

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1975

Price : Rs. 1-75

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Posting Date for MOTHER INDIA

26th to 28th of the preceding month.

Annual Subscription · Inland — Rs. 18. Overseas — £ 2, \$ 5.

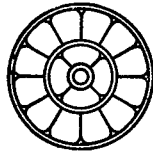
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Editor's Phone: 782

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

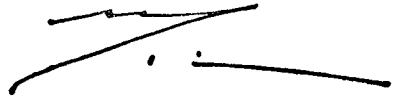


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXVII

No. 10

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

Published by: P. COUNUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY-605002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-605002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

NOTHING can harm you *if you do not fear*.

So, fear not, be quiet and calm. All will be all right.

15.10.1966

The ordeals are for everybody — it is the way of meeting them that differs according to individuals.

21.4.1967

I have only one thing to say: Depression is a bad adviser.

My love is always with you. Have faith and you will be all right.

28.10.1967

ILLNESS AND WORK

FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

JUNE 24, 1953

... If it is a work that you are doing for the collectivity and not for yourself personally, then you must do it, whatever happens. It is an elementary discipline. You have undertaken to do this work or have been given the work and have taken it up, therefore you have accepted it, and in that case you must do it. At all times, unless you are absolutely ill, ill in the last degree and unable to move, you must do it. Even if you are rather ill, you must do it. An unselfish work always cures you of your petty personal maladies. Naturally, if you are really compelled to be in bed without being able to move, with a terrible fever or a very serious illness, then that's quite different. But otherwise, if you are just a little indisposed: "I am not feeling quite well, I have a little headache or I have indigestion, or I have a bad cold, I am coughing", things like that — then doing your work, not thinking of yourself, thinking of the work, doing it as well as you can, that puts you right immediately.

In reality illness is only a disequilibrium; if then you are able to establish another equilibrium, this disequilibrium disappears. An illness is simply, always, in every case, even when the doctors say that there are microbes — in every case, a disequilibrium in the being: a disequilibrium among the various functions, a disequilibrium among the forces.

This is not to say that there are no microbes: there are, there are many more microbes than are known now. But it is not because of that you are ill, for they are always there. It happens that they are always there and for days they do nothing to you and then all of a sudden, one day, one of them gets hold of you and makes you ill — why? Simply because the resistance was not as it used to be habitually, because there was some disequilibrium in some part, the functioning was not normal. But if, by an inner power, you can re-establish the equilibrium, then that's the end, there is no more difficulty, the disequilibrium disappears.

There is no other way of curing people. It is simply when one sees the disequilibrium and is capable of re-establishing the equilibrium that one is cured. Only there are two very different categories you come across....

Some hold on to their disequilibrium — they hold on to it, cling to it,

don't want to let it go. Then you may try as hard as you will, even if you re-establish the equilibrium the next minute they get into disequilibrium once again, because they love that. They say: "Oh no! I don't want to be ill", but within them there is something which holds firmly to some disequilibrium, which does not want to let it go. There are other people, on the contrary, who sincerely love equilibrium, and directly you give them the power to get back their equilibrium, the equilibrium is re-established and in a few minutes they are cured. Their knowledge was not sufficient or their power was not sufficient to re-establish order — disequilibrium is a disorder. But if you intervene, if you have the knowledge and re-establish the equilibrium, quite naturally the illness will disappear; and those who allow you to do it get cured. Only those who do not let you do it are not cured and this is visible, they do not allow you to act, they cling to the illness. I tell them: "Ah! you are not cured? Go to the doctor then." And the funniest part of the thing is that most often they believe in the doctors, although the working remains the same! Every doctor who is something of a philosopher will tell you: "It is like that; we doctors give only the occasion, but it is the body that cures itself. When the body wants to be cured, it is cured." Well, there are bodies that do not allow equilibrium to be re-established unless they are made to absorb some medicine or something very definite which gives them the feeling that they are being truly looked after. But if you give them a very precise, very exact treatment that is sometimes very difficult to follow, they begin to be convinced that there is nothing better to do than to regain the equilibrium and they get back the equilibrium!

I knew a doctor who was a neuropath and treated illnesses of the stomach. He used to say that all illnesses of the stomach came from a more or less bad nervous state. He was a doctor for the rich and it was the rich and unoccupied people who went to him. So they used to come and tell him: "I have a pain in the stomach, I cannot digest", and this and that. They had terrible pains, they had headache, they had, well, all the phenomena! He used to listen to them very seriously. I knew a lady who went to him and to whom he said: "Ah! your case is very serious. But on which floor do you live? On the ground floor! All right. This is what you have to do to cure your illness of the stomach. Take a bunch of fully ripe grapes (do not take your breakfast, for breakfast upsets the stomach), take a bunch of grapes; hold it in your hand, like this, very carefully. Then prepare to go out — not by your door, never go out by your door! You must go out by the window. Get a stool. And go out by the window.

Go out in the street, and there you must walk while eating one grape every two steps — not more! yes, not more! You will have stomach-ache! One single grape every two steps. You must take two steps, then eat one single grape and you should continue till there are no more grapes. Do not turn back, go straight on till there are no more grapes. You must take a big bunch. And when you have finished, you may return quietly. But do not take a conveyance! Come back on foot, otherwise the whole trouble will return. Come back quietly and I give you the guarantee that if you do that every day, at the end of three days you will be cured.” And in fact this lady was cured!

NOTE

In the September issue the letter of Sri Aurobindo, “The Supermind in Earth-Consciousness and Earth-life”, stopped inconclusively because the rest of the matter could not be found. A further passage is now to hand, though it also is incomplete as yet. We give it here, starting with some words from the previous issue :

... plant and tree and living bodies were built out of the protoplasm and molecule; some ingenious force or being evolved slowly out of that through millions of years with an amazing patience, using chemical and biological elements alike, gene and gland and heart and brain and nerve and cell and living tissue and the animal walked and bounded and man arose evolving through tens of thousands, perhaps millions of years in the body of an erect two-footed animal. There again the physical-minded elemental would have intervened and cried out, “What is this that is being attempted? No, no, impossible. Such a thing has never been done. Reflexes, memories, associations, instinctive combinations of life and action, these things of course are possible; but reason, intelligent will, conscious planning and creation, art, poetry, philosophy in this savage shambling creature? An animal cannot evolve powers and activities which have never been possessed except by the gods and the Asuras. How can this material animal organism ever be capable of such a...

THE SUPERMIND IN EARTH-CONSCIOUSNESS AND EARTH-LIFE

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(This is the second of the two letters written to Professor Mahendranath Sircar, author of Eastern Lights, when he visited the Ashram in 1937. The first appeared in our September issue. They are reproduced from manuscript-drafts.)

As I have said, speculation on the results of the manifestation of a new supramental principle in the earth-consciousness organising itself there as mind, life and matter have already organised themselves — for that is what it comes to — is a little perilous and premature, because we must do it with the mind and the mind has not the capacity to forecast the action of what is above itself — just as a merely animal or vital perception of things could not have forecast what would be the workings of Mind and a mentalised race of beings here. The supermind is a different order of consciousness far removed from the mental — there are in fact several grades of higher consciousness between the human mind and the supramental. If the earth were not an evolutionary but a typical world, then indeed one could predict that the descent of a higher type of consciousness would swallow up or abolish the existing type. Ignorance would end and the creation in the ignorance disappear either by transmutation or by annihilation and replacement. The human mental kingdom would be transformed into the supramental; [the] vital and subhuman, if it existed in the typical world, would also be changed and become supramental. But, earth being an evolutionary world, the supramental descent is not likely to have such a devastating completeness. It would be only the establishment of a new principle of consciousness and a new order of conscious beings and this new principle would evolve its own forms and powers in the terrestrial order. Even the whole human kingdom need not and would not be transformed at once to the whole supramental extent. But at the same time the beginning of a supramental creation on earth is bound to have a powerful effect on the rest of terrestrial existence. Its first effect on mankind would be to open a way between the order of the Truth-light and the orders of the Ignorance here on earth itself, a sort of realised gradation by which it would be possible for mental man to evolve more

easily and surely from the Ignorance towards the Light and, as he went, organise his existence according to these steps. For at present the grades of consciousness between mind and supermind act only as influences (the highest of them very indirect influences) on human mind and consciousness and cannot do more. This would change. An organised higher human consciousness could appear or several degrees of it, with the supermind-organised consciousness as the leader at the top influencing the others and drawing them towards itself. It is likely that as the supramental principle evolved itself the evolution would more and more take on another aspect — the Daivic nature would predominate, the Asuro-Rakshaso-Pishachic prakriti which now holds so large a place would more and more recede and lose its power. A principle of greater unity, harmony and light would emerge everywhere. It is not that the creation in the Ignorance would be altogether abolished, but it would begin to lose much of its elements of pain and falsehood and would be more a progression from lesser to higher Truth, from a lesser to a higher harmony, from a lesser to a higher Light, than the reign of chaos and struggle, of darkness and error that we now perceive. For according to all occult teaching the evolutionary creation could have been such but for the intervention of the Powers of Darkness — all traditions including that of the Veda and Upanishads point under different figures to the same thing. In the Upanishads it is the Daityas that smite with evil all that the gods create, in the Zoroastrian [teaching] it is Ahriman coming across the work of Ahura Mazda, the Chaldean tradition uses a different figure. But the significance is the same; it is the perception of something that has struck across the harmonious development of creation and brought in the principle of darkness and disorder. The occult tradition also foresees the elimination of this disturbing element by the descent of a divine Principle or Power on earth, but gives to it usually a sudden and dramatic form. I conceive that the supramental descent would effect the same event by a progressive elimination of the darkness and evolution of the Light, but with what rate of rapidity it would be rash to try to forecast or prefigure.

This is a very general statement, but perhaps it is a sufficient answer to your first question. I need only add that there is nothing to prevent the supramental creation, the creation in the higher Truth-Light from being evolutionary, a continuous efflorescence of the Divine Truth and Harmony in a manifold variety, not a final and decisive creation in a single fixed type. What would be decisive would be the crossing of the border between twilight and Light, the transference of the base of development from the con-

sciousness in the Ignorance to the Truth-consciousness. That would be, on this level, final. The transition into a world of spirits would only effectuate itself, first, if the whole earth-consciousness became thoroughly supramentalised, secondly, if after that the turn were to a realisation here of the principle of those worlds of Sachchidananda where determination disappears in the interpenetration of All-in-All. But that would be to look too far into the potentialities of the future. In short, if the supramental principle came down it would not be in order to reproduce Heaven here under celestial conditions but to "create a new Heaven and a new earth" in the earth-consciousness itself, completing and transmuting but not abolishing the earth order.

It is evident that the creative process here could be greatly modified and transmuted by the appearance of the supramental principle. What would be its exact forms is a more difficult question, for the principle of a supramental creation is obvious but the possibilities of its manifestation are many and it is only the dynamic Truth itself that can choose and determine.

ON WATCHING SOME DANCERS

Our dance should be like fire, like swift bright streams,
 Like rushing winds, like waves, like flowing mistfilled dreams,
 And we should feel that ecstasy arise,
 That burns up from our yearning earth to flameswept skies!

We should be like a dawn that sings with light,
 Or like the crystal voice of a murmuring moonfilled night,
 Like strong fierce birds that skim across the sky,
 Great winged things that through the sunstruck stillness fly...

We should be free and let our bodies soar,
 As if they swayed in trance across a starstrewn floor,
 And filled with light from silken silence spun,
 As our hearts are weaving their radiant dance, — we should be one.

BEING TRUE TO ONESELF

WE are often told: "One must be true to oneself." It is often forgotten that this formula is not quite clear or convincing. For, the first question that arises is: "What is 'oneself'?" The correct formula is: "One must be one's true self." But are we always that? Do we even try to realise what that is? Don't we take for our true self the self we ordinarily know and feel? The self we know and feel as a rule is a being that is made up of moods — moods that are a play of impulses, personal reactions, fixed mental ideas, habitual vital-physical attitudes: in one word, a play of the pampered ego. Wherever there is a dominance of moods making for the satisfaction of momentary likes and dislikes, we may be sure that our true self is not in action.

