

MOTHER INDIA

▲ MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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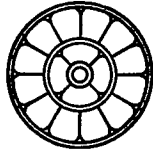
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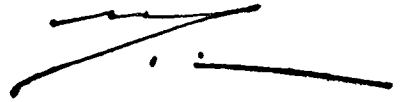


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXVII

No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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THE MOTHER ON SRI AUROBINDO

SRI Aurobindo came to tell the world of the beauty of the future that must be realised.

He came to give not a hope but a certitude of the splendour towards which the world moves.

The world needs the certitude of the beauty of the future. And Sri Aurobindo has given that assurance.

Sri Aurobindo gave his life so that we may be born into the Divine Consciousness.

1972

Each one has his own idea and finds out suitable sentences from Sri Aurobindo's writings to support his views. Those who oppose such views can also find suitable sentences from his writings. That is the way mutual opposition works. Nothing can be truly done until Sri Aurobindo's total view of things is taken.

10.10.1954

THE MOTHER ON OUR TRUE REASON FOR EXISTENCE

WE are here to give up all desires and to turn towards the Divine and to become conscious of the Divine. The Divine we seek is not far away and inaccessible. He is in the very core of the creation itself and what this requires of us is that we find Him, and by transforming ourselves personally become capable of knowing Him, unite with Him, and in the end we manifest Him consciously. It is to that that we should consecrate ourselves, that is our true reason for existence. And the very first step towards this sublime realisation is the manifestation of the Supramental Consciousness.

March 30, 1972

A NOTE ON "SRI" AND "AUROBINDO"

A PROTESTING member of the New York City Center once urged the Mother to "wage a war" against the practice in the U.S. of dropping the "Sri" from Sri Aurobindo's name. The Mother refused to be belligerent but deplored this tendency and told an American sadhika in the Ashram to inform them that "Sri" was *not* a prefix but an integral part of the name. She added that perhaps this tendency grew up because of a misunderstanding about Auroville. The name "Auroville" was chosen from the French "aurore", Dawn City, not from Sri Aurobindo.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat fragmentary, incomplete form. The translation of the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother at the time of its first publication as a book in French, came out in book-form in 1973. We are giving this translation here.)

February 7, 1957

This talk was given on a Thursday, the day of collective meditation. As an exception, the Mother spoke that evening.

BEFORE the meditation this evening I am going to say a few words, because several people have asked me the difference between a collective meditation and an individual meditation.

Individual meditation — I have already explained to you many times the different kinds of meditation that can be done and I shan't begin to talk to you about that again.

But collective meditations have been practised at all times for different reasons, in different ways and with different motives. What may be called a collective meditation is a group of people who gather together for a definite purpose; for example, at all times it has been a practice to gather for prayers. Naturally in the Churches, it is a sort of collective meditation, but even outside the Churches there have been persons who have organised collective meditations for common prayers. These prayers are of two different kinds.

From the beginning of human history, one knows, certain groups of people gathered together to express in common a certain state of soul. Some to sing together the praise of God, canticles, works of grace, to express adoration, thanksgiving, gratitude, and so to praise God. Others — and there are historical examples of this — a certain number of people gathered together for a common invocation, for instance to ask God for something, and this was done by all together, united, in the hope that this invocation, this prayer, this asking would carry more weight. There were very famous instances. One of the very old ones occurred in 1000 A.D. when some prophets had proclaimed that it was the end of the world and everywhere men gathered together to offer common prayers and ask that the world may not come to an end (!) or, in any case, that it be protected. Much more recently, in modern times, when the king of England, George, was dying of pneumonia, people assembled in England,

not only in the Churches but even in the streets before the royal palace, to offer prayers and ask God to cure him. It happened that he recovered, and they believed that it was their prayers.... That is of course the most external form, I could say the most worldly, of a common meditation.

In all initiatory groups, in all spiritual schools of ancient times, common meditation was always practised, and in that case the motive was quite different. They gathered for a collective progress, to open all together to a force, a light, an influence, and...it is more or less this that we want to try to do.

However, there are two methods, and it is this I am going to explain to you. In both cases, one must practise as one does for individual meditation, that is, sit in a position at once sufficiently comfortable for one to be able to keep it and yet not too comfortable to fall asleep in it! And then you do what I asked you to do whilst I used to go for the distribution down there¹, that is, prepare for the meditation, try to become calm and silent; not only not to gossip outwardly, but try to silence your mind and re-collect your consciousness which is dispersed in all the thoughts you have and your preoccupations; to re-collect it, bring it back within as completely as possible and concentrate it here, in the region of the heart, at the solar plexus, in such a way that all the active energies in the head and all that makes the brain run on may be brought back and concentrated here. This may be done in a few seconds, it may take a few minutes: that depends on each one. Indeed that is the preparatory attitude. And then, once this is done (or done as well as you can do it), you may have two attitudes, that is, an active attitude or a passive attitude.

What I call an active attitude is to concentrate on (I shall put it in general terms) the person who is directing the meditation, with the will to open and receive from him what he intends to give you or the force with which he wants to put you into contact. That is active, for here there is a will which works and an active concentration to open yourself to someone, concentrate on someone.

The other, the passive one is simply this: to be concentrated as I have told you, then you open yourself as one opens a door; you know, don't you, you have a door here (*gesture at the level of the heart*) and after you are concentrated, you open the door and remain like this (*gesture of immobility*). Or else you may take another image, as of a book, and you open your book very wide with fine white pages, that is, quite silent ones, and you remain like that waiting for what happens.

These are the two attitudes. You may take the one or the other, according to the days, the occasion, or you may adopt one, preferably, if that helps you more. Both are effective and may have equally good results.

And so, now, for our special case, I shall tell you what I try to do.... It will soon be a year that we had, one Wednesday, the manifestation of the Supramental Force. Since then, it is working very actively, even when very few people are aware of it (!) but still I thought the time had come for — how to put it? — for us to help it a little

¹ Every evening, before meditation or the talks, Mother used to go to distribute groundnuts to the children of the "Green Group", in the adjoining playground.

in its work by making an effort of receptivity.

Naturally, it does not work only in the Ashram, it is working in the whole world and wherever there is some receptivity this Force is at work, and I must say the Ashram hasn't an exclusive receptivity in the world, the monopoly of receptivity. But since it so happens that we are all here more or less in the know of what has taken place, well, I hope that individually each person is doing his best to benefit by the occasion; but collectively we can do something, that is, try to unify a ground, to produce a particularly fertile soil to obtain the maximum receptivity collectively and to have as little wastage as possible of time and force.

So now, you have been told in a general way what we want to try to do and you have only to...to do it.

THE MOTHER ON CHRIST*

“Strange! The Germans have disproved the existence of Christ; yet his crucifixion remains still a greater historic fact than the death of Caesar.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Aphorisms

To what plane of consciousness did Christ belong ?

IN the *Essays on the Gita* Sri Aurobindo mentions the names of three Avatars, and Christ is one of them. An Avatar is an emanation of the Supreme Lord who takes up a human body on earth. I heard Sri Aurobindo himself saying that Christ was an emanation of the aspect of love of the Lord.

The death of Caesar marked a decisive change in the history of Rome and the countries depending on her. It was therefore an important event in the history of Europe.

But the death of Christ has been the starting-point of a new step in the evolution of human civilisation. This is why Sri Aurobindo tells us that the death of Christ was of a greater historical import, that is to say, it had greater historical consequences than the death of Caesar. The history of Christ, as it is related, is a concrete and dramatic representation of the Divine's sacrifice; the Supreme Lord who is All-Light, All-Knowledge, All-Power, All-Beauty, All-Love, All-Bliss assumes in a material body human ignorance and suffering, in order to help men to come out of the falsehood in which they live and because of which they die.

“Men are still in love with grief; when they see one who is too high for grief or joy, they curse him and cry, ‘O thou insensible!’ Therefore Christ still hangs on the cross in Jerusalem.

“Men are in love with sin; when they see one who is too high for vice or virtue, they curse him and cry, ‘O thou breaker of bonds; thou wicked and immoral one!’ Therefore Sri Krishna does not live as yet in Brindaban.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Aphorisms

I would like to have an explanation of these two aphorisms.

When Christ came upon earth, he brought a message of brotherhood, love and peace. He had to die in pain, on the cross, so that his message may be heard. For men cherish suffering and hatred and want their God too to suffer with them. So they wanted, when Christ came, and in spite of his teaching and sacrifice, so they want still and are so attached to their pain that symbolically Christ remains always attached to the cross, suffers perpetually for the salvation of men.

* First republished from *Bulletin in Srinwantu*, December 1966

As for Krishna, he came upon earth to bring freedom and delight. He came to declare to men, slaves of Nature, slaves of their passions and errors, that if they took refuge in the Supreme Lord, they would be free from all slavery and sin. But men are very much attached to their vices and their virtues (for without vice there could be no virtue), they are in love with their sins and cannot tolerate anyone to be free and above all error.

That is why Krishna, although immortal, is not present at Brindaban in a body at the present hour.

“They say that the Gospels are forgeries and Krishna a creation of the poets. Thank God then for the forgeries and bow down before the inventors.”

Sri Aurobindo, Thoughts and Aphorisms.

What is the role of the Gospels in the life of man?

The Gospels were the starting-point of the Christian religion. To say what they have brought to the world it would be necessary to give a historical and psychological account of the growth and life of Christianity and the action of the Christian religion upon earth. That would be long and not quite in its place here.

I can only say that the writers of the Gospels have tried to reproduce exactly what Christ taught and that they have in a certain measure succeeded in transmitting his message. It is a message of peace, brotherhood and love.

But it is better to keep silent on what men have made of this message.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

JULY 7, 1940

P: Baudoin is furious against the British.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. He says that this aggressive action of the Navy is a blot on English honour — people who are entitled to honour!... Have you heard that the Banker and the Vice Consul of Pondicherry are back?

P: No.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are back; and now the blockade will be withdrawn. Trains won't be stopped; currency will be all right.

P: They must have settled with the Madras Governor.

SRI AUROBINDO: Maybe. But nothing is known on this side. I mean, what the Pondy Governor has decided.

DR. RAO: Weygand, in a statement appearing in today's paper, has laid the blame on the British. He says that he asked them to fight in the South-west, but instead of that they went to the North so that they could escape; and by the sacrifice of the majority of the French army their Expeditionary Force was able to get away.

SRI AUROBINDO: To fight in the South-west would have been the maddest thing to do. They would have been completely destroyed — both the French and the English.

P: Yes; by this move at least the English army has been saved.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes; that was the only course open. The French also should have withdrawn themselves.

DR. RAO: They say that France is their own home land, they can't leave it and get away.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not the question of home. The question is of a military strategy and the only strategy was to withdraw as quickly as possible. If the French had done that, they could again have come back to France and fought. And it was not only the British that escaped. They rescued more than a lakh of the French people too. The fact is that after the breakdown at Sedan and the Meuse, the French, British and Belgian forces were encircled; and then no other course was left than to withdraw. Weygand has done nothing and is now trying to justify himself.

N: There is a notion among our people that the British played tricks and were treacherous.

DR. RAO: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: These people know nothing about war. Why should the British do it? Don't they know that if France falls England would be in the greatest danger? Besides, Churchill has proved that he sent more than he had promised to Reynaud.

P: The British lost 50,000 lorries.

SRI AUROBINDO: 1,000 guns and other material.

S (*After a while*): Is there no news about the invasion of Portugal?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. It must have been a rumour. Franco doesn't seem to intend to claim Gibraltar. He won't as long as the English Navy is supreme. The Spaniards are only taking a promenade with one aeroplane and leaving a few bombs as mementos.

N: The important news of the day was vague today — about the Alexandrian fleet.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, they couldn't catch the keyword.

N: The Italians can send their Navy to help the French.

