of adults” or blunders like “an ignorant mind which thinks fit to criticise patronisingly or adversely the labours of a profound thinker or a great scientist”.<sup>4</sup> It can at best classify and describe but explain it cannot, for always the form is grasped and the intrinsic kernel missed.

This is not to suggest that Reason can be discarded. Indeed it can be a great aid in abolishing much of the external fossilised paraphernalia, dead customs and sterile gospels of religion that often stifle the spiritual efflorescence itself. But beyond this negative function, it can hardly serve any positive purpose. It can never succeed in creating a rational religion. A rational religion is a monstrosity and a contradiction in terms. Like the suprarational in man, the infrarational too has its truth though obscurely veiled. It has to be sublimated and transformed and not repressed under the artificial yoke of Reason.

Reason can help to distinguish spiritual Truth from the pseudo-spiritual imitation. To fulfil its role it must recognise its inherent shortcomings and allow the descent of a higher Power till, as Sri Aurobindo writes, “where it was blind it can see, where it was deaf it can hear, where it was insensible it can feel, and where it was baffled, uncertain, questioning, disappointed it can have joy, fulfilment, certitude and peace”.<sup>5</sup>

Thus Reason and Yoga need not be poles apart. For the spiritualised Reason liberated from its narrow prison-house can truly act as a bright star pointing at more luminous galaxies.

Today, happily, old decadent systems are fast crumbling under the massive

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (Centenary Edition), p 234.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Centenary Edition, Vol. 22), p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> *The Human Cycle* (Centenary Edition), p 120.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Centenary Edition, Vol. 22), p 171.

“streaming light” of a “symbol dawn”. It is the advent of a New Consciousness, manifesting a New Age, that will embrace life in its entirety. Physical Science has played its part and a very important part at that. But before it can find its place in the New Age, it must needs outgrow its present obscurantist limitations. To conclude, in Sri Aurobindo’s words:

“If science is to turn her face towards the Divine, it must be a new science not yet developed which deals directly with the forces of the life-world and of Mind and so arrives at what is beyond Mind.”<sup>1</sup>

Then will the true marriage of science and Yoga be possible and “In Matter shall be lit the spirit’s glow”.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 205

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book One, Canto Four (Centenary Edition), p 55.

*Compiled by* KISHOR GANDHI

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# EYE EDUCATION

## PALMING (*Contd.*)

PALMING may be done for five to ten minutes or more. It is good to palm before going to bed to induce good sleep. When there is a feeling of strain or a headache during summer wash the eyes and face with cold water, dip the hands in cold water and palm for about half an hour. While palming, sip some cold drink or fruit juice now and then. Cataract patients are greatly benefited by frequent palming.

When palming is successful, it yields wonderful results. I remember a very interesting case. A boy aged about ten years, son of a merchant, was blind in his right eye from birth although the organ of sight was apparently quite normal. When he was asked to imagine something while palming, he related a perfect experience, "A customer comes to my shop and wants two ounces of butter. My father takes the butter with a spoon and weighs it in the balance. The customer pays money to my father and goes away." The boy saw all this mentally as if the thing had gone on actually. The result was that his blind eye began to see, first, big letters and then smaller letters of the eye chart. And it was a very joyful and interesting event when the boy gained normal vision in two hours by repeated palming and practice on the chart.

An engineer, aged about sixty years, had been using glasses of + 3 for twenty years for reading. It was a surprise to him to improve his sight enough to read the newspaper without glasses in about a month's time. A myopic girl, after palming frequently, read small print in dim light and improved the distant vision to normal in about two weeks' time.

What are the signs of perfect palming?

1. When palming is perfect, the colour of any object is remembered perfectly and one feels perfectly relaxed and one sees a perfect black field before the eyes when they are closed and covered.
2. When the eyes are opened perfect sight comes instantaneously and the letters on the chart are seen perfectly black and are distinctly recognised.
3. The white centres of the letters called halos seem to be whiter than the margins of the chart.

For more details study the book YOGA OF PERFECT SIGHT.

(*Concluded*)

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