The whole movement of Yoga is a movement away from what one usually calls oneself. If the self we commonly know and feel is to be given its head on the excuse of being true to oneself, we should give up the ideal of doing Yoga. There is plenty of room in the wide world for this self of ours. Of course, even in the world of ordinary life, there will be limits and restrictions imposed by society, there will be circumstances cutting across the indulgence of the sheer ego. But, if we can somehow get round all these bars without being a direct danger to our fellows, we can justifiably indulge the ego, for we have not accepted the call to a higher reality within us. But once we have accepted such a call, we are nothing save false to ourselves if we do not recognise that to surrender to moods and to be firm in their assertion is to cover up our souls.

The soul in us is at once a sweetness and a strength, and both the sweetness and the strength are bathed in light — light that reveals God's presence and the presence of other souls related to us and standing in need of the God in us and of all the sweetness and strength we can give them. Not to be true to oneself but to be true to the Self that is one in all and especially one in us and in those among whom the Divine has placed us in various beautiful relationships which are to be fulfilled in a common progression towards the Light of lights — this is what is asked of us as children of the Supreme Mother.

AMAL KIRAN

THE MOTHER'S TOUCH

SOME INCIDENTS

I

It was 1953. The Mother started to hold meditation in the Playground. One evening I was delayed in my group activities, so I had to run in order not to miss the collective meditation.

In front of the Centre of Education, a heap of gravel was piled up for repairing the road. The shadow of a tree was falling on this heap and as I was running fast I hit it, stumbled and fell down flat on the road. Instead of going to the Playground, I went to the dispensary. After the doctor had dressed the bruises on my knees and elbows, I came to the Playground. The meditation was over and the distribution of Prasad was going on. I quietly joined the queue. When I reached Mother, She looked at my bandages in amazement, and asked, "What is all this?" When I told Her how I had fallen, immediately She said, "And you were flat!" I replied softly, "Yes, Mother." On hearing this, I observed a wave pass through Her body. For a moment Her body vibrated, suffered as if She Herself had experienced the accident. Then She gave me Prasad with Her right hand as She was giving to everybody. But She caught my fingers and kept on pressing until She brought another packet with Her left and for a while kept on pressing with both the hands as if She was giving or wanting to give something more than the usual blessing. When I looked into Her eyes, I saw them shining with a diamond-light and Her gaze penetrated my eyes and forehead.

With the joy of a wounded soldier, I came home and sat for meditation. I was unable to bend my knees, so I sat in my chair and kept a stool in front of it to stretch my legs. Hardly had I closed my eyes, when in the fraction of a second I saw that in place of me it was Sri Ramakrishna who was sitting in my chair. A part of my being, as a witness, was seeing all this. Soon that too sank down. I was lost completely. I, as Sukhvir, had no existence. If at all I existed, it was in the form and personality of Ramakrishna. I was he or he was myself, if it could be put like that; living the life he lived, discoursing to people who came from distant lands and gathered around him, solving their problems, preaching a new way to look at the world, teaching that the time had come when we had to do Shakti-Sadhana, saying that without the Mother's Power and Force and Help,

one could not advance on the path and make progress in the direction it is to be made, etc., etc.

After a year or so, when I had gathered about half a dozen experiences which indicated something of the kind with other personalities, I wrote about them to the Mother giving a full description of each one of them, asking her what they meant. Referring to this one, I asked Her if it was some indication of my previous birth. The Mother's gracious reply was, "It may be an identification, also."

Another incident, which illustrates how the Mother was with and within each one of us, took place in 1955. My nephew wanted to come to the Ashram for permanent stay. I spoke to the Mother about it. The Mother asked me, "How old is he? If he is more than 20, you can write to him to come." On his arrival he was asked by Ravindrajee to go to Cazanove Garden, to work there, two or three miles away from the Ashram. I do not know why, but somehow I personally did not like his staying at Cazanove Garden, so far away.

At night, as usual, I sat for my meditation before going to bed. I spoke to the Mother or rather prayed in the following manner: "He has not studied Sri Aurobindo and has no idea about the Sadhana, in the manner it is done here in the Ashram for the integral Realisation. He needs guidance and help at this stage, and that is possible only if he stays and works somewhere near the Ashram. I pray that his case may be reconsidered"

The next day, early morning, Ravindrajee came to me and, to my surprise, said that he had received an urgent message from the Mother. "She has asked me," he informed me, "to change your nephew's work immediately from Cazanove Garden to the nearest department of the Ashram. So I am putting him in the laundry, that is the nearest place to the Ashram, main building."

This is how She was, and is, present in every heart and mind, how She has been keeping us in Her heart and mind. Her spirit answering the calls and prayers of devotees was not limited to the Ashramites only, it was universal and the whole world was taking refuge in it. She was sending Her Force in response to every call, protecting each one of Her children, wherever they might be, in any corner of the world.

SUKHVIR ARYA

THE MOTHER'S GRACE

BEHIND PRIME MINISTER MRS. INDIRA GANDHI*

A VISION

THE day after the Mother's birthday of 21st February, 1975, I was meditating on the Mother at about 12-30 p.m.

Suddenly I saw, in a vision, Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi and a number of other persons around her.

There were two helicopters which were standing just close-by. The Prime Minister was expected to travel in one of them.

I saw that the Mother's force was making Mrs. Gandhi gesture that she would not go by that helicopter. The next moment she was instinctively made to point towards the other helicopter, meaning thereby that she would travel by that one.

Then I saw that the first helicopter took off and got destroyed somewhere in the sky while moving away from the vision. Along with it an intuitive feeling was given to me from the Mother that the second helicopter would fly safely.

I have not been reading newspapers. Recently I was told in a casual talk about an incident which occurred in the second week of April. The Prime Minister could have been involved in a helicopter accident.

It happened when Mrs. Gandhi was returning to New Delhi, in one of the two Air Force helicopters intended for her use, after dedicating to the nation the first off-shore oil-well near Bombay.

The helicopter other than the one in which she was travelling caught fire in mid-air and the pilot had to bale out in a parachute.

The Prime Minister's helicopter flew safely.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

* From the author's book *How The Mother's Grace Came to Us — Part Two* (under publication).

THE USES OF POETRY

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MODERN ENGLISH POETRY

A Lecture

(We are glad to publish, from the pages of Josephite, journal of St. Joseph's College, South India, this brilliant "Second Leigh Memorial Lecture" delivered on February 21, 1975, at that institution by Professor M. S. Duraiswami, M.A., Retired Professor of English, Annamalai University, whose name has become almost a legend in academia.)

MAY I begin my business by quoting a few lines from a well-known poet?

Must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest ... to drink ...
And depart peaceful, pacified and thankful,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?
For he seemed to me ... like a king,
Like a King in exile, uncrowned in the under-world,
Now due to be crowned again.

The tenor and the tone of that passage would, I am sure, have struck a responsive chord in the heart of Father Charles Leigh, for the exiled king welcomed here is a snake, though he may not have cared for the author, D. H. Lawrence. To be fair, I must add, that in the latter's place, Father Leigh would have suffered no self-conflict and could never have scared away the snake. On the contrary, he would have collected it and made a pet of it, perhaps wearing it like a garland for fun — as he appears in an old photograph I have seen. That Father Leigh was not only a naturalist but a lover of snakes, an *ophiophile*, if I may coin a word, is one of the memorable things I have heard about him.

We may well believe that Father Leigh would have approved of our concerning ourselves with poetry in this memorial lecture. It was not for nothing that he taught Shakespeare for over forty years. That life-long association with Shakespeare argues a taste for all good poetry and a belief in it.

It is pertinent to ask, who are the beneficiaries of poetry? The man in

the street has no use for poetry. Next, we have the man of minimal sensibility who does read some poetry. The 'poetry' he responds to is sensuous and passionate. It must be concrete, sonorous, emphatic and above all easy to grasp and remember. In other words this reader's 'poetry' is good verse strictly so called, such as ballads, love songs, patriotic odes or comic tales like *John Gilpin*. If we ask him what the reading or hearing of it did to him, he will say, perhaps, he found it jolly or nice and, if he is more articulate, that he escaped from his every-day work and worries and found himself in a 'brave new world', sharing the adventures of the hero, heroine and villain. This kind of pleasure is called escapist; and God knows this very common reader is entitled to it.

In one particular, this reader is akin to children. Like them he is fascinated by tales of mystery, magic and the preternatural. I must add, however, boys and girls, if they are imaginative, have a finer sensibility. Most of them are able to enjoy poems which speak to them through sound and image, without waiting for a rational understanding of the words on the page. This is what happens when they read, for example, Edward Lear's nonsense rhymes or a poem of Walter de la Mare's like *Tartary* or *The Silver Penny*. Young boys and girls have no difficulty in grasping the imaginative substance, where their elders go groping in the depths for the shadow of rational meaning.

If imaginative children are akin to the common grown-up reader, they are also akin to the more sophisticated and mature kind of reader whom we must now consider. He remains, in one sense, the child he was: he retains his powers of perception and feeling in all their freshness. And, like a child again, he is apt, and able, to forget himself and get absorbed in some experience, so that he feels he is part of what he sees. In the grown-up reader, it could be called empathy; but the root of the matter is already there in the child. For this reason, among others, we may well say the responsive reader is born, not made. But this is only one half of the truth: he is born but he is also made — (to adapt an old saying) '*Lector sapiens nascitur atque fit.*'

If there is any preparation or training necessary for the making of a responsive reader, what is it? You will find that topic treated in a book which, I am sure, most of you here have all along been expecting me, waiting for me, to mention. T. S. Eliot's *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* has not only lent me one half of its title but lightened my labour by its treatment of one aspect of this subject. But our own enquiry here has a more limited end in view.

Let us begin with the spade-work of a responsive reader. There is first of all, the necessary reading to be done, both in depth and in extension. He has to become familiar with the best in poetry or, to be precise, poetry written in the 'Modern English' period, say, from Chaucer to the present. But all the time he must examine the value and function of the poet's diction and grammar, for it is the words on the page that make a poem and are the poem. Some readers may think this study is a drudgery that may be delegated to pedagogues and writers of notes. But it is a stark necessity and part of the price to be paid for the right of entry into the House Beautiful of poetry.

Before the reading is completed, another exercise has to begin: it is the training of the sympathetic imagination. The reader has to learn to give himself to the demands of the poet's feelings and passion, and lose himself in the experience imagined. This should not be very difficult for a reader who has a natural capacity for self-surrender. At this stage, he should also cultivate a proper intellectual humility. Where a poem or a passage seems too difficult for response or comprehension, the reader should blame himself for his crassness and not curse the poet for his obscurity. I would even say the good reader must 'revere where he does not presently understand.'

Then comes the higher stage where a responsive reader becomes a 'mature' and 'seasoned' reader. He is now able to stand back and see a poem or the whole *œuvre* of a poet objectively and in the round; and his response involves appreciation as well as enjoyment. And if he is an exceptional reader, according to T. S. Eliot, he comes 'in the course of time ...to classify and compare his experiences, to see one in the light of others: and, as his poetic experiences multiply, he will be able to understand each more accurately.' He may even go on to organize such experiences; and, at a still later stage, he may reorganize them in a new pattern with every new experience. But by that time, that exceptional reader of Eliot's is no longer a mere reader: he has evolved into a critic, and has no further interest for us.

Our central concern is with the *responsive reader*. He is one of the two persons for whom a poet writes, the other being, of course, himself. It is through this reader's receptive mind and response that poetry finally finds its way into the mind and heart of the community as a whole. This privilege or honour is part of his reward for the trouble and training he has gone through. There are other and greater gains for him, as we shall see; but, first, we shall do well to consider one or two difficulties he has

to meet and cope with.