SRI AUROBINDO: They will take good care not to.

P: Alexandria is far away, they might say.

SRI AUROBINDO: They have their fleet in Dodecanese; they could have sent it from there.

DR. RAO: The Italians are said to be bad fighters.

SRI AUROBINDO: Till now they haven't proved themselves very good. Of course there have been only raids and skirmishes till now. One can't judge from that.

P: Malta is such a small place and so near. The Italians could not do anything till now. (*After a while*) Savarkar is not enthusiastic over the Viceroy's extension of the Executive Council, it seems.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nobody would be enthusiastic. It is like the old reforms, giving one or two seats.

P: Since the Hindu Maha Sabha's and the Liberals' defence policy is the same as that of the Congress, it is asked why the Government should take the minorities instead of the Congress majority with them and win the confidence of the mass.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but the minorities like the Maha Sabha and the Liberals merely advocate their policy and don't insist like the Congress. The Liberals will say that they should have this and that. If nothing is conceded, they say, "All right, we shall wait till the next time." They are a peaceful lot like the Pétain Government.

EVENING

Due to war there has been a Government rule that all arrivals and departures, even for two hours, must be reported to the Police. Dr. Rao, who has now retired,

has not been reported yet. As soon as P entered, Sri Aurobindo started speaking.

SRI AUROBINDO: Purani, have you reported about this dangerous character?

P (*smiling*): No, I will go. (*After a while*) Is there any proposal by the Working Committee? Sikandar Hyat Khan, it seems, has met the Working Committee and Gandhi, and is trying to come to a settlement. Fazlul Hoque was also there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but there is no proposal. They are still discussing. Haven't you read Gandhi's article today?

P: No.

S: He is asking the Congress to keep away from the irresistible temptation of going back to office, to stick to non-violence and declare independence as the immediate goal.

SRI AUROBINDO: And yet it was he who was willing to accept Dominion Status, and proclaimed his view about it.

NIRODBARAN

ZERO

Do not be afraid
Of failure,
For failure is not
A denial of success.
It is only a zero success,
A hidden beginning of success.

If you drop zero
Where is 10, 100 or 1,000,000?
Without zero
There is no appearance
Of a million
And without a beginning
There is no appearance of a goal.
Those who want millions
And those who want to reach the goal
Should not behave disdainfully
With zero or zeros or a line of zeros.

GIRDHARLAL

MONEY AND THE SPIRITUAL ASPIRANT

SOME QUESTIONS AND REPLIES

(This correspondence between two sadhakas dates back to 1952 but the fundamentals of it hold for the present time also.)

The Questions

1. How is a sadhak to earn money divinely? What should be the attitude of the sadhak living outside the Ashram when he goes into the field of business to earn his livelihood? If one labours to earn money with the sole aim of offering all his earnings at the feet of the Mother when he goes to Pondicherry, the matter is quite different, but the difficulty comes in the case when money is required to be earned for the maintenance of our life on earth (and money is indispensable for this). This earning, I think, is not for the Mother. Till the time arrives when one can live in the higher consciousness and constantly feel the Mother within, I believe the earning is for the ego. One may say at any time that the earning is for the Mother within, but without the constant feeling of unity with the Mother, it would be false and dangerous to say so. And yet the incontrovertible fact remains that one has got to earn money for one's existence. So, with what aim, motive and attitude should one work to earn money?

2. When the days are hard — no earning, no income, useless efforts — what should the sadhak do? Could he and should he pray to the Mother for removal of the monetary hardships with the consequent suffering and humiliation which one has to face in dire poverty?

3. Is it a fact that when a person takes to sadhana the Asuric forces who hold the money power (do they yet?) withhold their favours and deprive the sadhak of money and material prosperity?

SHYAM RAJ SHARMA

The Replies

I don't think your problem is so very difficult to solve. Money, of course, has to be earned — whether one earns it for offering it to the Mother or for one's own maintenance. What I don't agree about are the sharply divided alternatives you pose: the Mother or one's own ego. No doubt, they can fall apart, but they need not. As long as there is no constant feeling of unity with the Mother, the ego is bound to be at play — but certainly not at unchecked and absolute play. Here I may mention that even when one is settled in the Ashram the feeling of unity with the Mother is not always present: the ego is in some evidence even if one has mentally given up ordinary relationships and psychically turned towards the spiritual life. So, essentially, the problem can boil down to more or less the same thing whether one is in or

out of the Ashram and whether one is occupied with earning money or with doing some other work. The problem in its ultimate terms is: How is one to act in order that the ego may not fall quite out of tune with the spiritual orientation in one's activity? The problem, therefore, is just that of Karma Yoga — at least to begin with.

The movement of Karma Yoga is in three steps. First, while one feels that one is the doer, one yet makes an inner offering of one's actions to the Divine, and gets inwardly detached from the fruits of one's labour so that failure does not depress and success does not elate one but one preserves a poise and peace *vis-à-vis* every result. Second, one tries to get detached from one's actions themselves and feel oneself to be merely watching what goes on by force of Prakriti or Nature. This deepens into one's becoming the witness Purusha, the individual Being who initiates nothing and only gives or withholds sanction to Nature's doings — and ultimately one realises the infinite impersonal Atman, the one World-Self standing aloof in divine tranquillity and disinterestedness while supporting or not supporting Prakriti's play. Third, through this attainment and through ever-increasing dedication of all one's works and energies to the Ishwara or Supreme Lord a Divine dynamism comes down into one's nature-parts and the lower Prakriti is gripped and guided by the Ishwara's illumined Shakti, the higher Prakriti.

I have used traditional terms. We as Aurobindonians have to substitute our own appropriate ones of a Yoga in which the Mother is felt by us as the Divine embodied.

To practise Karma Yoga while engaged in earning money for the maintenance of oneself and one's family is the general solution of your problem. To this I would add a specially psychic bent — the inmost heart-and-soul's attitude of prayer to the Mother to be always with you and somehow so to guide you that the money you earn may go to the growth of her divinity in your life. The psychic bent should become stronger and stronger, mingling its drive of intense aspiration and deep devotion and passionate self-surrender with the urge of consecrated will that, along with the movement of dissociation, is usual to Karma Yoga.

Thus the whole business of money-getting outside the Ashram will be nothing entirely apart from spirituality. And, as a concrete physical gesture symbolising the interrelation, one should set aside a certain percentage as a direct offering to the Mother.

When the days are hard and there is no income, one may certainly pray to the Mother for removal of monetary problems. There is nothing unspiritual in connecting her in the right manner with questions of money; it would be unspiritual to leave any questions unconnected in the right manner with her. But one should keep off nervous and mental disturbance on account of lack of money: one should not be upset if one gets poor. One should pray for the Mother's help and do everything possible to avert poverty, but in an atmosphere of inner calm. Then the help too comes most, by way both of directive inner inspiration and of changed outer circumstance.

Your suspicion that when a person takes to sadhana the Asuric forces which in general hold the money-power withhold their favours and deprive the sadhak of money and of material prosperity is not well founded in all respects. Of course, the Asuric forces won't like the Divine's disciple to be rich, but they don't have the last word in the matter. If one proves a good medium of the Divine, one can earn more money than an ordinary man — especially when one is the practitioner of a Yoga which accepts the world and seeks to divinise life's activities instead of renouncing them and abandoning the world. It is not always the Asuras who have deprived spiritual men of money: spiritual men have themselves given up earthly goods under the mistaken idea that all such goods are evil. Perhaps the Asuras had a hand in suggesting that idea. In this way their grip on the money-power has been strengthened. Possibly in the past the true means of dealing with worldly powers was mostly missing and the general shying away from them was not altogether reprehensible. But the fact remains that the money-power, like all the others in this world, is originally the Divine's and has to be won back for the Divine's manifestation and it certainly can be won back.

Sometimes, however, financial difficulties come as a test and in order to increase one's spiritual intensity; they are not really punishments by Asuric forces but part of the working out of a Yogic development in one. God's workings are plastic and not single-tracked: they can use the absence of money no less than its presence as a step in their progression. If one meets the test in the correct fashion, the results wanted by the Divine take place — and the results may very well be more money. The chances of more money are at least as many as the opposite. There is no such fixed law as that the God-lover and God-follower invariably gets impoverished in worldly things.

But, of course, the mere fact of one's being a God-lover and God-follower does not automatically safeguard one against financial difficulties and mishaps. Foolishness and incompetence in financial matters may accompany the Godward turn, and ordinary nature brings a toll for them: to turn towards God does not immediately remove whatever foolish and incompetent traits one may have — traits which put one in relation to the common round of the Cosmic Ignorance and its retributive rules. God's grace, nevertheless, is ever about us, and a subtle "tact" of the soul can often get one out of the mess in which one may land oneself, even if one is not able wholly to avoid the mess.

K. D. SETHNA

“THE MOTHER OF DREAMS”

SOME EXPERIENCES FROM 1973

(Continued from the issue of November 1975)

(This is the second instalment of the series started last month. A part of the author's introductory note may be quoted here about the frequent dreams he had of the Mother during his stay in Bombay from August 2 to November 18, 1973, the day after she had left her body: “It was as if she showed herself close and intimate to one who was far away but needed her intensely — a presence of love and light giving repeated darshan before the great leave-taking. The last dream was on the very night of November 17. I used to write a report of each dream. Perhaps a few of the reports may prove of general interest and hold meanings for others no less than myself. They are reproduced below as originally written. Later ‘comments’ follow them whenever these second thoughts seem to illuminate the earlier experiences.)

III

Dream of 13.9.1973

At an early hour this morning I dreamed once more of the Mother. I don't remember many details, but her part is perfectly vivid in my mind. All the more is it vivid because on this occasion I had two darshans of her.

I had to go into a room from an open space in order to see her. She was on a low seat as she used to be in the early days. The first time I went in, I knelt down to her at a little distance. So she leaned forward and stretched her hands and gave me some flowers. After coming out of the room I made a sketch of her as she had looked during that gesture. Before going in again, I found myself, on the way to the room, crossing the open space outside. I saw Pujalal walking a little ahead of me and speaking to somebody behind me on the right. What he said was centred on the word “Sacrifice”. Our sacrifice of ourselves to the Mother: this was the sense of his speech. When I went once more into the room and knelt down — this time quite close — the Mother had a radiant face and a glorious smile. It was wonderful to see her thus.

Out of the two *darshans*, the first was as if the Divine were going out of her way to help: the Divine reaching out to give her love. The second *darshan* was as if the Supreme Bliss, Beauty and Grace were shining forth from their own far-off home, effortlessly like the light of a full moon.

When I woke up, with a deep happiness in my heart, I heard water flowing from the tap in the bathroom. The tap had been kept running in order to fill the bathtub

for use the next morning. I went and turned the tap off. Then I came back, picked up my wrist-watch from the table next to my bed, switched the light on and read the time. It was two minutes past 4 a.m. My dream must have been at exactly 4. There we have again the number which had figured in both the earlier dreams — as part of 47 in the first and of 70 and 40 in the second. What is further interesting is that when I looked at the watch what I saw most clearly was just 4 and 12 on the dial. My eyes were focused on these numbers as if they had been the only ones there. On reflection, I realised that, when 12 and 4 were added up, the sum was $16=1+6=7$. So not only was 4 there quite openly but also 7 as in the other dreams, though now in an indirect manner.

Within the dream itself the only number evident was 2, from the two *darshans*; but 2, of course, is the key-number, communicated through the sum of 4 and 7, 70 and 40, each time 11 which equals 2. Now it seemed communicated straight away and in immediate connection with the Mother herself.