Critics like I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot used to give a great deal of attention to what is called the problems of belief. Whether it still exercises the minds of poets and critics to that extent, I am unable to say. Possibly it does, probably not. But I venture to think it need not greatly trouble the mere reader who has not grown into a critic. I would tell him (as Hazlitt said of the allegory in *The Faerie Queene*) the belief 'won't bite' him. A good poem is entitled to a willing suspension of disbelief *ad hoc* and for the moment on the part of the reader. He may well hope that, later on, his mature judgement may find the belief more acceptable.

A real difficulty that is inherent in human nature, and also in the nature of all good poetry, is that much of the best poetry of any age is written by the young and often for the young and not infrequently about the young. There are exceptions, of course, like Yeats and Robert Frost; but they are not enough to refute the general proposition. Whether a new poetry springs from a new sensibility or from contemporary consciousness, it is the young reader that responds immediately and impetuously. So too with a poem of a traditional kind, provided it presents highly emotional experiences. Older readers, on the other hand, are not apt to fall so precipitately in love with new poetry of either kind, the revolutionary or the traditional. Generally speaking, old people are afflicted with what may be called sclerosis of sensibility. But the young who take so readily to new poetry — what do they make of it? They get enjoyment, obviously, but no deep insight. Real appreciation is yet to come; and judgement and evaluation are still further off in the future. The fact is, they will be able to get the most out of poetry, the pith and marrow of it, only after having repeatedly proved it on their pulse and after having lived and grown with it for many years; meanwhile their life experience and poetic experience will have illumined and enriched each other. Which means, the young will come to comprehend new poetry only when they are no longer young and that poetry is no longer new. I am tempted to hazard a half-truth, taking and twisting for my purpose two well-known lines of Yeats' —

'Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young
We loved (Poetry) and were ignorant.'

The difficulty is more obvious and is also of a different order, when we turn to modern English poetry, that is, poetry written since 1920. That a large part of it is difficult, and some part of it puzzling, to most readers is beyond doubt. It may be that its obscurity is the defect of a quality. Critics and admirers of modern poetry show us the reasons and justification

for its experiments; and they also try to help us to understand and enjoy it. But most of the tips and warnings given by critics — and teachers too — are too general and don't amount to much. What we want (what a responsive reader wants) is not a master key to all modern poetry, for it is not to be had, but a varied approach, a readiness to try any means, old or new, or any combination of means, of getting inside a poem and sharing its experience.

With that very general observation, I will turn to consider, as promised earlier, the gains and rewards that can be earned by a responsive reader. To put it in another way, we have to answer the question, what does poetry *do to* the responsive reader? The answer cannot be single and simple. The potential effects of the experience of poetry cover a wide range, from pleasure and entertainment to transcendental awareness. Which out of all these effects is realized for the reader depends upon the *kind* of poetry and the quality of the poem he reads. We may, for our present purpose, distinguish and differentiate between two broad categories: verse and poetry, strictly so called. Good verse, as T. S. Eliot pointed out, with reference to Kipling, has value and uses of its own. To take one outstanding achievement, Masefield has shown the possibilities of narrative verse in *Reynard the Fox*: it is not only a capital tale but conveys what it feels like to be a fox and to be hunted. And C. D. Lewis, in a more sophisticated but breathtaking way, takes us in his *Flight*, on a crazy adventure in the air, flying from England to Australia in a condemned plane. Another use of good verse may be seen in Walter de la Mare. He has written, along with poetry, many enchanting verses for children (and not children only) like *Tartary*, *Echo* and *The Little Creature*. Even where the feeling or thought does not amount to much, good verse can engage and satisfy the reader by virtue of consummate craftsmanship. In a poem called *April* (1885), Robert Bridges achieves some remarkable effects within the space of eight lines arranged in two stanzas:

Wanton with long delay the gay spring leaping cometh;
The blackthorn starreth now his bough on the eve of May:
All day in the sweet box-tree the bee for pleasure hummeth:
The cuckoo sends afloat his note on the air all day.

Now dewy nights again and raining gentle shower —
At root of tree and flower have quenched the winter's drouth:
On high the hot sun smiles; and banks of cloud uptower
In bulging heads that crowd for miles the dazzling south.

It will be noticed, among other felicities, that, for its size, this poem has an intricate rhyme scheme, end rhyme, internal rhyme and middle rhyme. Secondly, the θ , the lisp consonant as it is called, is repeated both in the rhymed words and elsewhere: which has the effect of suggesting that spring is a child breathing aloud in gusts of wind and lisping in the language of bird, bee, flower and cloud.

A special kind of verse rising at times to poetry is satire, which in the modern age tends to be social or institutional rather than personal or individual. Satire (in verse) may spring from, and evoke in us, a pure human compassion *or* a noble and impersonal indignation *or* a bitter sense of betrayal and destruction of ideals. These three effects may be illustrated by reference to three well-known poems. First, in Wilfred Owen's *Futility*, which, you may remember, presents the spectacle of a young soldier destroyed in World War I, the pity and protest mount till they explode in the last three lines —

Was it for this the clay grew tall?
— O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

It is our social and economic system that provokes Stephen Spender's satire in such poems as *An Elementary School Classroom* and *In Railway Halls*. A more striking and instructive example is *An Eclogue for Christmas* by Louis MacNeice. The two interlocutors in it, A and B, engage, antiphonally, in tirades against town life and country life in our time. Finally, however, they turn and rend themselves for their dreams and their criticism. The verse and the diction and style are appropriately harsh, emphatic and disturbing.

Ezra Pound had no deep interest or involvement in life and was, in fact, concerned mostly with art — and *his art*; but he wrote some of the finest satire of his time and on his times, in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. The sequence called *Pour L'Election de Son Sepulchre* deserves special notice. The tone and the diction are colloquial; but the irony is civilized; and the poem achieves the economy and finish of an epigram:

O bright Apollo,
Tin andra, tin eroa, tina theon
What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a *tin* wreath upon !

With Pound we have already passed on from good verse to poetry strictly so called. The 'line of wit' and satire runs from Pound to the

early Eliot and on to Eliot's early followers. Eliot's early poetry is mainly, though not solely, satirical and exposes, in a hard dry light, the pretensions and self-deceptions, the ugliness and unreality of cultured society. But there is something more than satire in those early poems. Eliot seems to be feeling his way in them and through them to something beyond satire. Which may be expressed (and has been) as a progress from boredom to horror and from horror to a further state of awareness, which is the 'vision of glory'. That final stage, however, begins only in *Ash Wednesday* and the *Ariel Poems*. We may ask, What does Eliot's early poetry do to the responsive reader? Since the poet's experience is universalized, the reader realizes the boredom and the horror within himself though he was not previously aware of them. And he is thereby motivated to join the poet in seeking a way out of the Waste Land and the society of Hollow Men. It is not for nothing that the poet in *The Waste Land* addresses the reader as his fellowman, his brother —

You hypocrite lecteur — mon semblable, mon frère.

The reader is also Prufrock and Sweeney.

To return to Ezra Pound for a moment: his poetry and his criticism extended the horizon of the mind, both in space and in time. He treated all Europe as one cultural family; and, later, he took China and its civilization and folded them in that family. And by virtue of his historical imagination, he considered all civilized nations and peoples of the last three millennia to be one human society. There is some affinity between Pound and Eliot, though with some difference. The latter learnt Sanskrit and acquired a European consciousness, besides being an Anglo-American. He makes good use of his historical imagination, especially in his early poetry, and enables the reader to see an experience not only in the light of the present but in that of other days as well. But, unlike Pound, he compares the past and the present for bringing out the imperfections of both and showing that human nature is always the same.

Some modern poets have extended their sympathy and study beyond man and tried to understand other animals and other forms of life. Two such explorations we have already seen: Lawrence's *Snake* and Masefield's *Reynard the Fox*. Robert Frost goes even further in this direction, finding consciousness in unsuspected places. A poem entitled *Departmental* is a humorous and kindly study of the common ant and conveys to us what it feels like to be an ant. And in *Good-bye and Keep Cold* he gets under the skin of the trees in an orchard (under their bark if you like) and divines their nature and needs. He talks to them as if they were his children and says —

How often already you've had to be told,
 Keep cold, young orchard, good-bye and keep cold
 Dread fifty above more than fifty below.

From poets and poems like those considered above, the responsive reader learns to extend his awareness to the outer bounds of the animate world. Corresponding to this outer extension there has come about an inner expansion, a growing awareness of the deeps below deeps of the human mind. Modern poets have made imaginative use of this new light on the subconscious. Perhaps the most striking example is the *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, which presents a split personality (a *dedoublement*); one part is the conscious self which is the speaker and the other part is his sensuous and submerged self, which is being addressed in the poem. It is invited to emerge and go out for a walk but, finally, it retreats to its subliminal depths. Not so well-known but effective in its psychological realism is *The Secret Sharer*, a short poem by Thom Gunn. The theme is a split personality and lost identity with resulting confusion and terror. The speaker stands outside his house on a snowy night and calls to himself in a third floor room inside to let him in, and then he sees himself inside, safely in bed; and once again he finds himself standing outside in the snow. Lest we should imagine we have fully explored the sub-conscious and know all about it, Robert Graves offers a wise warning in his *Lost Acres*. The poem is an extended metaphor suggesting that, after all our illumination of the mind, there will always remain an elusive *terra incognita*, the Lost Acres. The regular metre and rhyme and the colloquial diction have an ironic effect. So too has the use of phrases like 'no doubt', 'mere words' and 'loss of sense'.

Poets may thus benefit by the findings of psychology or some other science; but they often have other sources of knowledge as well, peculiar and proper to themselves. Many of them may be said to have a sixth sense or, if you like, doors of perception opening on a sort of debatable land that lies between fact and fancy, between the subjective and the objective, the external world and the internal. And what they apprehend in this way is as real to them as any report of sense or the senses; and so too should it be to the responsive reader. An illustration will make this point clearer. Walter de la Mare was peculiarly sensitive to this kind of experience, as we see in what is perhaps his most famous poem, *The Listeners*. I suggest, in passing, that whenever we would examine it, we read *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came* once again and keep it at the back of our minds. In that poem, Walter de la Mare makes us aware of 'unknown modes of being':

there are shades and presences that throng and can listen but cannot speak or even see. Who or what are they? Are they there in the house at all? And who is 'the one man left awake' in it? Such questions can never be rationally answered, though attempts have been made. An old friend of mine, the late Norman Williams (British Council Representative in Australia), once wrote to Walter de la Mare, offering a personal interpretation of *The Listeners*. The poet's reply is characteristic and worth quoting from:

"I hope you won't think it a clumsy and ungrateful return for your kindness in writing if I ask you to take the poem 'on its face value'. Whatever meaning you are so good as to find in it will more than content me — though this was hardly what you asked."

This is not a mere compliment to N. E. Williams; it may serve as a challenge to the sensitive reader, and an opportunity to exercise his own imagination.

It would be difficult to find two poets who differed so greatly from each other as Walter de la Mare and Thomas Hardy. But, oddly enough, they found, for once, a common theme and experience: it was in *The Ghost* by de la Mare and *The Voice* by Hardy. I need not remind you how Dr. F. R. Leavis (in his *New Bearings in English Poetry*) compared the two poems, to the disadvantage of *The Ghost*, which had already been damned by I. A. Richards in *Science and Poetry*. What I am concerned, however, to point out here is that whereas Hardy first makes use of the visitant and her voice and then returns to rationality, Walter de la Mare keeps his experience poised between fact and fancy and leaves the choice open to his readers.

That debatable land, as I have called it, is however no abiding place for modern poets. If they have that special sensitivity at all, they tend, as Walter de la Mare himself did, to venture further and explore the world of the patently supernatural or preternatural. Thus, we find in some poems of Robert Frost a total acceptance of the preternatural and a direct treatment of it. As may be seen in *The Witch of Cöös* and in *Paul's Wife*, Frost makes us willingly suspend our disbelief by means of suggestion and understatement; and his significant omissions stimulate the reader's imagination. And the simple country folk who are made to tell the tales serve to distance them and soften the scepticism of the reader.

(To be continued)

THE FORCE OF THE UNIVERSE

This composition is a recent and on-going one and at present there are four parts which are thematically related but different in rhythmic and metric form like the different movements of a sonata in music.

I

THERE is a natural stress of sound
A music of meaning and feeling and force
That holds together and whirls around
And rhythmically patterns a universe.

Its metric grace and myriad power
Meet and blend and flower in space,
Their waves' and bursts' and showers' colour
Veiling in wonder their singer's face.

She is the glorious Mother of All
And this is Her sovereign voice,
A luminous song of magic and skill
That makes all shapes, all worlds rejoice.

Hers is the thought and the heart that knows
And love is the work of Her infinite will,
The essence of all that quickens and grows —
And more than this my verse shall tell.

2

At times She leads us to the stark abyss
Or calls down darkness on our breaking heads
Until we cannot see beyond our dread,
At times She burns us in Her spirit's fire
And makes us stand alone against desire
Till after we endure Her flaming brand
And bear the weight of Her almighty hand
Our heads are raised beneath the fiery blast

And sweetness and grace come to us at last,
 A breath of life runs lightly through the brain
 And cool delicious drops relieve our pain
 And gusts of soothing wind come rushing round
 And release from anguish pours to us in sound
 And peace in us consents to come and dwell
 And rosebuds sway in the crevice of the hill
 And softly fill with light our empty space.
 This is Her hidden glory's glimpse and trace,
 The process of Her nature's dire travail,
 A pathway that Her secret hands reveal,
 A veil that She wears before Her face,
 A breeze that She wafts to us of bliss
 Till we die within the petals of Her bloom:
 Seed sounds form in us the music of Her name
 Inspiring us to cross the gates of doom
 And chanting we rise to Consciousness and Flame.

3

A form that stands alone
 A rhythm that is born
 A tree, a silhouette
 Above the blue marine

Companion to the wind
 Moved to descend
 Stirred to become
 By a distant silent friend

Called by the sea
 And the rising of the sun
 Slowly to discover
 The powers that are one

The force of the universe
 Her elements are known
 Her rhythms and harmonies
 Her melodies and themes

And sweetness and grace come to us at last,
 A breath of life runs lightly through the brain
 And cool delicious drops relieve our pain
 And gusts of soothing wind come rushing round
 And release from anguish pours to us in sound
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 And the rising of the sun
 Slowly to discover
 The powers that are one

The force of the universe
 Her elements are known
 Her rhythms and harmonies
 Her melodies and themes

Heard on peaceful hillsides
 In orchards soft and still
 Sung in sighing arbours
 By echoes faint and shrill

Above the cruel barriers
 And battlements and fight
 Ascending through struggle
 To gardens of delight

The fury of the god
 The goddess sweet and mild
 The swift and the subtle
 The terrible and the wild

A strong descent of calm
 Is Her arrival's sign
 And waves from golden seas
 And light from planes beyond

But always is She there
 Though rarely is She seen
 Magnificent and victorious
 Smiling and serene.

4

O Blessed Form concealed from sight
 Yet hidden from us somewhere there
 For now we see a signal ray
 And feel within a mystery
 Though still we cannot grasp its truth
 Nor know the path that we must take
 Upon our blind and stumbling quest
 For hints that shadow wholeness' light
 And peaks from which we dare to glimpse
 That every turn and every pain
 And every misregard and sin
 Has been a sign, a secret plan

That brings us to the formless One
 And every step a secret grace
 That guides us to some perfect Form —
 O wayward bliss that dwells within
 Each hand, each voice, each name, be known!
 Descend upon this trail of doom!
 A call wells forth from Thy world-heart
 And echoing returns Thy strain,
 A happy cry, a blessed song
 A silent thought, an anguished moan
 A grace note on a curse to greet Thee.
 Raise these human energies high,
 O Force, unmask divinity.

ROD

BIRD

BIRD, who art Thou
 That carriest me
 Across the cloud-gods' sky
 In the night when the moon grows full ?
 I hear Thy cry
 And in the instant's equal time
 Feel the force of Thy mighty wings
 One with the joy in all my limbs.
 I know Thee well,
 Walking among the stars
 And being one with Thee
 A pilgrim gazing into brighter worlds.
 Bird, bird,
 Messenger, friend,
 Guardian at Her feet.
 O, in these moments of Identity
 When we are two in one —
 O marvellous song of gratitude,
 O chanting vastness,
 Future's melody.

CRYSTL

THE CHILDREN OF THE SUN

A PARABLE

THE Sun who is One has four children who play throughout the universe in many forms. When they take the forms of Air and Earth, Water and Fire, according to their natures, then time and space are born.

Once the eldest of the four, Earth, swallowed up the others, so that there was nothing under the sun except a dense dark mass, as if in a deep sleep. But Earth dreamed in his sleep dark, heavy dreams — rocks and stones and minerals of different kinds. Even in his sleep he was dissatisfied. He moved uneasily and longed for something purer and brighter until he dreamed silver and then gold, brightest of metals, and knew dimly that alone he could do no more.

Still he was not satisfied and longed and yearned until he wept... and his sister Water was released.

She laughed and danced and shone in the sunlight and together they played and made shapes for their delight. They made lichens, mosses, ferns and fungi — then grass and little flowers, trying always for something livelier and more joyful, until one day they made a jacaranda tree and felt they could do more alone.

And though his sister had helped him make a diamond Earth still was not satisfied, and Water longed for new forms to take and together they yearned and longed until they sighed...and their sister Air was released.

She passed over the flowery forests like a soft breeze, bringing breath. The three of them shaped animals — amoebas first and sea-anemones, fish and snakes and birds — then lions and tigers and horses until at last they made man, the most enlightened of animals. And he grew gardens full of roses and made necklaces of gold and diamonds. But still they longed for more light and truth, more power, more delight. Together they yearned and hoped until they began to remember — had there not been another brother?

Their longing became a burning desire and Fire sprang up in the heart of Man, and all four of them began the new creation, which is just beginning now.

Fire says, 'It was I, burning within you, who drove you through this play and secretly shaped these many forms.'

Earth says, 'I started the game, it was played in my body; it was I who yearned and dreamt so long alone.'

Air says, 'It is my light that has wakened us so we remember what we are.'

And Water says, 'It was I who brought the joy of the game and it is my delight that makes the game worthwhile.'

The Sun who watches all this play rejoices to see his children dancing together.

SHRADDHAVAN

ARGIL'S PRAYER

O lift me,
 O shift me,
 O soak me
 In rain
 Again and again.
 Hold me,
 Mould me
 On Thy wheel.
 Let me feel
 And trace
 Thy Grace
 In my speck,
 Till my crust
 As it must
 Shake,
 And break.
 O Lord,
 Afford
 Me to be
 Eternally

Thy cup,
 To hold up
 The red wine
 Of Thine
 All-Love.
 O bake me
 In Thy Fire.
 O wake me
 Enough
 To follow Thy desire.
 O hush me,
 O rush me
 High, and higher.
 O Lord, let nothing
 Ever escape
 From Thy breaking
 And making
 Into a new shape.

KAMALAKANTO

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of September 1975)

8 (contd.)

TEILHARD'S "MOMENTS OF TRUTH", HIS ATTEMPT TO DIVIDE "GOD IS ALL" FROM "GOD ALL IN ALL", A CLUE FROM SRI AUROBINDO, THE FORMULA "UNION DIFFERENTIATES" AND THE NATURE OF LOVE

(c)

Now a short comment would be in order on Teilhard's linking up of love with differentiation. Like "God all in all", a recurring note in him is: "Union differentiates." Zaehner¹ too mentions it: "...as Teilhard says, 'union differentiates' in the sense that 'in every organized whole, the parts perfect themselves and fulfil themselves'.²" Teilhard's drift at its highest is that, if God is All, there can be no relation of love between Him and souls, and that in the love-union with God as in every authentic union the uniting parts not only reach their own perfection and fulfilment but also possess a fundamental distinctness of being from God. Criticising pantheism Teilhard,³ as we have already seen, says first that there can be no Other in it, at least no higher Other, with whom one can effect unification. Then he observes: "Nor can there be any 'union', when the term of conjunction is strictly single. Union presupposes, up to the very limit of its perfection, duality beneath unification. Otherwise it completely changes its nature and loses all its attractive force."

Surely, no more than a half-truth acts the dictator in such a statement. What is the true character of love? Teilhard⁴ has some fine things to say: "Love seeks...for contact with beings...lovers, driven on by passion to melt into one, to form but one, imagine that one can penetrate into the being of

¹ *Evolution in Religion: A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 39. ² *The Phenomenon of Man* (Collins, London, 1960), p. 262.

³ *Writings in Time of War* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 291.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

the other..." Still he keeps harping on the impossibility of love without an eternal difference of selfhood, without an increase of distinct personalisation in proportion to the increase of melting into unity, forming an inalienable contact and association.

No doubt, the love that lies at the basis of union requires a relationship between different terms. Yet, if there were only difference, there could never be the mutual draw, the pull of the one towards the other, the urge to take the other into oneself and to be taken oneself into the other. Not only contact and association or even a flawless fitting together can be the motive-force of love: the motive-force must be also — and immeasurably more — an inner commingling, an inmost passing of each into each, an identification in the midst of relationship. Love in its core implies an intense coming together of separate terms that feel they are really one. Essential identity is the foundation of love: existential diversity is its superstructure. The rationale of love is a secret oneness striving to realise itself in a play of manyness. In the supreme experience of love between the soul and God, the rapturous relationship is shot through and through with the ecstatic sense of identity. The truth about union is far deeper and richer than Teilhard's conception. We should have to define it: "Union is the differentiation of a basic unity, union differentiates the one *into* the many rather than the one *from* the many." And in the full or integral spiritual realisation of union there should be room for a total awakening of the small self to its own divine Reality of infinite Selfhood no less than room for an intimate play of God-as-the-One with God-as-the-Many.

Even apart from the true character of love, the formula "Union differentiates" calls for a non-Teilhardian interpretation. The full sentence from which Zaehner has culled a portion is: "In any domain — whether it be the cells of a body, the members of a society or the elements of a spiritual synthesis—*union differentiates*. In every organized whole, the parts perfect themselves and fulfil themselves." We are afraid Teilhard lumps side by side systems which cannot be accurately compared. The members of a society as at present constituted are an organised whole dissimilar to the cells of a body. They gather together and co-operate, but they do not form, like the cells, an integrated structure manifesting the striking phenomenon called "organic unity". The word "organic" is in common use in various contexts, but in the present one it has a special and unique import deriving from the biological peculiarity of an "organism". The cells do not merely gather together and co-operate and thereby contrast with an aggregate or a summation of parts, like a physical object. Each cell acts with the

rest as if it were itself an aspect of an indivisible whole, as if it were that very whole on a small scale. Organic unity is, to all intents and purposes, a whole self-differentiated, a whole self-concentrated into various parts — a whole, therefore, which appears to pre-exist and, by its pre-existing presence, bring together the parts to co-operate. Each part behaves as though the whole were actually within it in a subtle manner, permeating and activating it. There is an internality of relation between the parts and the whole — and, as a result, between part and part. No such relation exists in a society as we know it — but something of the kind we should expect with “the elements of a spiritual synthesis” — in an intensified and heightened form when the organised whole involves a Being who, whether we be pantheists or Christians or Aurobindonians, is the primal support of all beings. There we have to repeat what we have said apropos of the nature of love, and add: “Short of a differentiation of a basic unity — short of a multiple singleness — there is at most a fitting together into a system of external relations as in a machine, or a loose external-internal organisation of common purposes as in a society, but never a union in the true and appropriate sense.” Teilhard’s argument is misconceived.