Later Comment

In the preceding comment I have read the recurring 2, which is linked with the repeated 4 and 7, as an indication of the Mother's taking her stand alongside Sri Aurobindo after 47 years of spiritually mothering the Ashram (from November 24, 1926 to November 17, 1973). The present dream shows the Mother herself twice over — but in two distinct attitudes that are complementary to each other. And these attitudes remind us of our usual impression at the *darshans* when she and Sri Aurobindo used to sit side by side. Though full of a transcendent beauty, she leaned towards us and put us at ease by her smiling all-giving grace. Sri Aurobindo, though near to us in the act of benediction, was like a Himalaya, a far height of all-transcending truth. In my dream the Mother was both herself and Sri Aurobindo. She re-enacted in her own person the old *darshans*, suggesting in a sort of pre-view that in another manner she and Sri Aurobindo would again be together but also that to our subtle senses the Divine would still be accessible in a Motherly-cum-Aurobindonian power.

IV

Dream of 15.9.1973

Another dream of the Mother, again at an early hour today. It was a long dream, but my memory does not go back beyond a certain point. At that point which serves as the beginning for me, the keynote of all the dreams — number 2 — is at once struck.

For, I find myself in a kind of classroom with only one other student. We are two and the Mother is our teacher. The second student is Huta. She has an exercise-

book, but I have only a big white envelope with a letter in it dealing with a worldly concern — a sort of business letter. The flap of the envelope has not yet been stuck.

The Mother dictates a sentence in French — a message from her. I start wondering from where to get hold of some material on which to take down the message. Then I decided to write, in a small hand, on the inside of the envelope flap. I can't recall the words in full but the ending sounds like “t'arrondir” which means, literally, “to make you round” and, figuratively, “to enlarge or extend you” or perhaps “to make you full and complete”. When the dictation is done, the Mother wants to look at it. She turns the envelope around and reads what I have written. She finds it correct and is pleased.

She moves on to what has been written on Huta's exercise book and, after reading it, puts her signature on the page. This seems to be her custom. Then she moves back to me. My envelope has changed into an exercise book. She waits for a second — and decides to put her signature on my page, too. But it's not the full name. Just an abbreviation: M. I feel very moved by her generous act.

Now she leaves us. We follow. I may say that my eyes have no cataracts and my left leg is not lame at all. While following the Mother at a distance I feel extremely open to her in my heart. Aspiration and devotion are working there intensely. I ask myself: “Should I send that business letter at all? Why not forget about it and give myself wholly to the Mother?”

At last we reach the door of her apartment. Huta walks in as if that was a natural thing to do. I stand outside and wait. The Mother, who is standing beyond the threshold, smiles, steps half outside, catches my hand and pulls me in. I go in happily. At this time my companion student is a mixture of Huta and Vasudha. She sees that there is a big attached bathroom and exclaims: “How nice! We shall live here like two cooks!” The word “cooks” is surely odd but again the number 2 openly named is striking.

Huta-Vasudha then disappears and I am alone with the Mother. Now she and I form the number 2. I am very close to her. I have an arm half around her waist. The Mother's face is near mine. I move my head a little forward and lightly kiss her on the right cheek. She is slightly startled and makes a serious, semi-disapproving face. I say, “Sorry”, and everything is all right. Then she starts speaking about my sister Minnie. She says: “I wish to bring Minnie near me. I know she has been full of love for me, but I have understood that this love was meant to be in her inner being and not come at all into her outer. The outer was meant to be different. But now I want her to stay near me.” I remark: “Mother, whatever you do in this way is just what she wants. It will enrapture her.”

Here the dream breaks off. I wake up. My impulse is to look at my wrist-watch. But I don't look, I lie quietly lest the memory of the dream should vanish. I trace back the events of the dream for a short while and then, when I am sure of them, I get up, take my wrist-watch to the next room, switch on the light and try to read the time. For a second I can't properly see. The light dazzles me. When I am able

to look, it is 3.29 a.m. A few minutes have surely elapsed from the time the dream ended. It must be two or three minutes. Most probably it is three. If that is so, the time was 3.26 a.m. The numbers would add up to $11=2$.

P.S. — My first operation has come to be fixed for next Tuesday: 18.9.1973 = $11=2$. Doctor Ursekar will do it. He is at present doing his own work as well as that of Doctor Maskati who was going to operate on me but is now gone abroad.

Doctor Ursekar = 13 letters = 4.

Tuesday = 7 letters

So $4 + 7 = 11 = 2$.

V

Dream of 29.9.1973

Three more reports were sent to Pondicherry during the next fortnight — on September 20, 25 and 29 respectively. The first one ran as follows:

At the hospital where my operation was to be done, I was to be put in ward 13, that is $1+3=4$. I chuckled with anticipation. I was told my bed would be number 1. This surprised me, but a greater surprise was in store. On getting to the hospital in the afternoon of September 17, I found that my bed was part of a row of 5 beds — the very first row as we entered the room. Believe it or not, my bed, numbered 1, was not standing first but second. It was as if bed 2 from one side and bed 4 from the other. If 4 and 2 are put together and the actual labelled number, which was 1, is added to their sum, we get 7. So once more 4 and 7, amounting to $11=2$. Surely the Mother's numerology was having a field-day!

It was a huge ward, very clean, airy and bright. There were sixteen beds in all, widely spaced. Late in the evening, after a good vegetarian meal, I was taken downstairs for a final check. Various tests were done; the one that sticks most in my memory is the passing of a wire into the tiny hole at the inner corner of the right eye, the hole connecting the eye with the nose and the throat. Water was injected into this hole until I could get it in the throat and gulp it. My upper eyelashes were all cut after this.

Early next morning I was sponged. Then I got tea, but no bread and butter, as patients who are to be operated upon do not get solid food. Later I was given an intravenous injection of Terramycin. At 8, I was taken in a wheelchair to the preparation room. There the eye was washed with drops and the surrounding areas cleaned with ether. Again in a wheelchair I was taken to the upper floor — the operation theatre. Stretched on the operation table I was given several injections — one in the facial nerve near the ear, another in the lower eyelid, a third in the upper eyelid, and a fourth behind the eyeball. Then an intramuscular injection of Pethidine (Morphine) in the right arm to make me dozey. While lying on the operation table I got

repeatedly a slight cough, a thing forbidden. I tried a trick in which I had often succeeded. There is a Purusha (Self) at each spot of the body behind the Prakriti (Nature) working there. I now separated the Purusha in the throat from the Prakriti which was indulging in that local irritation. And this Purusha, standing back, refused sanction to what Prakriti was up to. Immediately the movement to clear the throat stopped and never came back till 36 hours later! I also called for the peace and protection of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

When the injection had taken effect, Dr. Ursekar started covering my left eye as well as the parts around the right, leaving only the prepared eye open. This took quite a time. He was sitting on a stool behind my head. My doctor nephew, Ferdauz, was to my left and near him a nurse. A bright light was switched on above my eye and the operation began. The doctor made a semi-circular cut in the skin over the lens. Then he called for the Cryopen, the probe with freezing nitrogen within its tip. He inserted it under the skin flap and touched the lens. The lens froze and stuck to the Cryopen and came out with it. The operation was over. The doctor started putting sutures into the cut skin of the eyeball, as well into the upper eyelid. The previous bandages were removed and a new bandage was neatly put over the eyes. I tried to thank the doc and to say that the operation had been absolutely painless, but the Pethidine made my speech very difficult and I could hardly get the letter *l* right in the expression. Then I was shifted to a wheeled trolley and taken out of the operation room. I attempted to say something to my sister, my brother-in-law and my other nephew who were waiting outside. But the same effect in the speech was there.

We are supposed to keep the head completely still for twenty-four hours, otherwise the operation may be a failure. I consider this idea an utter myth. For the trolley on which I was laid was an old rattling one and, although sandbags had been put on both sides of my head, my head was jerked up and down and from left to right as I have never experienced before in my life. Halfway through, I kept my head a little high, suspended instead of right down.

Back to the ward, very dopey in the head but in possession of my mind, even if unable to articulate clearly. I inwardly thanked the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. After some time I fell into a doze. The doze lasted until about 3 p.m. Ferdauz had been tenderly looking after me all the time.

The rest of the family called at 4 p.m. when the visiting time started. I chatted with them cheerfully. As I had been instructed to lie on my back all the time, my back was painful. At night when one of the hospital doctors came to see me I asked if I could turn a little. The answer was “Yes”. This relieved the backache. Now I realise that all such instructions are more or less bunkum. One should try to take precautions but not overdo it. Of course one must not turn on the side of the operation.

I woke up in the morning lying on my left side. At seven the left eye was unbandaged, the right eye cleaned, the suture in the upper eyelid cut, the eye closed up

again but the other one left free and open. I was no longer totally blind. The whole day passed well. In the afternoon my sister brought Sehra's registered envelope containing the special blessing-packet given by Champaklal from the Mother's room. It was a glorious little purse in gold-paper with a press-button. Inside were the photos of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The instructions were that what was inside should be the first thing my right eye should fall upon when it would be able to see.

In the evening when the other relatives called, I was quite animated and my hands moved as usual in accompaniment to my talk. They found me a little too active and advised me not to move my head. Very obediently I agreed, affirming my agreement by nodding several times.

I slept well at night. In the morning I got permission to read and write a little. Hence this report. I'll close it with a snatch of conversation I heard when my sister and my brother-in-law had come in the afternoon of the operation-day. I asked Ferdauz at what time the operation had started. He at once said: "9.20." My brother-in-law remarked that it must have been at 9.30, but Ferdauz replied: "No, it was at 9.20." He said this without any preconception, quite spontaneously, confidently and matter-of-factly. I was struck by his statement. 9.20 comes to $11=2$.

The report of September 25 is rather brief:

It was my wish that on the very next day after my eye would be opened — that is, on the seventh day after the operation — my left eye should be operated upon, even though the cataract there was still unripe. I persuaded the doctor to undertake the job. But two days before the date fixed, which was September 25, I developed conjunctivitis in that eye and a little cold and cough. This made it uncertain whether my wish could be carried out.

On September 24 it was found that the second operation was out of the question. I was running a temperature and the cough had become fairly nasty. What was worst of all was an extremely disagreeable feeling as of a lump of poison in the stomach. Occultly speaking, it was as though a small monster was sitting in it.

The same afternoon Ferdauz decided I should leave the hospital immediately. When a healthy patient falls ill in a hospital, the hospital itself becomes a risk, for having caught one infection he is exposed to the various other maladies flying about, as it were, in the hospital air. So I was taken home.

The day, however, was memorable for me because of what had happened in the morning. The right eye was at last opened completely. I had kept my golden press-button paper-purse ready. There was a sudden blaze of white light when the shield was off the eye and in that blaze I saw what was inside the purse: photographs of 2 faces, the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's, side by side. The strange history of the numerology that had presided over my doings in Bombay seemed to reach its completion and culmination.

Later Comment

What happened afterwards lent a poignant touch to my newly opened eye's first vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother side by side. The first sight it had of the Mother in actuality was when I flew back to Pondicherry on hearing that she had passed away.

A week before November 17 I had gone to the optician to have my new glasses made. On November 17, a Saturday, I was supposed to go and fetch them. But there were hitches and it seemed reasonable to wait till Monday. Somehow I felt I must go that very day. So I got the glasses in the late afternoon. The next morning I heard of the Mother's departure. If I had not obtained the glasses as I had done, I could not have seen her body clearly at the distance at which I had to stand when I reached Pondicherry and went to the Meditation Room. They were obtained exactly in time.

However, what I saw with them made my first view of her inside that press-button purse tragically significant. The cured eye was fated to see her as Sri Aurobindo had been seen by me at the end of 1950. The side-by-sideness which it first glimpsed in that purse presaged the sight of her after she had discarded her body and taken up her position in the subtle world with Sri Aurobindo who had discarded his body twenty-three years earlier. The sequence of number 2, which the glimpse completed and culminated, meant for the newly seeing eye a final look at the Mother in a state which joined her to the Master beyond the earth-plane.

Here is the report of September 29:

I move about in grey-tinted goggles, with flaps on both sides to shut out light. The right eye has been progressing excellently. But a big general setback came in the form of the strange infection I had brought from the hospital: the cold, the cough, the fever and that sense of a monstrous little presence in the stomach.

Various blood-tests were taken. They showed nothing. This meant a viral infection which would not respond to any antibiotic treatment. So all treatment was stopped and one had just to wait.

Much anxiety was caused all round. The third day at home was the worst. I sent a telegram to Sehra to carry the news to the Mother's room. On the fourth day there was a little improvement on the whole but the infection persisted. The monster within the stomach refused to budge. My resistance appeared to be in a poor state and I felt no certainty within me of any cure. On the fifth day the same helplessness and hopelessness continued. My body made no positive reaction. The mind kept detached, not caring whether the body lived or died, though vaguely somewhere in the being was an expectancy for some reaction at some time.

Late in the evening of the fifth day — counting September 24 itself as the first — something suddenly awoke in me. From behind the head on the right side and from behind the right side of the upper part of the body a mysterious power acted. It was as if a subtle arm were stretched forth with a clenched fist, asserting an irresistible decision.

I felt a thrust of the mind and a drive of the life-force, supported by the secret soul. Just one moment of decision and I knew that the viral infection had been completely pushed out of the body. There was no process, no gradual betterment: everything was instantaneous. The disease was completely gone. The ogre sitting in the stomach was dislodged once for all. If this was not a miracle, I don't know what a miracle could be. At once I declared to Ferdauz that I was well. Nobody could believe me but they knew the old blighter had always been a strange chap.

I had a very pleasant sleep. When Ferdauz came the next morning to ask me how I was and whether the special blood-test for Rs. 100, which he had planned, was to be taken or not, I smiled and said: "Not at all. Everything is finished. Forget the special blood-test."

I said this not only because of what had happened the previous evening but also because of what had happened the same morning in the early hours — that is, on September 29, exactly 11 days after the operation.

I had a dream. I found myself living in the house where I had spent the first 10 years of my stay in the Ashram. I had lived in the upstairs corner room of what had then been known as the Guest House. It is the present Dortoire opposite Pranab's place. Sri Aurobindo had lived there for 9 years, and when I arrived in Pondicherry Purani had his quarters there. Now in my dream I was again a resident of that room. I came out of the house and was taken in a sort of truck to the corner diagonally opposite the Ashram on the south side where the main gate is. I stood on the footpath in the midst of a small group of people. Suddenly the Mother emerged on the top terrace of the house where she has been living. But the house was as I had seen it in 1927, when the Mother's present room had not yet been built on that terrace. She came walking in our direction. Her hair was done as in a picture of her when she was 18 years old — wound in a top knot. The significance of this vision was that she had unexpectedly got up from her couch or chair of current withdrawal, throwing aside all apparent infirmities and illnesses and come up in full strength. There was an unbounded joy in the watchers as she kept moving forward. She came in my direction and seemed to look long at me. At one point she slightly slowed down and, in response to my gesture to her with folded hands, made a similar gesture. Her walk was a walk of supreme victory. My heart was near to bursting and the lips kept saying "Mother, Mother, Mother!" The same words were in everybody's mouth. This *darshan* was the most moving experience in my whole life. Then the dream ended. I knew that the Mother had achieved something stupendous and that one of the side-effects of the achievement was my own inexplicable cure.

Only one thing remains to be added. When I first arrived in Pondicherry I was taken straight from the station to Purani's room by Pujalal who had come to receive me. As I have already mentioned, Purani's room was in the Guest House. The time was 7 o'clock. From the north window I looked towards the main Ashram block and lo! the Mother was on the top terrace of her house, walking in the morning sun, with her hair unbound. That was my first sight of her — a glorious unforgettable

vision of divine beauty that made me instantly her disciple and her child.

That experience and the dream were as if fused now and what had begun then seemed consummated.

Later Comment

Here is not only a doubling — two experiences of essentially the same kind — but also the seeing of the Mother as quite different in look from what she was at the age of 95. The old body seemed to have been left and a perennially young Mother came forth — an anticipation of her abandonment of her aged frame on November 17 to become altogether her ever-youthful being of the subtle planes. Viewed in the light of the victorious air she bore in the dream, we may regard the event of November 17 as a triumph, no matter how like a death that is a defeat it may appear to our surface eyes. These surface eyes may be compared to the cataract-obscured eye, which I had before the operation. The cataract-free eye, in the very first dream after the operation, saw the true Mother, the verity behind appearances.

VI

Dream of 17.11.1973

There were several dreams of the Mother between September 29 and November 17 but their impression was not strong and they have now faded from my memory. But the short one I had on the night of the day which was the Mother's last in her body has stuck in my mind ineffaceably.

There is no prelude to its main feature as far as I can make out, nor does there seem to be a sequel to it. The Mother was before me in a strange kind of light — neither clear brightness nor marked dimness. The atmosphere was most unusual. I stood facing her. She had a big bunch of reddish-pink roses in her two cupped hands. She gave them to me, saying, “Put them upon your head.” That was all.

What did this mean? Reddish-pink is the colour of psychic love and indicates “Surrender”. I believe I have to put my head under the power of the surrender which is the natural movement of the deep soul's loving self-gift to the Divine. Perhaps the Mother meant that she was herself giving me the capacity of a full self-giving of all my mind in psychic love to her? The sense of “full” is shown by the numerousness of the roses. The big bunch seemed to represent a blessing from her hands — a last gift to enable poor me to realise in life the message of the flower which, a long time ago, she had described as my typical flower and whose painting I had made and hung, as she had ordered, in Sri Aurobindo's old room which I had occupied for 10 years in the Guest House—the flower called “Krishna's Light in the Mind”. Sri Aurobindo has said that Krishna's Light is also his own. Krishna's and Sri Aurobindo's Light — a whitish blue — surely needs for the preparation of its establishment in the mind the latter's complete psychicisation by devoted submission to the Mother. Even in

that whitish blue the white, according to Sri Aurobindo, comes of a fusion of the blue light of Bliss (Ananda) with the Mother's white light of pure Consciousness-Force (Chit-Tapas) in which everything originates.

The morning after my dream a trunk call came from Pondicherry to announce that the Mother had passed away at 7.25 the previous evening. Towards the beginning of November my wife and her sister had come to Bombay. My niece and her husband were already there. All of us, together with my sister, made ready to fly to Pondicherry by the next available plane. The husband of my wife's niece was connected with the airways and he tried his best to get us seats. But there was a semi-strike on — and most planes were either cancelled or considerably delayed. We could not fly during the whole day which we spent at the airport. The earliest booking we could obtain was on a night plane to Bangalore, from where we would have to hire a taxi and run down to Pondicherry.

At the airport I developed severe tachycardia — the heart racing at about 120 beats per minute. I stood it for nearly two hours and then felt rather tired and uncomfortable. So I stretched myself on one of the sofas in the waiting hall. As the tachycardia wouldn't stop I was told that perhaps the flight was not advisable for me. But I was determined to go. By night-time the heart was on a little better behaviour. We emplaned, all our hearts seeming to be already in the Ashram where the Beloved's body awaited our last look at it, the shed vehicle of the Warrior Spirit that had come as the Avatar of the Supreme to save us with its love from our darkness and that could say like Sri Aurobindo:

Often, in the slow ages' long retreat
 On Life's thin ridge through Time's enormous sea,
 I have accepted death and borne defeat
 To gain some vantage by my fall for Thee.

For Thou hast given the Inconscient the dark right
 To oppose the shining passage of my soul
 And levy at each step the tax of Night:
 Doom, her august accountant, keeps her roll.

All around me now the Titan forces press;
 This world is theirs, they hold its days in fee;
 I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.
 Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?

Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,
 O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest.

SUPPLEMENT

Nearly 2 years have passed since the dream on the night of November 17, 1973. Several dream-darshans have been experienced in the meantime, one or two of deep personal significance; but none had any notable connection with the old series except the one which I am reporting below.

Dream of 11.10.1975

I was at the window of a high storey in a tall building. On the opposite side across a broad street was a place where people had to go to have the *darshan* of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. One had to leap over the breadth of the street to reach there. I had the impression that it was a space I had leaped over several times in the past. But now I was hesitating.

Then Champaklal came along to the window and without a moment's thought took a leap. But he misjudged the distance and, instead of reaching safely the opposite house, he fell short of it and dropped vertically down, head first, towards a stone block in the street. To save his head from striking the block he thrust his arms forward so as to take his weight on them. But before he could reach the block some people rushed out and caught his legs in mid-air. When he got back on his feet he swayed a little uncertainly but without any fuss kept moving on to meet the Master and the Mother.

I was rather unnerved at the sight of what had happened, and so I did not jump. I thus missed the *darshan*. In the next scene I was sitting with some others near Champaklal who had come back from the *darshan*. He told us that, on his way in, he had been attacked by two fellows who had short knives in their hands but he too had a similar knife and he got past them though with a few scratches on his back. Then he asked me if I had gone for the *darshan*. I said, “No.” He was a little surprised.

I resolved to go up to where the Mother had retired after the *darshan*. I climbed staircase after staircase, from floor to floor. I had no lameness in my left leg and mounted rapidly. From far below, my natural mother was heard shouting in fear, “Don't climb so fast!” I emerged onto a balcony at a great height. Looking down on the street I saw two or three men running to the house in answer to mamma's alarm. I waved to them, telling them all was safe. Then I ran up another floor to reach the Mother.

Suddenly I saw the Mother herself coming swiftly down a small staircase. She was dressed in cream pajamas and a cream khamees. There seemed to be a soft yellow-white radiance about the dress. Her face was also calmly luminous and looked as if she were rapt in a trance with open eyes. She made a majestic all-silencing picture. Evidently she was coming down for my sake. As I looked at her, there was intense emotion in my heart and the words “Mother, Mother, Mother!”, as during

a dream-*darshan* of her over two years earlier, came out. I rushed to her, fell on my knees and gave my head to her to bless. She blessed it. Then I brought it down to her feet and touched with it first her left foot and then her right. It was a most fulfilling experience

When I got up she started to move back upstairs. There were a few people on the upper landing. I remember only Udar. The Mother whispered something into his ear. Then I heard Champaklal saying, "She will see Bala." The Mother passed into a balcony which was at the back of the landing. As she disappeared there I, saw that her clothes were a pale shiny orange.

When I woke up from the dream my mind was filled with a vivid memory of the Mother's presence as she had come down that small staircase. Rather the frontal part of my mind was full of it, while at the back of it I found the image of a familiar face from my waking life.

I pulled my wrist-watch out from under my pillow to see the time. It was 4.50 a.m. Immediately my thought went on a numerological track. First I realised that the date was the 11th, the digits of which add up to 2. When I had looked at the watch-dial what I had noted was that, while the minute hand had been at the 50-minute mark, the hour-hand had stood at the 24-minute mark, just a little before the numeral 5, since the time — 4.50 — meant also 10 minutes to 5. Now, $50 + 24 = 74 = 11 = 2$.

What does 2 signify in this dream's context? We must observe that the original *darshan* was to be not only of the Mother but also of Sri Aurobindo — a side-by-sideness explicitly possible only with the Mother physically disembodied like Sri Aurobindo. The two of them were together in one and the same sense — a joint presence on a plane other than the earth, though about it one could always say in Shelley's words:

Thou whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.