Teilhard has asserted that throughout Nature the principle of union by differentiation and of differentiation by union operates. Quite true — but that does not mean an absence of basic unity at work. Teilhard has himself hit on the truth when he¹ writes about the result of elements uniting: “Everything is something more than the elements of which it is composed. And this something more, this soul, is the true bond of its solidity.” What he calls “soul” is the principle and power of unity lying at the basis of the union of multiplicity. By the presence of the same binding “soul” in every element, a unification of different elements is effected. If it were not there, we would not have a real synthesis — what Teilhard designates “complexity and centration”, where we get a new emergence, a “something more”, which is not a mere collection of parts but the underlying cause of their combination, the guiding centre of their complexification: in a word, their hidden all-pervading *raison d’être*. More operative or less, more or less perceptible, there must be, in every genuine union, what we have marked as “organic unity” in a body composed of cells.

A universe, in which “organic unity” is being developed or evolved in a variety of forms, must be a universe single in essence and substance of being but deploying itself diversely by a manifold power of consciousness: everywhere unity in diversity would tend to manifest in an ascending

¹ *Human Energy* (Collins, London, 1969), p. 83.

series of what Teilhard describes as material complexity going hand in hand with conscious centration. Teilhard's law of "complexity-consciousness" requires an Aurobindonian universe.

I do not think Zaehner would disagree. His own ultimate position is eclectically Christian. It is not Christian as opposed to Hindu or Mohammedan but as particularised in a certain way from a general ground which can make room for all religions. Throughout his book we can feel a spirit of accord: he tries again and again to show parallels, affinities, identities. As Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford, in succession to Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, his knowledge and sympathies are vast — and in this respect he is as unTeilhardian as can be and as near being Aurobindonian as possible to a convert to Roman Catholicism and an ardent yet not uncritical champion of Teilhard. Both his particular *penchant* and his general outlook are well displayed in one of his introductory passages:¹

"For what, after all, does mysticism teach us? Broadly speaking it teaches us that all things are one in God who is the Centre on to which all 'centres' converge. This is not just a Christian interpretation of an experience which, as all agree, is ineffable: we find it in such unaligned authors as Rousseau, Balzac, and Teilhard de Chardin, and we find it in the Upanishads, the Gita, Ramanuja, and Sri Aurobindo. Its earliest formulation, perhaps, is this from the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* Upanishad (2.5.15):

" 'Just as the spokes of a wheel are fixed together on to the hub and felly, so are all contingent beings, all gods, all worlds, all vital breaths and all these selves fixed together in the Self.'

"Let no one think that I regard all mystical experience as being ultimately the same. All that I have written shows that I do not; and I have not changed my mind. Nor should I now be lecturing on Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin if I had. All I would say now is that the convergence of human personalities on to the hub and felly of a divine centre is one of the main themes of mystical experience, and it is the one consistently emphasized by both Aurobindo and Teilhard..."

Zaehner, in another book of his,² comes out unmistakably in support of our standpoint: the Aurobindonian universe needed by Teilhardism. There he elaborates the love-mysticism of a certain Hindu system or sect which he mentions in his present book:³ "Very few of us feel as

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

² *Concordant Discord The Interdependence of Faiths* (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1970).

³ *Evolution in Religion*, p. 113.

a living reality that unity in diversity suffused by love that not only Christianity proclaims but also the Saiva Siddhanta and the Vedanta according to Ramanuja which have grown up independently on Indian soil." Now drawing upon "Fr. M. Dhavamony's definitive and sympathetic study, *Love of God according to 'Saiva Siddhānta'*"¹ Zaehner² writes :

"As one of the texts puts it: 'Just as the two words *tāl* and *talai* combine into one word *tātalai*, the *bhakta* is mystically united to the Lord as one. If the *bhakta* and God were identically one in substance, then no union would be possible between them, for union presupposes two beings; if they were to remain two, there would be no fruition; hence in the mystical union they are neither identically one nor two.' 'The condition of such a *bhakta*,' Fr. Dhavamony adds, 'must be a combination of duality and non-duality; after release the soul is not merged into the supreme Being (there is no non-duality); yet they are not separate (no duality either). Hence the mystical union does imply both duality and non-duality but at different levels of being and [of] experience.'

"To express this experience words can only mislead, for such words as 'one and many', 'dual and non-dual', are only applicable to sensible things as the twelfth-century Anadalusian Muslim mystic, Ibn Tufayl, points out: between liberated souls, or 'separate essences' as he calls them, and God there is both difference and identity: there is oneness of spirit but difference in degree, God being cause, the soul effect...

"In the experience of union with God the sense of unity predominates over that of separateness, but to interpret this as absolute identity Ibn Tufayl calls a 'misgrounded conceit' (*shubha*), and both the author of the Bhagavad-Gita and the Saiva Siddhanta would agree with him, for where there is love there must be both duality and unity. This may be incomprehensible to the intellect: to the lover it is self-evident."

What renders Zaehner's reference and comment and conclusion especially pertinent to the Teilhardian context is his further exposition:³

"For the Saiva Siddhanta salvation means a gradual growing into God. 'Let my unchanging great love grow towards him,' one of the most important texts says. This 'growing into God' takes place in four stages, each of which corresponds to some specific form of religious activity... In the last phase God and the soul are inexplicably united in knowledge and love. This is called *sāyujya*, 'yoking together' or 'interpenetration' which, as the texts repeatedly point out, is not simple identity: it is ... a conscious realization of a oneness with and in God which yet

¹ *Concordant Discord*, p. 164.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 168-9.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-1.

does not abolish the existence of the soul. The essence of the experience is love saturated in knowledge, and it is symbolized by the union of bride with groom.¹ It is a melting away into the divine Being — a simile that is used time and again.... Now the mystic no longer lives, acts, and enjoys the supreme bliss, but it is Siva who lives, acts and enjoys within him. This seems to echo the words of St. Paul : ‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’,² so close is the Saiva Siddhanta to the Christianity of St. Paul and St. John.”

Zaehner³ continues:

“United with God [the soul] is united to all other beatified souls in something not unlike what Christians call the Communion of Saints.

“Theologically the Saiva Siddhanta stands closer to Christianity than any other Hindu system or sect.”

In another place, after saying of the Saiva Siddhanta that “of all the religions and sects of India it approximates most closely to Christianity”, Zaehner⁴ remarks: “All that is lacking is the Incarnation.” Conversely we may observe: “Of all the religions and sects outside India Christianity approximates most closely to the Saiva Siddhanta. All that is lacking is the comprehensive concept of God.” After listing the three categories under which the Saiva Siddhanta classifies existence — “the Lord, the herd, and fetters” — Zaehner⁵ gives us this concept:

“The Lord is Siva who alone is God, the Lord of all things, endowed with wisdom, love, and grace, wholly transcendent and wholly immanent, wholly independent of all that is not he. He has his centre everywhere, his circumference nowhere; he is the inner principle of all things, self of all selves. He is the soul of the soul, indwelling it just as the soul indwells the body. He is a God in trinity — he is love, he is the Absolute (*Sivam*, neut.), and he is creative power (*śakti*). Love, however, is the essence of his nature, for it is love that makes all things cohere. This follows from the mythological representation of Siva who unites within himself both the male and female principles, both the *lingam* and the *yoni*. Siva is the union of the two. God is inseparably united with his creative power as the sun is with sunlight. In his essence he is ever at peace, but through his creative power he never ceases to work. As one of the texts puts it: ‘Siva generates Sakti, and Sakti generates Siva. Both in

¹ Cf. p. 168: “. . . for the Saiva Siddhanta, marriage is the highest form of union because the most intimate; and this union, as with St. John of the Cross and the mystics of the Eastern Church, means nothing less than defecation.”

² Galatians 2 : 20

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65

their happy union produce the worlds and souls. Still Siva is [ever] chaste and the sweet-speeched Sakti is [ever] a virgin. It is only the true lovers of God who comprehend this mystery.¹ The Saivite trinity, then, is one of male and female and the love that unites them, each deriving from the other in an eternal ebb and flow. Yet the Saiva Siddhanta insists as much as does the Christian mystic that this union and this 'generation' are essentially chaste..."

Through the insight of the Saiva Siddhanta Zaehner puts himself on the side of Sri Aurobindo and exposes the defect of the Christian notion of love and union as well as of Teilhardism insofar as it coincides with that notion. But, as everywhere else, Teilhard is not of one piece here and he does not completely cut himself off from an Aurobindonian universe of the manifold One, the unitary Many. The born pantheist in him is bound, here as elsewhere, to break out and turn ambiguous his final message. Indeed, on occasion, he writes no differently from any believer in the Universal focusing itself in individual centres, any upholder of the single Self of selves, any adherent to the Super-Person whose partial projections are all personalities. Thus, when envisaging the change of outlook resulting from a vision of things ahead where "we may descry an ultimate state in which, organically associated with one another (*more closely* than the cells of a single brain) we shall form in our entirety a single system, ultra-complex and, in consequence, ultra-centred",² Teilhard writes: "the world glows with a new warmth: that is to say, it opens wholly to the power of Love. To love is to discover and complete one's self in someone other than oneself, an act impossible of general realisation on earth so long as each man can see in his neighbour no more than a closed fragment following its own course through the world. It is precisely this state of isolation that will end if we begin to discover in each other not merely the elements of one and the same thing, but of a single Spirit in search of itself."³

Here Teilhard begins with the usual Christian postulate of the eternally other — the selves external each to each — one's self and someone else's. But he simultaneously implies that the otherness, the externality, the else-hood is an appearance; for he speaks not only of completing one's self in someone other than oneself: he speaks also of discovering one's

¹ P. Nallaswami, *Svajñāna iddhyaṅg*, Madras, 1913, 3-2-77. The same text is quoted by Zaehner in *Evolution in Religion*, p. 104

² *The Future of Man* (Collins, Fontana Books, London, 1969), p. 92.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

self in another. The completion comes of realising a new shade, as it were, of the identical being that has assumed a particular shade in one. The usual Christian postulate is at once undermined. And immediately afterwards follows the suggestion that the sense of the otherness, the externality, the else-hood is an error seeing individuals as separate pieces closed in themselves and moving on exclusive tracks. The truth is: individuality is just a significant stress on a certain play of the Universal progressing towards a consummation in the multitudinous yet single spiritual Reality which it secretly is. There can be no two interpretations of a phrase like “elements of one and the same thing,...of a single Spirit” and the declaration that in these elements this Spirit is searching for its own self. All the more is the sole possible interpretation indicated by the preceding turn of thought about being “organically associated (*more closely* than the cells of a single brain)”.

Even when Teilhard is most insistent on the Other, the One different from us, as the *sine qua non* of meaningful unification in love, an inner instinct of the fundamentally real pushes him beyond the Christian view. The Christian colour he cannot quite, at least not always, avoid. But behind the dome of many-coloured glass, the One White Radiance of Eternity is felt, in which that spectrum of separative personality has to dissolve, has to die in order most abundantly to live — or, rather, it has to pass into a submerging identity in order to realize love’s experience of difference most authentically. Thus we get those beautiful and solemn words,¹ which we may label one more “moment of truth” breaking out through every obstacle of preconception — particularly as they themselves begin with a mention of veracity: “...in truth those will be saved *who dare to see* the Centre of their being *outside themselves*, who dare to love Another *more* than themselves and in some sense become this Other: which is to say, who dare to pass through death.”

Yes, there can be, for the aspirant, no escape from “some sense” in which the soul and the Other-seeming Divine are a single fact of mystical self-becoming.

The Aurobindonian universe of the manifold One, the unitary Many, shines out here and there in Teilhard in a more direct relation also to his formula: “Union differentiates.” He is not quite without the realisation that a social union cannot be compared to the soul’s union with God and that the latter is the biological unity of an organism raised to the *n*th degree. Here it is highly suggestive that he speaks of the supreme union —

¹ *Writings in Time of War*. p. 112.

or the Communion of Saints, in strictly Christian language — as the completion of the Body of Christ: in other words, a cosmic spiritual organism. The suppressed pantheist in Teilhard comes up to make him write:¹

“...under the influence of natural evolution, community of work produces only a Whole whose texture is divergent, so that its parts can pull away and disintegrate at the whim of all sorts of accidents or impulses; again, the group of living beings that are the most united in their destiny, that is to say the human group, has not (or not yet?) advanced beyond the stage, in its unification, of an organized collectivity. On the other hand, souls that have attained holiness can envisage at the term of their development and confluence a solidarity of a very different nature.