The leap which Champaklal instantly essayed showed the distance of that plane from our earthly stance. I failed to make it and consequently lost the chance of the full glory of the new side-by-sideness. But the Divine Grace forgives our fears and vacillations and grants whatever is still possible. That is why the Mother responded to the cry in the soul of her hesitant child, especially as a bold attempt was made to climb high in spite of some danger. The sign was given that the Mother, for all the gap between her present plane and ours, was always ready to answer a true call and would come forward on her own, descending towards us. Yet even in the descent she kept her consciousness aloof and above at the very time that her eyes were open to the needs of the world below. This was the impression created by the kind of trance she was in. The rapt open-eyed state beckoned us towards the subtle dimensions of her being while making a move of love and help in our direction.

The yellow-white radiance accompanying her rapid descent of the small staircase symbolised the spiritually mental form taken by the answer she gave to the soul yearning through a wide visionariness of the mind. When the dress changed to a pale shiny orange on the way to the Mother's own chamber where Sri Aurobindo must

have been waiting, a glimpse was afforded of the nature of the work both of them are at present intensely doing; for orange or red-gold light is the light of the Supramental in the physical, and the whole effort of the Master and the Mother is to emanate into our outer material world the Supermind's Truth-luminosity which is theirs in this world's inner subtle-physical background where they have now joined their forces.

(Concluded)

AMAL KIRAN

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A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR OF "THE MOTHER OF DREAMS"

**RELATING TO THE INSTALMENT PUBLISHED IN THE ISSUE OF
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28-10-1975

Dear Amal Kiran,

You have mentioned me, in your usual jocular way, as "our 'astrologer-royal' of the Ashram" and referred to my reading of your horoscope. I sent you this morning further information on the subject and you wrote back that it might be interesting to the readers of *Mother India* if I could discuss in some detail the situation as seen in August, 1973 when you went to Bombay for your cataract-operation.

Since that time much new light has come regarding the connection between things, and this has given me a larger insight into the why of that intensified body of experiences you had in August of 1973 — into the form it took as well as the particular time-period. As you explained in your article, it is true that I had seen the time was not appropriate for your operation, but what I did not tell you then was that coupled with this condition of "isolation, detachment, separation" was almost every aspect one could expect to see in a horoscope regarding the possibility of death.

Seeing this put me in quite a dilemma: should I tell you? That is, if I did, what could be the results? Would you have changed your plans, and if so, would that alone have annulled the events that were foreseen? But above all there was the fact that in astrology there are many possibilities offered and, depending upon the consciousness in which we receive them, we are channeled into one direction or another by the force. That is, the force of a particular destiny is always there and active, but the actual form it takes in our lives can be "manipulated" through means of a widening of the consciousness. For this reason the question of Destiny is the most complex one that faces the reason of man. There are many factors which enter into the play, of which we have absolutely no knowledge. So naturally much of what we can "see" depends largely upon our experience and understanding of the so-called occult sciences. The larger this becomes, the easier will it be to explain these enigmas.

Also, regarding your destiny at the time, it must be pointed out that the Mother was still in the body then, and we did not know which turn her withdrawal from activity would take. On the basis of this I decided not to speak of the question of death to you and only give my opinion as to the unauspicious general character of the times, knowing that the Mother's force would work things out for you according to the needs of your soul.

I remember then that when I began hearing from your wife about all the delays in your operation, I was really amused, especially by the rather grandiose way your operation was postponed. This brings up those curious questions which generally remain unanswered: Did the inhabitants of Bombay have to suffer a doctors' strike just for Amal?

But still the other things were there and were being worked out, for which reason Amal was "allowed" to go to Bombay, since the strike was a part of the whole. The dreams seem to me to have been a preparation for the Mother's final withdrawal and, as I will now explain, they corresponded to a link-up with what was to occur in her life-cycle during that month of November of the same year — that is, the time when she was to leave her body.

I have been able to see this by means of a very interesting device that has come to me during the last two years, a "wheel of Time", as it were — what I have called the Gnostic Circle. This wheel explains many enigmatic properties of Time, and therefore also explains some fundamental aspects of Destiny. Through it I have been able to see concretely or, let us say "mathematically", the direct connection between events that otherwise we would ignore.

Such was the case regarding your experiences of August, 1973, because in this wheel I could see that you were actually passing through the section or band of Time, as recorded in the subtle strata, that the Mother was to pass in November of the same year. In the conventional look at your horoscope, that is, the study of the actual position of the planets in the actual sky, there was present the strong element of Death, as well as all the rest. But in this more unconventional method, through this study of the Harmony of Time, Death was also present. In fact, the band of Time I have referred to corresponds in the zodiac to *Death* or *Dissolution* ... and this occurred for you in August and for the Mother in November 1973 — in both cases 9 months after the last birthday. As a disciple of the Mother this "crossing of your respective time-orbits" would naturally bring the result of a strong link in the subtle planes, especially at such great turning points not only in the individual but also in the collective destiny. Yours was a sneak pre-view, as it were. You were approaching your 69th birthday, the Mother her 96th — you can see the link-up merely by the switch in the digits; but this too is a much more complex matter. As for example, the meaning of numbers. I don't believe there is any other field where more nonsense has been written than in the field of numerology, except perhaps in the field of astrology! Therefore I cannot give you a simplistic explanation of the number 2, since in your letter you ask me about this number, and also about the meaning of 1973. In fact, as I wrote you, 2 is the Mother's full number of birth. The date of her birth is 21.2.1878, and this works out to $2+1+2+1+8+7+8=29=2$. The year 1973, when the experiences took place, was also 2 ($1+9+7+3=20=2$), and 47 is of course 2, as you pointed out in your article. I have understood your dream experiences as having been a means to announce to you the turn of events regarding the Mother's passing and the change that this would signify for you personally, as you have explained in your comment about the "Independence" dream, in the 47th year of the Ashram.

But to really understand the significance of the year 1973 I have to refer only to the Gnostic Circle, where it is seen that the Mother was then, and you also, only somewhat earlier, passing through the zodiacal section of Time that refers to *Death*, *Dissolution*, and *Transformation*. It is a very interesting fact, to which no one seems to pay

much attention, that in the zodiac the sign of Death is not the last sign in the wheel, — only the 8th (which corresponds, by the way, to the 8th Book of *Savitri*, the Book of Death). In fact, there are four more signs after that! The last three of these are the victory over Death, the universal transformation and the emergence of the transformed being. The link between these last three signs, the 10th, 11th and 12th, and the 8th, is the magical 9th — and this is the incredible newly-manifested ingredient in the scheme, the Supermind! This pattern or scheme pertains to the individual as well as to the collective body and the evolution of the Earth. This is what is “written in the heavens”, if we had but eyes to see

So, in August of 1973, you passed through this experience of Death, and I must point out that in the cosmic scheme that point is the death of the old, all that which cannot stand in the light of the higher truth that is to manifest *in relation to that individual*. Thus your passage through this point in Time will be different from mine, or your wife’s, or the Mother’s — because according to our development we are able to die to that part of the past which will prove to be a hindrance for the future realisation to come. This key the Shakti holds: the knowledge of our future and past, and therefore the knowledge of the immediate needs of the present.

Now, in terms of the Mother’s yoga, this fact takes on very deep significances. I have discussed them elsewhere and I cannot go into the matter fully here. However, to be brief, the dissolution of her physical sheath, according to a greater Harmony, occurred *exactly* when it should have within the process of the full transformation, that is, regarding the transformation of the very physical. Sri Aurobindo’s took place at the point of Time that is the “sacrifice in Matter” — exactly the same point considered to be the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. (See *The Gnostic Circle*, Chapter XV.) Such a harmony is rarely to be found, for the fact I am presented with each day is that the greater our development the closer do we follow the harmonies of the Cosmos, as can be proven in the lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. However, I must stress again: Such a Harmony can be seen only in terms of the manifestation of Truth, only when we pierce the veils of Ignorance that cloak our planet and become able to look at the heavens with “new eyes”, which therefore see a “new Time”. With such a vision there is no question of Death in such a case as the Mother’s, and we know also the future course of that transformation. It is a fact that all of this is new to us, for which reason the easiest thing to do is to dismiss it, call it irrational, impossible, and all the rest. However, I would say that in reality this Work, this Transformation is *old*, it is the Ignorance that is *new* and transitory. The Immortal Being has been the truth of the Earth’s destiny from its first embryonic pulsations — it is its very seed, and the experience of Death is merely one layer more that has to be removed in order for the full flower to burst forth and show its beauty to all. We are at the point when the plant is just about ready to push its head through the soil that hides its transformation process, and meet the full light of the Sun.

Nonetheless, such a happening we must realise is not in any way disconnected from the whole, just as a seed depends in large part for its fulfillment upon the soil

that receives it, and the Mother's own yoga does not in any way *overstep* the conditions of the planet, but within those conditions it accelerates things. That is, when the time comes for the great Becoming, certain things can be done in order to hasten the march of the whole Earth so that this be more compatible with the higher truth that is to manifest: the Earth also knows its period of death to the old. I believe, more firmly now than ever before, that such a transformation must come about only when not only the individual is ready, but the world as well. This does not mean that the whole Earth must be transformed before such an occurrence, but only that conditions must be favourable, must be complementary and not antagonistic. Often to hasten things, to accelerate the process, great destructions occur, but these are known now to be fully controlled, for the purpose of the manifestation of this integral Truth.

I have seen great meaning in the years between Sri Aurobindo's centenary and the Mother's. And so many things have already begun to take shape! In *The Gnostic Circle* I mention that when Science manages to photograph the planet Venus, which has always been covered in mists and inaccessible to the vision of the astronomer, regardless of the potency of his telescope, the subtle planes will begin to merge with our more dense physical. And now look what has happened, and even sooner than I expected! Just this month Russia has accomplished this feat. Moreover, this was its Venus 9 probe, and you know what importance I attach to the number 9. Also it happened on 22.10.1975, a numerological 9! Venus is the 2nd orbit, so there's your number 2 again. How's that! But see the beauty: Venus is the closest planet to the Earth and yet the most mysterious, the only one whose surface we cannot see The divinisation of matter is just that way, so close we cannot see it. And this is the subtle physical plane where the new form and forms exist. It is not far away and beyond. It is right in our midst. Sri Aurobindo speaks of Venus in this connection in *Savitri*:

I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers ...
 Out of the paths of the morning star they came
 Into the little room of mortal life ...¹

Another preparation during these six years is taking place in India: she is being made ready, and quickly. But more on that some other time.

Voilà, so much for your dreams!

the "astrologer-royal",
 PATRIZIA NORELLI-BACHELET

¹ Book Three—Canto Four, p. 345 (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1970).

FLAMES AND FROWNS

My lover took away my robe of sin and I let it fall, rejoicing; then he plucked at my robe of virtue, but I was ashamed and alarmed and prevented him. It was not till he wrested it from me by force that I saw how my soul had been hidden from me.

If I cared even for your praise, O ye saints, if I cherished my reputation, O ye prophets, my Lover would never have taken me into His bosom and given me the freedom of His secret chambers.

Sri Aurobindo

The flames of beauty and murmuring joy
That run with light feet through our laughter-looped days
Are the delicate touch of Her deft artist's Hand
On our minds' imprisoning fear-muddled maze.
Rare and shy shining quicksilver things,
They are swift to flee the blind sombre gaze
Of eyes that are dim and only see darkness,
The faint surface of what they blame or they praise.

Life is a spy with a veiled secret glass
That casts back on our sight what our cloaks have concealed,
Or a farcical masque where our hearts are the mummerys,
And what we see in each scene is our own selves revealed.
Is purity something dull, pale, and proper,
Is truth a tight-lipped dry timorous rule?
"Must" and "should not" are like dusk's swaying shadows,
Clouds on the soul's cool crystal-lit pool.

Is the In-dweller shocked by a bit of bare flesh,
Embarrassed and sad at a gentle embrace?
Have you never lain in His quiet burning Arms
And lifted your eyes to His flame-tender Face?
Have you never felt that high wild Flute
Fling a tune in your soul so strange and so sweet
That nude and moon-mad you would dance through the darkness,
Hurling the shames of your heart at His Feet?

Oh, I would be flighty and free as a fool
And, flapping my crazy clown-clumsy wings,
Soar into skies wide with child-wonder,
Swooping in daring and rapture-vast rings.
Our days should be dew-deep, as fire-fresh as dawn,
As sweeping and bold as a star-spattered night,
And we should sing always Love's luminous dreams
And paint our lives with bright rainbows of light!

JEAN

OFFERING: NO. 1

I CRY to Thee, Oh Mother,
In an agony of separation.
How can my dust be of Thee?

My dust cries to Thee
With many mouths.
The mouths of my dust are hungry
To be fed by Thy Love.

What solace is there
When all of my arms cannot reach Thee,
When a thick veil of darkness
Hides Thee from me?

Intolerable is the agony of our separation;
Blessed am I only when
As through a parted curtain into a great distance
Even for one most infinitesimal split second
Of Eternity, I behold
The Glory of Thy Presence and
Thy Face.

Intolerable is this Ignorance which is I;
Blessed am I only when
As from a far distance I hear
The Golden Promise of Thy
All-Knowing voice.

29.9.1975

ELIZABETH STILLER

A PROGRESSION OF FRAGMENTS

2.8.75

Sucking the sky,
 gulping the earth, devouring trees,
Soaking up the play of sunlight and shadow
I drink back life, nourished by this beauty.

But how to go through?
This eye-defying blue
 that is our sky,
This sun we cannot look upon
 nor bear too long his rays
Are only shadows of That Light.

These perfect trees
 who dance for joy
 in rhythms delicate and grave
Are only sketches, faint indications
Of the Beauty His creative vision gave.

And all these forms, though beautiful
Do not reveal but hide His Face.

Draw back, my soul, from thought, from sense
And know thyself entire in His embrace.

3.9.75

Who are they, these golden-bodied strangers
Shining, sun-wrapped, in the glory of their boldness?
Sweating to sow the seeds of the new world,
Labouring to bring to birth a higher Truth,
Sons of sweetness, sisters of strength —
Though their names are unknown
Yet their souls are close to me,
Closer than hand's clasp or whispered word,
Closer than heart's beat or secret breathing.
Singing the future into being, a flame of faith
Fuses our metals. Oneness devours us.

If as we pass momentarily in the world's greyness
A second's contact can touch us thus to fire,

When we will stand all together, a ring of flame,
 Hands lifted in the temple of the Truth,
 No stain from the grey past will withstand that heat
 And Agni will refine all earths to utter ultima of purity.

16.9.75

What? What are you saying?
 I cannot hear the words you're calling
 Across the spaces widening between us.

I do not know where the way leads
 That I've chosen — perhaps I'm falling
 Endlessly through bottomless star-spaces,
 Spinning through silver. But my soul
 Utters no cry, it is not startled —
 Knowing perhaps all vastness is its home.

SHRADDHAVAN

OUR ELDER

He is our elder.
 Well, let me inquire,
 "Is he my elder
 Because he occupies a seat of power,
 Has riches or is learned?"
 Then a firm rejection is my reply.
 But, undoubtedly, he is my elder
 If he is firmly established
 In the fundamental mystic experiences
 And still more
 If he can impart even something
 Of any of those experiences to me.
 My elder is he who is a bond-slave of God.

GIRDHARLAL

SHAPES...

SHAPES between the leaves
beckon with mystery.
Holes in the seen.
Shadow-conference unknown
gasping light within the dream.

Peopled houses and peopled hills
roll numbness, energy spills
ether bewilderment on the ground.
Not a sound, none has seen,
Mockery in the in-between.

Gasp in the woven thread of
conditioning nightmare insensitivity.
Smile shines wealth through crumbling head
Grace tears of iron and music wed.

Beloved Lady hear my song
inaudible in the night.
Thickness din surrounds this drop
I dare not thrust it forth.
Echo of your presence somewhere here
beyond my sight.

Secret chits of ecstasy
passed through oblivion, one to one.
Do not miss this
though it fears to speak
through a world's deafening run.

I shall wait
in this musty corner
of realities' seams
huddled,
tear-polishing this lovely gem
till for you it gleams.

MICHELE

SIVA: THE UNIQUE CONCEPTION OF RĀMALIṄGAM

Introduction

Rāmaliṅgam (1823-1874) is a great Saiva saint of Tamil Nadu. Though he is associated with Saivism, his ideas differ very widely from those of the Saiva tradition. Since his purpose is chiefly to give expression to his deep spiritual perceptions in the form of devotional poems, he has given little thought to a systematic statement of his philosophical ideas. It is true his poems are full of philosophical content, but the content is mixed up with a highly suggestive and metaphorical language. So it is not easy to make much headway in properly understanding the philosophical content of his poems. But fortunately a way has been opened just now since the appearance of the works of Sri Aurobindo.

A scholar versed in both Rāmaliṅgam and Sri Aurobindo cannot fail to notice how a great number of very striking parallels exist in their writings. It seems that in many respects Rāmaliṅgam is a forerunner of Sri Aurobindo. Studied in the light of Sri Aurobindo, the literary form of the poems of Rāmaliṅgam ceases to be a bar to us in reaching the philosophical content; it becomes possible to see all his metaphysical ideas connectedly and present them in a systematic form.

The present study is a result of an attempt on these lines to understand Rāmaliṅgam's conception of Siva. Except in one place I have refrained from giving parallels from Sri Aurobindo, for otherwise it would not have been possible to limit this article to its present size.

I. The Uncommon Description

In his poems, his letters of supplication, and a few of his other prose writings Rāmaliṅgam describes the nature of Siva very elaborately. Generally speaking, a large number of his descriptions correspond to the traditional ones. But some of them are markedly different and uncommon. To this group belong the descriptions in which the word '*iyarkai*' occurs, attached to Siva or to his essential aspects — Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. Rāmaliṅgam describes Siva as:

- a) *iyarkai* Truth¹
- b) *iyarkai* Consciousness²
- c) *iyarkai* Bliss³

Usually scholars do not pay attention to these descriptions. Perhaps it may be for two reasons: (1) they are *uncommon* and so due importance is not given to them; (2) they occur *very rarely* in the collection of his poems, *Tiruaruṭṭa*, and hence they fail to engage the attention of the scholars sufficiently. Of course, they are frequently found in the letters of supplication and other prose writings. But the prose works do

not exercise as great an influence on the scholars as *Tiruaruṭpa*. In effect these descriptions could not occupy the focus of attention. Perhaps the reason why *Tiruaruṭpa* attracts the scholars so much is that it is a work known for its high poetic beauty. However, there is one exception: a writer in the recent past has given thought to the epithet 'iyarkai' and the descriptions having this epithet. He interprets the phrases thus:

- 1) the supreme Truth of Nature (*vide a*)
- 2) the supreme Bliss of Nature (*vide b*).

The word 'iyarkai' may be used either as a noun (Nature or the phenomenal world) or as an adjective (natural). The writer is inclined to take it as a noun. Accordingly he interprets the phrases to mean the supreme Truth or Bliss immanent in Nature. In our view, to do so is to miss the real significance of the teaching of Rāmaliṅgam. If we take the word as an adjective (*i.e.* natural), then it holds a key to the unique conception of God enshrined in the teachings of Rāmaliṅgam. Usually it is very difficult to comprehend his teachings about God as they seem to be a blend of so many inconsistent ideas. But given the key, the key held by the epithet 'iyarkai', the conflicting ideas become complementary ones. His grand and comprehensive view of God unfolds itself in its natural perspective. And consequently, we discover the true significance of his philosophy, *Suddhasanmārga*, which he upholds as a system of a very high order. Apart from this, this discovery contributes very significantly to the expositions of Rāmaliṅgam's philosophy where a precise and systematic presentation of the concept of God is invariably missing.

II. Conflicting Ideas about the Nature of Siva

In the teachings of Rāmaliṅgam two accounts about the nature of Siva are generally discernible. According to one, Siva is

- a) the only Reality⁴
- b) the One⁵
- c) the Perfect and One⁶
- d) formless⁷
- e) the Reality which is not two⁸
- f) immutable⁹
- g) attributeless¹⁰
- h) entirely undifferentiated¹¹
- i) of the form of pure consciousness¹²
- j) the attributeless Brahman.¹³

Siva, according to another account, is

- a) the supreme Lord, *Pati*¹⁴
- b) the Lord of the souls, *Pasupati*¹⁵
- c) the supreme God who cuts the bonds (*pasa*) of the soul (*Pasu*)¹⁶
- d) the creator of the world¹⁷

- e) the possessor of auspicious qualities¹⁸
- f) the possessor of spiritual qualities¹⁹
- g) the embodiment of infinite qualities.²⁰

The description that God is one, not two, devoid of qualities, etc. allows little room for the affirmation of the realities of positive attributes — the supreme Being possessing auspicious qualities, the sentient and non-sentient beings of the relative and phenomenal order supported by that Being. On the contrary, the latter account says that God (*Pati*) is not the *only* reality as it permits the existence of other realities such as the souls (*Pasu*) and the bonds (*Pāsā*) which being material keep the souls under the fetters of material qualities. Thus one account excludes the other. Therefore one is likely to conclude that Rāmaliṅgam cannot hold both the views. But it is not possible to come to such a conclusion, in view of certain other descriptions about God, which are found in the works of Rāmaliṅgam:

- a) having become *Pati*, *Pasu*, and *Pāsā*²¹
- b) having become the world of matter, the self, and the Lord²²
- c) having become the God of eight qualities.²³

Mark the phrase 'having become' (*āi* or *āki*). It implies that *Pati* and other realities come into being as a result of transformation of a substance different from them. Such a substance is nothing else than the substance of the God of negative attributes. In other words, the God of negative attributes is the source of the God of positive attributes. Rather they are the two different expressions of the same Reality. Hence Rāmaliṅgam speaks of Siva as both

- a) having attributes and no attributes²⁴
- b) the formed and the formless²⁵
- c) the one and the many²⁶
- d) the being in whom no thing exists and in whom every thing exists.²⁷

Though this way of talking about Siva does not seem to present any difficulty to Rāmaliṅgam, we hardly understand his position. For we do not know how Siva can be the subject of contradictory predicates at one and the same time.

In such situations two alternatives are possible: (1) the problem is due to *the inadequacy of materials* under consideration, or (2) it may be due to *the deficiencies of the mind* applying itself to the study of such materials. In dealing with Rāmaliṅgam's conception of God we may say that it does not lend itself to clear understanding because he has not said all he ought to have said, or that our way of understanding is so rigid and prejudiced that we fail to put ourselves in his perspective. If the difficulty is due to the former reason, then we have to throw the blame on Rāmaliṅgam. But before we do so we have to ascertain whether it is not due to the latter reason. In many cases the difficulty is a difficulty of our mind. By illegitimately transferring our difficulties to the subject of study we often complain that the latter is obscure or incoherent. In my opinion the difficulty about Rāmaliṅgam's conception of God is of this description: it is due to our limited ways of understanding the conception rather than to the conception itself.

III. The Unrestricted Freedom of Siva: the Connotation of the Epithet 'Iyarkai'

As to the meaning of the epithet '*iyarkai*' we are not left completely in the dark. Rāmaliṅgam himself has indicated its meaning through a few significant clues. In one of his letters of supplication the epithet is preceded by a few qualifying words which, upon a proper analysis, points to its real meaning:

- a) the *all-accomplishing* natural (*iyarkai*) Truth²⁸
- b) the *all-becoming* natural (*iyarkai*) Bliss²⁹

These words — "all-accomplishing" and "all-becoming" have a common reference, the reference being the unrestricted freedom of Siva. As qualifying words they indicate the meaning of the following phrases. The function of a qualifying word or phrase is in some cases, though not in all, to state explicitly what otherwise would remain implicit in the word or phrase which it qualifies. Needless to say, the qualifying words in question belong to this category. So we may conclude that when Siva is spoken of as the natural Truth or Consciousness or Bliss, it is by reason of his unrestricted freedom that he is thus spoken of. In deciphering the true meaning of the epithet '*iyarkai*' we have really made some progress, but we have not made enough progress. The word '*iyarkai*' (natural) simply means that which is not '*ceyarkai*' (unnatural). So, how is it that it can refer to the unrestricted freedom of Siva? We may reply that it is its *special reference* or *connotation*. But still the question 'how' remains unanswered. Therefore, we have to go one more step in the direction of deciphering the real meaning of the epithet. It appears that the answer to this question depends upon understanding fully the significance of the freedom of Siva.

Freedom, as attributed to an illimitable reality, has two essential aspects: (1) absence of external limitation; (2) absence of internal limitation. If a being has another besides itself, then it cannot be free. For it is impossible not to be a second entity. It is impossible to overcome this limitation because it is imposed from without. To talk of a free entity having another entity alongside is absurd. So the first condition required for a free being is *the absence of external limitation*. A being may be free in the sense of not having another by its side. But that is not enough. It ought to be possible for the free being to impose its own limitations on itself and to exceed the limitations thus imposed. If it is incapable of such a power, then it is limited by its negative position, the position of just not having another by its side. It is therefore obstructed from within, and it means it is not free from internal limitation. The second condition necessary for a free being is, therefore, *the absence of internal limitation*. Strictly speaking, an internal limitation, in so far as it is internal, cannot be a real limitation in the sense of something which cannot be exceeded. It ought to be possible to exceed any internal limitation if it is really internal, otherwise internal limitation is not *internal*, it is a misnomer. It becomes another version of external limitation. It is evident now that a being which has no external limitation should, by the same reason, be

capable of imposing self-limitations and exceeding them. It is an inevitable consequence necessitated by the absence of external limitation. A being that is free in these two senses is an illimitable being.*

According to Rāmaliṅgam, the freedom of Siva has these two aspects. As for the first, Rāmaliṅgam says that Siva is —

- a) the only Reality (*civam onrē poruḷ*)³⁰
- b) One without a second (*tān anri onrilā*)³¹

As regards the second, he says again that Siva is capable not only of self-limitations but of exceeding them.

a) Though Siva is no thing in particular, he exceeds this condition (and becomes all) (*anniyam allāta teivam*).³²

b) The being of Siva is the pure transcendent Self (*tānē tān āki*) and yet other than this Self (*tānē tān alanāy*); all is a self-limitation of the being of Siva (*ellāmtān āki*) and yet Siva's being is other than all (*ellāmtān alanāy*).³³

c) All is a self-limitation of Siva (*ellām tān anatuwāy*) and yet Siva's being is other than all (*ellām tān anatuwāy*).³⁴

d) Siva is the deity that knows no obstruction (*tataiyariyāt teivam*).³⁵

It becomes clear, from these quotations, that Siva is free not only in the sense of not being another but in the sense of not being bound by that freedom from external limitation. Hence Rāmaliṅgam says in one of his letters of supplication that Siva's freedom is a total freedom (*carva cutantarar*)³⁶. The phrase 'other than' *alanāy* or *alatāy*) is a significant one. It is employed purposefully by Rāmaliṅgam to indicate that in Siva the One no particular thing or position is *negated* but just exceeded. A typical formula employed by Rāmaliṅgam to express the unrestricted freedom of Siva is this:

“All is a self-determination of the Self and at the same time the Self is also other than all”

(*ellām tān ānatuwāy ellām tān alatāy*).³⁷

Now let us go back to the question we raised: how does 'iyarkai' come to connote the unrestricted freedom of Siva? Though Siva is a being illimitably free, our concept of his freedom is likely to be inappropriate owing to the deficiencies of the intellect.

* Cf. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Cent. Edn, 1972, Vol. 1, p. 333.

“Our intelligence looks at its concept of the Absolute and sees that it must be indeterminable and at the same time it sees a world of determinations which emanates from nowhere else and can exist nowhere else, it is further baffled by the affirmation, also hardly disputable on the premises, that these determinates are nothing else than this very indeterminable Absolute. But the contradiction disappears when we understand that the indeterminability is not in its true sense negative, not an imposition of incapacity on the Infinite, but positive, a freedom within itself from limitation by its own determinations and necessarily a freedom from all external determination by anything not itself, since there is no real possibility of such a not-self coming into existence. The Infinite is illimitably free, free to determine itself infinitely, free from all restraining effect of its own creations ... Its freedom from all limitation, from any binding by its own creation, cannot be itself turned into a limitation, an absolute incapacity, a denial of all freedom of self-determination; it is this that would be a contradiction, it would be an attempt to define and limit by negation the infinite and illimitable.”

In consequence, Siva's freedom may be unnaturally restricted to any of its aspects. Siva may be regarded as occupying the position of another, but yet, it may be added, it does not endanger his freedom as he is in an *exalted position* owing to the presence of certain exclusive qualities which are absent in the other realities existing by his side. Or Siva may be thought of as being in the position of One without a second in the sense of an absolute negation, but yet, it may be argued, he is not deprived of freedom because freedom is a *negative condition*. Evidently, in both cases Siva's freedom is unnaturally restricted. In the former Siva is not free in so far as he cannot overcome the position of his being another; in the latter he is not free in so far as he cannot exceed his negative condition. Now it is not difficult to understand how '*iyarkai*' connotes the freedom of Siva: positively, it refers to the fact that Siva's freedom is by *nature* illimitable; negatively, its reference is to the other related fact that to define Siva's freedom either as an exalted position or as a negative condition is *unnatural*.

(To be continued)

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NOTES

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 1071
4. *Ibid.*, 6-90-7
5. *Ibid.*, 6-90-9
6. *Ibid.*, 3-22-7
7. *Ibid.*, 3-5-14
8. *Ibid.*, 6-20-8
9. *Ibid.*, 3-3-6
10. *Ibid.*, 3-3-6
11. *Ibid.*, 6-79-10
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14. *Ibid.*, 6-81-952
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24. *Ibid.*, 3-1-35
25. *Ibid.*, 6-102-1
26. *Ibid.*, 6-96-3
27. *Ibid.*, 6-2-13
28. *Ibid.*, p. 1076
29. *Ibid.*, p. 1078
30. *TA.*, 6-134-20
31. *Ibid.*, 6-79-27
32. *Ibid.*, 6-41-4
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34. *Ibid.*, 6-2-5
35. *Ibid.*, 6-41-10
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THE MESSAGE OF THE GITA

A BRIEF REVIEW

(Continued from the issue of November 1975)

The Antinomies Reconciled

THE Gita, like all Indian metaphysical thought, proceeds from the antinomy between Being and Becoming which so obsessed the ancient thinkers. It has at the same time to synthetise the Purusha-and-Prakriti idea common to Sankhya and Yoga with the Brahmavada of the current Vedanta, and the concept of sacrifice offered to the many gods that dominated the ritualistic Veda-vada with the Vedantic doctrine of One Godhead and with the Yoga view of Karma as embracing all the activities of life. The last is easy. The gods of the Vedists are mere names and forms and powers of the One God, *deva* of the Rigveda; the ritual sacrifice, the Vedic *karma*, is but one form of the give-and-take that pervades all life and that none can escape even if he wills. Moreover, all the Vedic knowledge of the Veda-vada leads to and culminates in the one true and ultimate Knowledge of the Brahman, the goal of Vedanta.

The antinomy between Purusha and Prakriti is deeper, it is a perfect dualism unlike the "dualism" of later Vedanta. How to reconcile it with the One Brahman of the Vedantins looks a formidable problem. The Gita does so with its insistence on three Purushas, or rather three statuses of the same Purusha,—Purushottama, the Akshara and the Kshara Purushas—and its enunciation of two Prakritis, or rather of the One Prakriti in its two statuses and modes of action, the *parā* and the *aparā*, the higher and the lower Nature. Purushottama is the supreme Reality who manifests both as the Akshara or Immutable Brahman of current Vedanta and as the Kshara or the Changeable Person within created beings who does not stand aloof but participates in all action. It is this Akshara, it says in effect, who is the *puruṣa* of the Sankhya, the eternally silent and inactive conscious being because of whose presence all action takes place, and the Kshara is the same *puruṣa* who enjoys the fruit of all action. The *prakṛti* of the Sankhya which through its various evolutes, *buddhi* and *ahankāra* and the rest, acts as if mechanically for the pleasure of the *puruṣa*, is no other than the *aparā prakṛti*, the lower Nature of the Gita. But Nature in its highest form is not mechanical nor is it "unconscious"; for this *parā prakṛti* is the very Power and Consciousness of the supreme Person, *puruṣottama*; She and not the *jaḍa prakṛti* of the Sankhya is the true Creatrix and has become the eternal Self, *jīva*, in man. It is again the supreme Person, *puruṣottama*, who is the Ishwara, the Lord to whom worship is enjoined by the Yoga view. He is not only the Transcendent and Absolute but also the Immanent in man, the Godhead who dwells within him and whom he can approach as a near and dear friend and with whom he can establish all other possible relations.

The Gita Concept of God

The Gita concept of God needs a little elaboration, as well as its view of cosmos and of man the microcosm; for these give us the clue to the practical steps of the Gita's discipline, and provide a basis for the future it offers to the aspiring soul.

The Gita idea of God is the widest conceivable. He is at once transcendent, universal and immanent, personal and impersonal, silent and inactive as well as lord and master of all manifested Nature and its action. He manifests all the worlds in His own being, there is nothing but He. He manifests Himself in his Avataras and Vibhūtis and through them makes Himself more visible to the blind sight of man. He is the creator Brahma, He is Time the Destroyer, He keeps the worlds in being as Vishnu the benign godhead, He is all the gods. Seated within the hearts of all creatures, He receives their adoration, guides them on their paths even when unknown, makes man's surrender easy, impels him to feel one with all beings. He is Parabrahman and Paramatman, Purushottama and Parameshwara,⁸ all in one. There is no end of his vastness, *na hi anto vistarasya me*. The vision of the World-Spirit vouchsafed to Arjuna in the 11th chapter would shatter the ordinary mortal. To make man realise God in His entirety would be to divinise him.

The Gita View of Cosmos

The worlds that manifest in God's being are not the creation of an indefinable, a mysterious and incomprehensible real-unreal Maya; they are real because they are manifestations of the One Reality. "The world for the Gita is real, a creation of the Lord, a power of the Eternal, a manifestation from the Parabrahman, and even this lower nature of the triple Maya [made of the three *guṇas*, *traiguṇyamayī māyā*] is a derivation from the supreme divine Nature."⁹ How then does creation come about? "Leaning — pressing down upon my own Nature (Prakriti), says the Lord in the Gita, 'I create (loose forth into various being) all this multitude of existences, all helplessly subject to the control of Nature."¹⁰ In other words, although the Divine pervades all and dwells within the heart of all, few are conscious of the fact; the manifestation though it proceeds from God is not itself entirely divine, there are many elements and forces in it which are "undivine", because ignorant of their true nature and substance.

The Gita uses the Vedantic figure of the Aswattha tree in its brief description of the cosmos. "This tree of cosmic existence has no beginning and no end, *nānto na cādih*, in space or time...It is an infinite movement and its foundation is above in the supreme of the Infinite...beyond Time in the Eternal, but its branches stretch down below"¹¹ Yet this movement proceeds in a continuous cycle of manifestation and non-manifestation, *sṛṣṭi* and *pralaya*, "each period called respectively a day and a night of the creator Brahma, each of equal length in Time, the long aeon of his working which endures for a thousand ages, the long aeon of his sleep of another thou-

sand silent ages.”¹² For the rest, the Gita, like the later Vedanta, accepts the Sankhya details of the cosmic manifestation of Prakriti, in its lower status.