“Grace, in fact, is more than the common environment or overall current by which the multitude is bound together into the coherence of one solid whole or one single impulse. For the believer, it represents, quite literally, the common soul that brings them under the infinitely benign domination of a conscious mind. The Communion of Saints is held together in the hallowed unity of a physical organized Whole; and this Whole — more absolute than the individuals over which it has dominion, in as much as the elements penetrate into and subsist in God as a *function* of Him and *not as isolated particles* — this Whole is the Body of Christ.

“Minds that are afraid of a bold concept or are governed by individualistic prejudices, and always try to interpret the relationships between human beings in moral or logical terms, are apt to conceive the Body of Christ by analogy with human associations; it then becomes much more akin to a social aggregation than to a natural organism... The Body of Christ is not, as some unenterprising thinkers would have us believe, the extrinsic or juridical association of men who are embraced by one and the same benevolence and are destined to the same reward... it constitutes a world that is natural and new, an organism that is animate and in motion, one in which we are all united, physically and *biologically*...

“Grace is not simply the analogous form found in a number of different immanencies, the life, uniform and at the same time multiple, shared by living creatures. It is the unique sap that starts from the same trunk and rises up into the branches, it is the blood that courses through the veins under the impulse of one and the same Heart, the nervous current

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-50.

that is transmitted through the limbs at the dictate of one and the same Head: and that radiant Head, that mighty Heart, that fruitful Stock, must inevitably be Christ. Through grace, through that single and identical life, we become much more than kinsmen, much more, even, than brothers: we become identified with one and the same higher Reality, which is Jesus Christ."

Teilhard has confuted himself out of his own mouth better than anyone else could have done. What do we have in these passages? A higher Reality with which all souls attain a common identification even though they know a differentiation from it in a Whole that is organised not like a human society on a grand scale but like a supreme biological unity, a natural animate organism constituted on cosmic lines, a universal entity carrying to the n^{th} degree the living formations of the physical world, holding all its parts as functions of a single Divinity by whom they are interpenetrated and who essentially contains them in Himself and whose differentiated identity or sameness they are. Surely, here in the Communion of Saints, in the Body of Christ, we have a beatific union not differentiating the one *from* the many but the one *into* the many.

(*To be continued*)

K. D. SETHNA

CLIMB

CLIMB on my back, my friend,
 So we can run together
 Across this sultry plain,
 With manes streaming, free, untethered,
 Our hearts and hoof-beats timeless
 In our thundering sweat of joy.

When we reach the palmyras
 We'll take to the sky —
 The fused spirit within us
 Will dare to defy
 Our outer earthly disguise.

GILL MCINERNEY

TOGETHER AT THE UNIVERSITY

A TRUE STORYETTE

It was in the spring of the year 1950 when my son Anil had just passed his B. Com. (Hons.) from the University of Delhi.

As usual I went to the Indian Coffee House in Connaught Circus to have my morning cup of coffee. A smart bearer came up to my table and said, "Pitaji (Father), what would you like to take with your coffee?" I thought it may be the custom in some States to respectfully call one "Pitaji" as they do in the south where even a girl of 5 years is addressed as "Amman".

Some days later I happened to go again to the Coffee House and the same bearer smartly jumped up and came to my table and with a lot of respect and reverence said, "Pitaji, what would you like to have?" And to my surprise he brought something more than I had ordered and, what was still more astonishing, the extras were not included in the bill.

I told the bearer that I did not even know him and asked him why he was showing so much allegiance to me. He abruptly remarked, "Are you not Anil's father (Pitaji)?" I said, "Yes", but I added, "How do you know Anil?" He replied, "Sir, Anil and I were together at Delhi University." I was somewhat shocked to learn that after graduating from the University the young man was serving as a bearer. This was typical of conditions obtaining in our country.

Again, much later just by chance both Anil and I happened to be together in the Coffee House and in the twinkling of an eye the bearer was at our table with folded hands.

We just ordered what we wanted and I told my son what a pity it was that this fellow was working as a bearer even after graduating with him. "Is he not your class fellow? He told me that he had been with you at Delhi University."

Anil told me that when he had been studying at Delhi University this fellow had been a bearer in the Delhi University Coffee House, and therefore he could say that they were together at the University!

SURENDRA NATH JAUHAR

ON THE ORIGINS OF HOLY SITES

A FIRST visitor to India who stays long enough and roams the country visiting various temple sites invariably runs into both other tourists and other seekers with various stories about holy sites one must visit and various testimonials concerning the particular qualities or spirit of the place or places recommended. The holy pilgrim, then, if he is not orthodox and a native of a given sect and thus knowledgeable concerning the site he must visit, and especially the pilgrim from another land or another faith, may, much like the novice treasure hunter who follows every rumor about buried galleons and doubloons off the keys, spend his time seeking out place after place recommended to him by various devotees who have been there and will testify to the special benefits to be obtained. Frequently, these sites are places where very famous yogis or holy men have lived, taught, and often died, but the claim still remains that whatever miraculous powers they exhibited are still available to those who come. To the seeker who has at least once experienced that peculiar and special sense of presence or holy ground, whether it be at a site well known to him in his native land, or in a foreign land, the desire to find it elsewhere, or to find it strongest and most permanently and most efficacious at a given spot, is no negligible motivation for his travels. It is much like the artist's continual search, from object to object, for the peculiarly heightened state of being called the aesthetic, which drives him on, much as it must motivate the dancer, the actor, the poet as well.

The sense of "presence" in relation to both objects and places of veneration has mystified me for some time. I once asked an oriental aesthician what it was that distinguished a fine ivory Buddha or Kuan Yin from an inferior one and he said it was the sense of presence and, when I asked him further what he meant, he said he supposed it meant that they used up all the space around them. I thought that a remarkable reply. Anyone who has stood for some time in the middle of the numerous Buddhas in the temple room in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts must find it hard to deny that the sense of presence one experiences is quite remarkable. I felt a similar presence in a small rock-cut Shiva temple in South India which was tended by an old white-haired priest, and, along with several others, a very alarming, dark or malevolent presence in a larger temple devoted to Kali, or one of her kindred gods north of Madras. Being subjective, of course, such a phenomenon is both difficult to define and more difficult to defend. It would seem, however, that feelings of a benevolent presence are not limi-

ted to temples or religious objects, such as images of the Gods, but may also be experienced in relation to various sites, both natural and man-made. Anyone with a sense of American history must have felt at times when visiting the battlefield at Gettysburg where so many are buried that he was standing on hallowed ground. I have been touched with a subtle, yet nonetheless real sense of the reverential, if not holy, when standing on the spot at Washington's crossing where our nation's forefather pushed his boat from the shore, and have felt a similar hallowedness while strolling across farmlands in Maryland that have been nurtured for generations by loving and caring hands. I have had a like experience in a cemetery on the side of a hill in Mt. Union near Easter. All of which relates, I suppose, to man's age-old belief in the inhabitation of spirits, whether of ancestors or gods, in various places, including trees, stones, fields, houses, temples, images, objects, and works of art of all kinds. It relates also to the common belief that artists have the ability to infuse objects with some kind of presence or spirit, and that priests have the ability to come into contact with this presence and even manipulate it. It relates also to the idea that the place or site at which a great historical birth, event, miracle or death occurs takes on and retains the special qualities of the personage or persons involved, and pilgrims may partake of that special presence by visiting and paying homage at the site. One need think only of Bernadette and her vision of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes to bring to mind an illustration in which healing and purifying powers are attributed to the spring near the place where the vision occurs, or one may mention Arlington National Cemetery where we hallow our nation's deaths. People have felt this hallowed sense of presence in an endless number of places, cathedrals, churches, cemeteries, battle grounds, temples, grottoes all over the world and in every conceivable faith. It would seem that history bears continuous evidence of some kind of sacramental entry into life, in all times and in all places. The deeper mystery is just what all such evidence of "divine" entry or special concern throughout history really means.

Recent contact with lectures and readings relating to holy sites of pilgrimage in India and how they came to be, along with my own memories of special experiences in relation to several places, both here and abroad, have combined to stimulate an interest in the ways in which holy places come into being. This question, having crept up on me imperceptibly, has evidently also led my mind to noting some similarities among both experiences I have had and various sources of information relating to this topic which stir my interest. For example, while reading an article which traces the development

of the Buddha image and the cult of its worship, I came across an anecdote which states that the Buddha, in trying to forestall any worship of himself as a person, allowed the Bodhi-Tree to be set up by Ananda with his sanction, during his lifetime, as a substitute for personal worship.¹ It is one of those curious alchemies of scholarly investigation that I encountered a parallel anecdote while reading the life of Sri Aurobindo which relates to a tree at the site of the Master's teaching, and eventually, as at Bodh-Gaya, his samadhi. The story is told of the disciples planting a tree under the direct instruction of his co-worker, the Mother, in 1930, which now shades the last remains of both the Master and the Mother in samadhi. In growing, the tree's branches hung so low that many of the disciples hit their heads and wanted to cut the branches off but they were strictly forbidden. Instead, they were instructed to build supports for the tree as it grew and spread so that no one branch of this living symbol should be lost. Today, the "Service Tree", as it is called, shades the thousands of visitors and worshippers that come there, just as it stands protectively over Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's tomb. I find the parallel between this contemporary tree and that of the Buddha's five centuries before Christ somewhat intriguing. It relates, however, to several other trees in my experience and that of my students, which make the "living tree" as a symbol more and more interesting. At this point, it came to mind that the cross of Christ is often referred to as the "tree of Calvary", especially in hymns and that its wood was supposedly taken from one of the most ancient and durable trees in Palestine. There are some other trees I had in mind, however.

While reading in Volwahren concerning the origins of the mandala as a cosmic plan for cities, I came across this item concerning the centrality of a living tree in ancient Indian living which made a further connection with my growing ruminations about holy sites:

Before any cities were founded the villages of the Aryan tribes were arranged as follows. In the centre there stood a huge tree, under which the elders held counsel and pronounced judgement. This *tree symbolized the axis around which the universe and the celestial realms were believed to rotate*. Its branches marked off the celestial worlds, superimposed one upon the other.²

Now it occurs to me that the Bo tree must have been seen as the central axis of the world very early in the growth of Buddhism as a form of

¹ O. C. Gangoly. "The Antiquity of the Buddha-Image The Cult of the Buddha." *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, Neue Folge XIV, Heft 2/3.

² Andreas Volwahren. *Living Architecture: Indian*. Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1969, p. 46.

worship, just as this tree in the Aryan village, although I have no reference to validate that obvious notion at the moment. It is clear, also, that after Buddha's passing, his remains, and later the mound or stupa which was built to house or preserve them, his burial mound, became that center or axis, and circumambulation became one of the rites, as it is in the Hindu temple, by which the site was venerated. In the case of Hinduism, it is the mythical presence of the God Brahma in the Vastu-purusha mandala that becomes the axis or fulcrum around which all devotion takes place, and the center or core of the architectural monument, the temple itself. One is tempted to speculate, not being able to discern the remote past, that just as the elaborate structure of the chaitya hall grew up with time to enshrine a few hairs or nails of the Buddha, the temple probably had its origins around a magical diagram scratched with a stick in a village on the site of some divinely auspicious event. It occurs to me also that the Mother and her disciples, in preserving the remains of Sri Aurobindo in a garden setting with a tomb and a protective or "sacred" tree, were following an ancient tradition, the import being that these remains and this tree are now the "living fulcrum of the world" and if both these traditions were to be followed over time, that is, both Hindu and Buddhist, one could eventually expect some sort of new structure to emerge at the site. Thus we would have the typical evolutionary development of an architecture, and, I suppose, accompanying rituals, that any new faith based upon the life and teachings of a new saint usually follows.

It occurs to me, however, that there are other factors in the contemporary picture that would cause things to take a different direction, although other parallels to the histories of previous holy sites exist. This is the dream and the reality of Auroville, a new city already under construction, by followers of Sri Aurobindo on land north and somewhat removed from the Ashram which is the site of the Samadhi and the tree we have discussed. On this site, there is *another tree*, of great age and character, which has already been used as a focal point for celebrations, exhibitions, visits which, for the time being, at least, and for the Tamil natives in the vicinity, seems to be functioning much as that ancient Aryan village tree. This tree will neighbour the Matrimandir, or "Shrine of Truth", which is under construction in the center of a mandala-like plan of the city to come.

So much for some ruminations about similarities between a number of "holy trees" which are related to different sites and different faiths, two historical and one contemporary. I should much like to add that

a tree has functioned as a natural symbol at least once in my own experience, and a brief account of it may explain my sympathy or affinity for the tree as it has been so far discussed. I came upon this tree along a stream at a time when I was much taken with the seeming split in the consciousness of the west which I explained by reference to the crucifixion as an historical event. It was also at a time when I was much distressed by the split or tensions between east and west, and the tree was stumbled upon quite accidentally. Due to the "set" of my thought, however, it was remarkable with what speed it became a "living symbol" and eventuated into a lecture and a poem shortly afterward. The tree had been struck by lightning and split open down the center, or "to the heart" as I saw it. The two flayed halves of the trunk were lying horizontally, on either side of a path which went through its heart, and, amazingly, a host of tall, green shoots of new growth had leaped skyward, from either side. In short, bright new growth had sprung up beautifully and courageously and in defiance of the decaying, graying dying limbs on either side. It immediately became a symbol for me of the hopes our current generation holds for a new birth of peace which will bind east and west together, and the new shoots were symbols of the young people who would be born to accomplish the reconciliation and the new birth on either side of the present chasm of alienation, the old world split in two.

This illustration is given merely to show my affinity for the tree as a symbol, and I would like to relate one more such instance from an essay by a student. In one of my courses, I am in the habit of asking for testimonials on aesthetic experience, and one of the most beautiful accounts had to do with a young lady who came upon a magnificent pine tree while walking in the snow. She crawled in under its protective branches and sat under its quiet canopy until a particularly heightened form of elation overcame her, a sense of deep serenity, love and peace. Such events are probably inexplicable, and they occur usually when least expected, but her account, or rather her naming of it, was particularly apt. She called it "a snowy dome of inner peace." The parallel to a sanctuary, a place of peace, a hallowed ground is obvious. She had stumbled upon and created her own temple in the woods and the experience would stay with her as long as she lived. So much, again, for my thoughts about trees and the part they play in the marking and growth of holy sites. And all this has omitted any mention of Moses' burning bush!

I should like to turn my thought to another source of sanctuaries

or sites of pilgrimage, namely, dreams. In a recent lecture, Prof. Spencer stated that a deity may direct a person to erect a shrine in India, as in dreams, and several instances were given reciting such visions. The statement made me think of other instances in which a vision led to the eventual sanctification of a holy site, whether in the east or the west. It made me wonder what led the Buddha to the Uruvela forest and to the particular tree, now sacred, under which he sat assailed by the temptations of Mara, only to achieve Nirvana. Did he have a vision, unknown to us, which brought him to that particular site? I came upon a contemporary illustration of such a vision again in the life of Sri Aurobindo. Narayan Prasad states :

It was in compliance with a Divine Adesh (command) that Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry in 1910, and he never went out of the town even for a day during 40 years, despite all attempts to entice him to British India or to extradite him. The Ashram, although then no visible body, can be taken to have been set up, in its essence, with his arrival.¹

In short, the sage was led to a particular geographical spot by a vision or divine command and, from that time on, there was no question of his leaving. He was settled in one place to do his work on one site for good. The move is also interpreted as prophetic since, according to an archaeologist named Dubreuil, the man who was to reinterpret the meaning of the Vedas and to confirm them in his yogic experience had come to the site of an ancient Vedic college or center of culture and, in keeping with the prophetic nature of this vision, the town's real name was Puducheri which means "new town"² and 60 years later a new town in his name was to be dedicated near this very site. Further, it was to be a vision or a dream of a new city of universal culture and harmony experienced by the Mother which led to the establishment of Auroville, the City of Dawn, on the Coromandel Coast. And again, carrying the prophetic dream element further, it was in a series of dreams that the fourfold partitions and the mandala type plan of the site were revealed to the architect who drew up the initial plans for the city.

Two other dreams of a premonitory nature are reported in connection with Sri Aurobindo's passing into samadhi. One sadhak dreamed, some twenty days before the Master's passing, that he saw him come out of his

¹ Narayan Prasad: *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram* Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, India, 1965, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 271.

room and sit down under the Service Tree. He communicated this to the attendants at the time who were aware of Sri Aurobindo's state, and they told him that from that time on he would only be there. Later, when the body was being placed in the vault, the dream passed again before his eyes, and its meaning was clear. Similarly, four days before his burial, a young girl in the Ashram had a dream in which Sri Aurobindo appeared and told her he was going away, after which she wept. She was later told that he had passed away on that day.

PAUL EDMONSTON

UNMOVED MOVER

Do not run away
 From anything.
 Do not run after
 Anything.
 If the thing is ugly
 Reject it calmly and quietly,
 Standing where you are.
 If the thing is glorious
 Accept it lovingly,
 But only
 Standing where you are.
 You are superior to all things
 And have a power to reject or accept them.
 But that could be visible
 Only if you stand unmoved and firm
 Where you are, in all circumstances.

GIRDHARLAL

THE SECRET SOURCE OF THE GANGES

A QUEST IN A STRANGE LAND

(Continued from the issue of September 1975)

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

VIII

“ASTOUNDING! The waves and floods of *ānanda* in which I have been lost since yesterday, I can feel them at all moments, but such a high state seems unbearable, suffocating — as if I can stay here no more.... Why does it happen like that, Devi?”

She smiled and explained:

“This is our Gandharva Rajya! Centred around Ganga Devi, high in the Himalayas, are the earth, water, air, in fact all that is essential for the sustenance of a physical body; these elements would seem a bit strange to the inhabitants of the lowland. Particularly compared to the all-too-familiar gross world of yours, everything in this place may seem very strange and unearthly or ethereal. Furthermore, you are not accustomed to the rarefied air of the Himalayan ridges; so to linger here for long is hard for you. This explains your present condition.

“Now let me break the ice: you are young, about 30, I believe, a new life and strength can be seen flowering in you. You are not, as yet, lost under the hard crust of worldliness, deceitfulness and grossness which is the way of your society; seeing your heart-whole face my lord wished to bring you here as our guest and satisfy your eager curiosity. That is why you could at all live here till now and may continue to do so for sometime more, if you wish. None who belongs to the ranks of ordinary mentality or whose thoughts and preoccupations are centred on the gross material world alone, can stay here even for a moment against our will.”

I weighed in with the remonstrance, “The source of Ganga Devi is the object of our pilgrimage too; we also — ”

Stopping me short she said, “Oh, it is the one that comes down from the snow-covered mountain in so-called Gomukh. You people see only her most material form and worship her according to your tradition or sacra-

ments, in an unrefined way and with only a lip-respect; but actually it is mummery — and you do all this accepting a dreadful Puranic truth based on the legend of the rescue of the Sagara dynasty.¹ You people cannot reach anywhere near the actual source of the Ganga. With great sedulity, spending a lot of energy and undergoing tremendous hardship, even if a man by chance manages to reach there, it would be impossible for him to remain there alive!”

Immediately the thought of the lucky chance-meeting with that Olympian of a man occurred to me — a miracle of the first water. Thanks to him I found my way to this land. It was not difficult for me to understand that it would have been impossible to come here, depending solely on my personal strength. I silently expressed my accordance: it was a grace, and a free grace.

The Gandharvi continued, “Here you will not find the whirligig of time, nor is there any unhealthy influence of the climate or seasons, it is always joyful spring; that is why nobody has any natural depression or sorrow.”

I was quick to ask, “Then why this depression in me today since early morning? After coming here, I was having the time of my life; till yesterday I was perfectly happy. The cultural programmes have given me immense delight — ”

Unperturbed and riant, Devi explained, “It was by our wish that you became receptive enough to enjoy the *rasa* of the music in the open dancing hall and the temple.”

I bridled up. My *amour propre* was hurt; in fact I was quite taken a-back. “How could that be?” I exclaimed, “I have a fairly good background in music!” My tone was clear and full of confidence.

Devi flushed rather than frowned. In a voice soft but very clear she informed me, “By our wish, and thanks to the minute particles of life-currents here which fed your vital sheath, the subtle sound-waves could penetrate your auditory channel through to your heart. Of course, all this became at all possible because the foundation had already been prepared in you. Appreciating this sublime music and these refined emotions is simply not possible for ordinary, less sensitive men. It becomes possible only by the action of our propitious mind-force. As for the present reaction in you, it is because you do not belong to this milieu. Anyway, it will soon pass.”

I nodded. I was mollified. I felt relieved that she ignored my impu-

¹ Bhagirath, saintly descendant of king Sagara, invoked Ganga to come down from Indra's heaven and deliver the souls of 60,000 sinful sons of Sagara from hell.

dence, my aggressive ignorance.

“But there is another curiosity in me: we are a people of a strange nature, of another race, very inferior, our way of life is altogether different — then how is it that you are so gracious to us? I am truly surprised.”

“Everybody here is strongly attracted by strangers and guests,” she told me, “for very few beings of the lower plateau can come here.”

It was my feeling rather than sure knowledge that by ‘lower plateau’ she meant — besides the people who live more to the south and on physically lower altitudes — those that are not interested in the higher life.

Howbeit, I succeeded in further drawing her out by asking the obvious question, “Why?”

She revealed: “That is because of their besetting sin of identifying themselves with their opaque physical body, their coarse desires and beastly passions, their rough and uncouth actions and incurable attachment to their dense physical, animal sheath. They have given their hearts away to material forms and objects. All this prevents them from coming or staying here.

“Besides this, having been always dominating over the animal kingdom, men consider themselves civilized and much superior to the animals; this pride has gone to their heads and made them blind. Animal or physical strength is their main support, since there is practically no trace of any spiritual powers in human society. And, again, men do not feel satisfied unless they get coarse enjoyments. Their connection with the animals is deep-rooted indeed. They think animal, eat animal, live animal and have their work done by animals. The lot of the birds and fishes is no better, they too are exploited by men. In short, men have upset the life of all the living things on earth.

“Many are the tricks man is adept at in subduing the subhuman species. So many things are invented to kill the animals, but finally, and ironically, it is seen that they are gleefully murdering one another with these same contrivances. Jealousy, covetousness and such other rapacious inclinations — the remnants of man’s beastly origin — give them joy and excitement. These evils have become a way of life in human society. So, in every dealing and action, man takes the lead from the beasts, voluntarily or involuntarily. The few who follow the path of goodness object to this, but their precepts do not always reach the ears of the mass, or they are not given due consideration and importance.”

Devi paused. A far-away look came into her eyes. Was she musing, or worried, or sad? Maybe all the three. A little later she spoke again.

“What fools these men are! From time to time they would attempt to climb the Himalayan or other peaks and count that as an extraordinary and meritorious deed. Then they are eager to become materially all-powerful, even at the cost of all that is beautiful and good in Nature; for them manliness or humanness means going all out against Nature or doing unnatural things. Blindly, they tread the dreadful path of self-aggrandisement and exploitation of the weak.

“In the hoary past Goddess Durga slew Chanda and Munda hereabouts. At that time, explaining the need of destroying them She said that these *asuras* had become intolerably savage and egoistic. Their ruthless barbarism over men and gods was unbearable. Exactly that kind of despotism and chaos is in the offing in man’s world. By the oppression of some powerful, ‘civilized’ animals, society is in a state of turmoil, deprived even of a hope for peace. Those who aspire after peaceful co-existence are rewarded only with bitter experiences.”