But the distinction it makes between the lower and the higher Nature, *parā prakṛti* and *aparā prakṛti*, is an original contribution of capital importance. It is this that enables it to escape the dilemma of the later Maya doctrine; for it bridges the gulf between the lower and the higher, the “divine” and the “undivine” in this manifested universe. The lower Nature of the three *guṇas* has on it the stamp of the Ignorance; it is Maya not in the sense that it does not exist but because it creates a delusion, erects a barrier between the lesser and the greater reality. That greater reality is the Divine, and the higher Nature is the Power of the supreme Divine, Purushottama; it is the Divine in all His action of knowledge and creation and love. It is the link between the Lord in his highest manifestation in the Knowledge and this lower creation in the Ignorance. All the three *guṇas* of the ignorant lower Nature derive from and are ultimately resolvable in something that is inherent in the higher Nature. The inertia of Tamas for example is another form, a degradation if you like, of the Eternal Stability, the violent kinesis of Rajas a distorted form of the Strength and Power of the Supreme Nature, the Sattwic calm and balance a distant reflection of the Peace that abides. Thus understood, the lower Nature of Ignorance acquires a meaning. It opens out high possibilities for man, offers not merely an escape into the Nothingness of Nirvana or a dissolution into a featureless Absolute, but the chance of transmuting his existence into something akin to the Divine.

The Gita’s philosophy is thus not a mere exercise in intellectual gymnastics; it is not even a dissertation in ethics although its starting-point is an ethical problem. Its great interest lies in the psychological basis it provides for its essentially pragmatic objective, which is to provide a solution to man’s major problem in life — the problem of doing action divested of all its perplexities.

(To be continued)

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THE SECRET SOURCE OF THE GANGES

A QUEST IN A STRANGE LAND

(Continued from the issue of October 1975)

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

9

“LET me always possess this clear and luminous understanding that I have gained today. May the words of the Gandharvi remain graven in my memory forever” — uttering this wish I nearly lost all awareness. Perhaps I remained somewhat unconscious for a time. When I opened my eyes again I saw Devi. She came close to me and caught hold of my elbow in an affectionate manner. It seemed that she had been waiting till I got back my awareness. Now she questioned me—“What has happened to you?” And then she had her arms around me; I felt strong again and secure. She was motherly, protective.

“Don’t worry, a wave of *ananda* (bliss) engulfed you — you could not bear it,” so saying she became quiet for some time, looking me straight in the face — as if a flash of lightning had lit up for a moment her countenance. She eased my mind by asking me the question that I had been waiting for — “Come, tell me frankly what you have in your mind.”

I plucked up heart and said, “I shall dearly love to stay on here. I don’t want to go back to that God-damned society among a sodden, perverted group of human beings. Live again amid reek and squalor, I cannot. That depression is not troubling me any more, so there is no problem. And yet there is no question of my staying here without your permission. Please be kind, Devi. I was nothing, here I have got a new birth.”

“Go you must,” she coolly observed. “You shall have to go back, because you cannot alter the laws of Nature. All who come here from outside always have to leave this land. We don’t like outsiders to come and die here. They alone need not return who have the same nature as ours and therefore get our unreserved approval. Of course it is for their own good that we keep them here. Their soul and spirit belong to this Circle, so they can live here. They never even have the inclination for going out again. In fact, as a rule, we keep here only those who have no attachments to or ties with their brothers, sisters, parents, friends or wealth and position. In your case the strong relation with your family and the social connections have been there right from your birth. The effort to keep up the same family line through centuries, the same rigid tradition — well, we can’t even imagine such things. Here

we don't have a distinct continuous line of the family or the sense of 'we' and 'they'." I smartened up a bit and reminded her, "Why, Devi, here also you have father, mother, brother, sister, etc.!"

"That is true, yes," she agreed, "in keeping with the laws of creation. But we don't have any passionate, special attachment to them as in your society where the birth of the offspring is only an unavoidable result of uncontrolled, coarse, sensual pleasure. Back in your community the blood relation is of the utmost or primal importance — the others are strangers, outsiders, even if they be your neighbours. Here everyone is a Gandharva, and the matter ends there. Well, we are beings of another sort. We live in perfect unity, harmony and understanding. This union of hearts is perhaps unthinkable elsewhere in the world. You can see here only one big family, the family of Gandharvas; we are all united with each other by that open and inherent understanding. There are no particular cases of special association or segregation. In addressing each other, however, we use the universal forms of brother, sister, father, mother, etc. I believe it may not be easy for you to understand, or perhaps not possible even. 'These people are my *own*, the others are *outsiders*': this kind of thought and feeling has no place here. The only special association that may be observed here is when two mature souls of opposite sexes spontaneously feel like offering themselves to each other." She took breath.

Yet, even after all this exposition of an unearthly social philosophy, my eagerness to become a permanent citizen of this promised land — by securing a passport from my hostess — by no means diminished; I yearned desperately to be havened in the Gandharva Rajya, as who would not have?

I pleaded, "I absolutely don't feel like returning to the ordinary world. Please have a heart, do stretch a point in my favour — save me, O Devi! There, I sacrifice and surrender myself."

She was unmoved, great and calm. "I am afraid you shall have to go. You will go following the tracts of your own nature and inclination. Until then you may stay here without worries as our guest."

"But why not all my life?" I still had the cheek to demand. Without showing even an iota of annoyance or displeasure at my shameless audacity, she let me know — "Due to the natural, categorical differences your stay cannot be permanent. If your wish of staying here is not fully backed by our unreserved approval, then, as soon as you have passed through the unfamiliar circumstances and started feeling at home, your old grossness or lower nature will raise its head and this place will be disgraced — well, that would be bad for both you and us. Besides —" she suddenly stopped.

I asked helpfully, "Is there more —?"

"How are you going to cut asunder your parents' attachment to you? They cannot renounce their claim on you. You are their hope for the future, they expect a lot from you. This is not just a custom of your society, it is bred in the bone of every member of the society. Then there is the custom of periodically offering food,

accompanied by rites and rituals, in the name of the departed souls, the ancestors. Just how are you going to tear yourself apart from the hold of all these time-old beliefs and practices? You will also have to beat the trodden path, isn't that so? Perhaps you have not already forgotten about your various 'indebtedness' from birth to your mother (*matri-reen*), father (*pitri-reen*), gods and goddesses (*deva-reen*), saints and sages (*rishi-reen*), and so on?"

Wordless, I stared vacantly. The point came home all right. If she had given me any choice, it was no other than Hobson's. In no time the pluck and the spirit, with which I had been flinging the questions one after another, dwindled. All on account of Devi's unalterable will I had to give in. I had to give up my preference, my heart's choice. I understood, I recognized the truth that I was not really prepared for or worthy of sojourning for long in this holy land. This valley is by no means a reformatory, but a happy refuge for the reformed.

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I passed the afternoon sitting alone, musing: "It is not like touring in London, Paris, New York or Chicago. This is not the kind of land where one can come and spend a fun-filled holiday if one desired and had sufficient money. I imagine coming in here or going out does not depend upon a person's individual will, nor can the power of riches exert any kind of influence here. But there is another consideration. Suppose by the crotchety will of Nature some of those well-equipped foreign vagabonds manage to land in this valley with their knapsack and all, will the privacy of The Emerald Kingdom remain intact? Will they not exploit or ruin the spacious, untouched atmosphere that is this Kingdom's pride? God alone knows whether something like this could take place. And in this age of aeroplanes, which spot on earth can remain undiscovered? Here there is no landing problems for planes. But from the sky I think one should be able to see nothing except monotonous stretches of snowfields. The natural camouflage is perhaps the only safeguard at present. What about the future? Will this land be able to prevent the glares of foreign eyes or an invasion of tourists forever?"

However, I stayed for one more day in this enchanted valley, full of wonders that no fairy tale had ever told me about or no dreams revealed. I saw and heard a few more things into which I need not enter now, for I should like to conclude my account by telling the last and the most important thing that I witnessed thanks to my rescuer and my hostess. Vasudeva and Gurbi were, respectively, their names, as I learnt some time before my departure. This is how it happened.

On the morning of the fourth day Devi came to me, her eyes riant as always. She was flanked by Vasudeva on one side and, on the other, that young man who had taken me, on the second day of my visit here, to the dancing hall. His name was Makaranda. Leaving me in his hands she took leave of us and sailed away with Vasudeva. Soon after, we also began to walk slowly.

Far away I saw a huge ice-clothed mountain. In front of me stretched a field of ice into the far distance — actually a glacier. It rose gradually to unite with the foot of that mountain. My companion addressed me, “Well, my good friend, I heard from Vasudeva Swami that you had come to a place a little towards the south from here in search of the source of the Bhagirathi. There you had lost your way and also become exhausted; it was then that you met Arya Vasudeva who brought you here because he saw something in you. That is why you could live here for three full days. Now I am told today to show you the origin of the Mandakini or the Bhagirathi and then lead you by a short and easy way to your destination.”

Throwing his hand forward he said, “See that mountain — the origin of the river is there. From near you can see it — the water falling from the mountain down to a chasm and soon disappearing under a field of ice. It is exposed again, as you have already seen, at the so-called Gomukh cave. There everybody can have the ‘*darshan*’ of this holy river. Come let us hurry and see the waterfall from near.”

The most holy and the most venerated river on earth, the Ganga has from time immemorial inspired poetry and religious awe. It purifies both life and death. It thrilled me therefore to think that I was going to see the real origin of this great river.

My friend reached out his hand and held mine so that it became easy for me to climb the gradually rising terrain. This reminded me of the ease with which I had walked when Vasudeva had held my hand in this manner the first day while taking me to the emerald valley. We left behind about one and a half miles before we reached the foot of the mountain. This was the end of the snowfield and also of any kind of dust. Here was a clean white mountain. One feels like calling it the frozen or solidified laughter of Maheswar, the great Lord Shiva.

Climbing the mountain was a rough game for me — stepping on the small heaps of snow, turning and twisting and all the time scared lest a foot should slip. A climber puts a foot wrong almost at his peril. With Makaranda’s ever-ready help I managed it. Otherwise, an ordinary man, an outsider, could not even think of coming here without a whole team of sherpas, guides, reporters, photographers and doctors. After a climb of a further half mile we reached the shoulder of the mountain on its other side. I saw the chasm that separated us from another dizzy mountain. We stood facing this mountain. Pointing his forefinger to a particularly impressive snow-heap clinging to the body of this mountain my friend joyously uttered, “Look, gratify your eyes.”

The form of a cow’s head, white, became clearly visible. It was four times as big as the head of an average cow and seemed to be stretched out over a slanted wall. We were standing at a distance of about 20 yards. From the slightly open mouth of this head escaped two thin milk-white streams of melted ice each about 4 feet wide and falling along the mountain’s body down to its foot from a height of about 22 feet. Soon after falling at the bottom of the chasm, the water precipitated under a floor of ice and disappeared.

Makaranda was contemplating; his palms were joined. With half-closed, meditative eyes he uttered reverently under his breath, "This is Go-Mukh! Few are lucky enough to see it — the earthly birth-place of heaven's Mandakini."

After what seemed to me to be a very short while he urged, "Come, friend, I should now lead you to the appointed place." His words brought me down to earth, and before I could say anything he started climbing down, holding my hand. God knows, I had no heart to make an about-turn so soon.

My body, my mind, as if no more belonged to me. More or less like a drunken man, half-consciously, I stepped, with my guide's help, by his side. At one place he stopped, thrust something into my hand and said, "Here, eat this." I took three