I was hanging on her lips with rapt attention, and now I was overwhelmed with a profound emotion. How surprising, she the happy and opulent and enchanting, communicating mostly through radiant smiles and soft laughters, became that day so effusively wordy, being overcome with sorrow at the sorry plight of cribbed humanity. I cannot say why I should have behaved as I then did, because I do not know it myself; it was not at all how I had seen myself behaving on a similar occasion. A sob tried to break from my tight throat; but I bit my lip and remained staid.

With delectable warmth she continued, “This state of the animal — the animal mentality — beastliness, it is man’s dream, his ideal, everything. Being puffed up by their egoism, men are not aware of the bottomless pit they are driven to. So when proud mankind boasts, it compares itself shamelessly with less developed species.”

“Why is it like that?” I heard myself uttering.

Devi answered, “The so-called civilized men compare themselves either with animals or with those aborigines who are animals born as human beings for the first time. That makes these men feel elated. Thus always mixing with beings or species of a lower order, using them as instruments for their own selfish ends and comparing themselves with these, human society could not avoid degradation. If there were some acquaintance with the beings of a higher plane of consciousness, if men could compare themselves with them, then they would be matured enough to understand their own condition. But men do not even give due respect to the truly great ones of their own society, so where

is the question of their taking trouble to contact beings of a more perfect world?

“There is no unity and cooperation among human beings. They unscrupulously criticize one another; this keeps the fire of conflict burning. And there are many who restlessly trot about the globe in the hope of finding harmony, happiness or understanding. They never find any of these anywhere. Then, those who have become effete, lacking the energy to move about after having spent a dissipated life, sit idly, wishing other people’s fall. They have no healthy consideration for others.”

Moments of silence passed before she observed, “Seeing this fallen condition of men, their perversion, a certain sympathy is evoked in us. As a result we feel an urge to raise in them subtle sensitivity, through various means: refined arts (*rasas*), social instincts like friendliness, love, affection, understanding; and thus we seek to eliminate their smallness and spur them to some noble cause. For us, a human being, whoever he may be, needs and deserves our kindness. This understanding is there in everyone here. It is an instinct from birth, one could say.”

Through the ears her words reached my heart. Bit by bit the hard truth came home all right. Alas, compared to the lofty insight of the inhabitants of this region, in what a muddy pool man’s mind is wallowing in our society! The animal has been supposed to be so inferior to man, but where does man stand today? Indeed, what an abysmal misery he has to suffer now for his obstinate ignorance and hostility towards all that is good!

I understood that Devi — being saddened by man’s misfortune — said so many things for our well-being. Then I remembered something which I had heard many times: souls of a higher order or development do not have such pettinesses as passions, and impulsions like attachment, hatred, sorrow, etc. Then why — I wondered — are these Olympians so fond of visitors or human beings in general?

Devi read what was in my mind. She looked at me tenderly and said:

“True, we do not have all that. But we do get attracted — we have feelings of love, as it is the law of the universe. We like to see a man satisfied, it is an innate propensity in us. And we do it here mainly through hospitality. We do not like to be isolated and we *are not*. Below us our immediate neighbour is man, and exactly above us is the world of the gods.

“We hold truck with both of these. But the connection with man is the greater because, according to Nature’s scheme it is by our courtesy that the family of man develops, progresses and becomes more and more cultured. Man does not know that the expressions of the soul’s delightful existence — dance, music, painting, poetry, etc. — are usually inspired by us. Unfortunately few people can retain the purity of these arts or the inspirations, few can really achieve *siddhi* (mastery) in any of these.”

Being an artist I immediately cognized this truth in my heart of hearts. Therefore I was curious to know, “Why does it happen like that, Devi? Why can’t we remain faithful to the inspiration, and pure, even when we wish to?”

She answered, “Egotism, boastfulness, jealousy and ambition — these four ‘great qualities’ are bred in the bone of every man; they are always clearly perceptible in all man’s undertakings. Ironically, these defects have been, shamelessly, conveniently, regarded as special qualifications. A smart man is one who is ambitious and can thrust himself forward at the expense of others’ ease and convenience. And hardly any artist sincerely desires the spread of arts and techniques. People actually have their eyes fixed on gold. Everybody is mad after it. Based on this mineral substance runs the history of man’s crude intelligence, the materialistic mind. This metal has been the centre round which has grown up man’s civilization, his prosperity, trade, business and culture. It is declared to be the chief good, the most valuable thing that civilization has to give. Queer! Gold is the footing of man’s pride and vanity. The more one has of this metal the greater is he among men.”

I was quite astonished. “Devi, we live in society, but we have never looked at this amazing truth in this way. We boast of knowledge and artistic skills in public gatherings...”

She cut in, “In the field of knowledge man’s smallness and poverty are staggering. ‘Nobody should become greater than me,’ this is the mentality of most human beings. They balk the advance and spread of arts and culture by being biased, over-enthusiastic about one or two persons who have managed to come into the limelight. Instead of freely encouraging people to learn arts of any kind by providing them with facilities, your society only induces them to be ambitious and greedy by rewarding with wealth and honour only a few select artists. Lust for riches is a hindrance to the diffusion of all that is noble and lofty.”

After a moment’s pause she concluded, “These are the reasons why we attract sometimes those youths who are receptive, sincere and possess

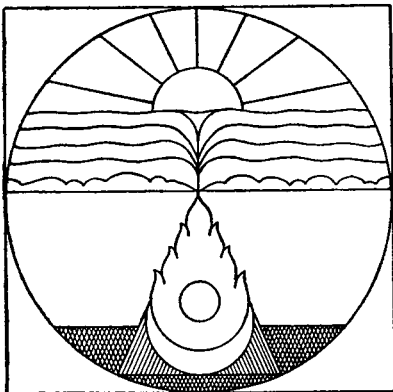
clean hearts; we relieve them of all that is wry and perverse in their minds and lives. Making them pure and blissful we direct and help them on the higher path of progress. If the subtle perception and the capacity to appreciate the arts are developed in a man who comes here, then that becomes a great help to him and his society.”

(*To be continued*)

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EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of September 1975)

8

IN Nuremburg once again the War came to view, this time under the cloak of legality. After the First World War, the Allies had written a "guilt clause" into the Versailles Treaty without giving the guilty party the chance to say a word of defence. Perhaps to make amends this time, they put up a show of "trial" with all the paraphernalia of judicial procedure. It did not placate feelings and what other purpose it could serve still eludes our grasp. It focused attention on facts which had best remain hidden in the archives. Adolf Hess, one-time Deputy to Hitler, is the sole surviving convict, an old man pacing the floor of his cell guarded day and night by a dozen men. We were shown from a distance the outer walls of the prison house. One wonders if he is not regarded as a martyr to a good cause, by people who may not care to express their true feelings.... Apart from this monument to human folly, Nuremburg looks a smiling prosperous town abounding in TV sets and tape recorders and frigidaires displayed in the shops. The quality is fine, the prices are cheap, and some among our companions spent their time looking for bargains.

From Nuremburg we turned westwards, with the river Main playing hide and seek along our track. All of a sudden we found ourselves ushered into the Medieval Age, as we entered the little town of Rothenburg, complete with its massive stone walls and tall frowning towers that would not permit the entry of a modern coach. It was a different kind of world altogether. It so happened that a fête was on, that day. There was a big carnival in progress and the town was in gala dress. People wandered about jovially in their medieval costume complete with sword and dagger and large queer-looking hat. Bus-loads of American tourists mingled gaily in the crowd and cameras clicked as the residents posed for the visitors. The saris must have added a new element of attraction to visitor and townsman alike. Here in Rothenburg we had our first full view of a German doll-shop. It was unique, this little doll-shop that seemed to contain a selection of almost every type of dolls made in Germany and Holland. Every little piece was so cute and the whole show was so interesting that we lingered on as long as we could and did not feel like leaving the place without buying up the whole lot. Perhaps that will be done by some American tourist one

of these days.... And then, suddenly the rains came and woke us up from reverie with a terrific shower that made us run helter-skelter for the coach waiting for us outside the city walls.

The showers bring to mind our experience with shower baths in Italy. We encountered a variety of baths in the course of our travels, but there was none to match the shower baths of Italy. Of that anon.

Mohenjodaro can assuredly claim for India priority in time among all the bathing devices invented by man. But the ruins of the ancient Roman baths, built some two thousand years later, give the more charming impression. The aqueducts which brought the water from distant hills are still to be seen. But the baths themselves, once the centre of ancient fashionable society where eminent politicians discussed the latest scandal while the slaves massaged their limbs with oil, are no longer used as baths, as their replicas are in American film settings. We were surprised to learn they are now used as the stage for open-air theatrical shows. Need we really get surprised? The baths had already acquired a theatrical flavour and had been thrown open to the general public before the fall of Rome....

Our up-to-date hotel offered the Sauna of Finland, one of the latest and craziest among bathing styles. But there is nothing like it if one has the intention of being boiled alive and then restored to life under the snow. Americans seem to love it. We in India were too accustomed to get scorched if not boiled alive under the sun free of charge to squander the precious dollars on this doubtful luxury. The Turkish bath is good enough for a change, for there you get a thorough laundrying of your body followed by a deep sense of relaxation and general well-being. It is not so expensive either.

The Spas or hot-water mineral spring resorts have been a well-known speciality of Germany for a long time. Some of them still do flourishing business, although rheumatism or gout which they particularly claim to cure is no longer deemed so fashionable as in less hectic times. People seem to visit the Spas nowadays for another fashionable purpose. Every day a list is hung out to say what food to eat and what not to eat on that particular day. We cannot say if that has any astrological significance, and whether the list helps cure diseases. But it certainly helps reduce fat....

America, they say, is the land of delightful baths. But Europe too seems to offer quite a bewildering variety — at least from the language point of view. In any case the ultra-modern hotels where we were put up throughout our tour offered facilities of bathing which no American

need grudge. The showers were not fitted with golden knobs to be sure, but they blew hot and cold all the same.

And here came the rub — in our first experience of an Italian shower, at the hotel in Rome; for we could not decide which it would be, hot or cold. On the knobs were written the words “Fredo” and “Caldo”. Now, which of them was “cold” and which might be “hot”, in simple King’s English? — that was the problem. We had no knowledge of Italian, and we did not carry a pocket dictionary. Even if we did, it is not generally the custom to carry it to the bath. So, we had to fall back on etymology, and plain common sense. But “Fredo” sounded like “frozen” and “Caldo” must be “cold”. Were they meant to indicate different degrees of cold then? Perhaps in a climate like that of South Italy, hot water was not needed in a bath? Etymology which once played havoc with Vedic interpretation was now going to play havoc with our skin. The “Caldo” was turned on, with a blind faith in etymology *cum* common sense. A thorough scalding was the immediate upshot. One feels an Italian shower bath should always have a pocket dictionary attached...

In Germany and other northern countries bath tubs seem to be more popular, one does not know why. There need not be any historical grounds, for it is not on record that Archimedes shouted his “Eureka” from a bath tub beyond the Alps. It may be that the northerners take more exercise and need a longer time for relaxation. It may be that water is more plentiful. But it cannot be particularly cheap; for a dip in the tub may be quite an expensive affair if one is used to bathing more than once a day. In most of the hotels we stayed at, we had to move into the corridor to find a bath tub, and it had to be paid for every time one wanted to have a dip. Strangely enough, practically on every occasion we entered a hotel for the first time, we found the doors of the bathrooms in the corridor wide open and tempting a free entry as soon as we had time to change, in spite of the fact that our arrival time must have been intimated to the hotel people well in advance. Before one could make up one’s mind about the bath, the maids came rushing into the corridor and promptly shut the tub out of one’s view. On the door-panel outside there appeared in bold white letters the German word, BAD, whose meaning one could easily guess. It was too bad...

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI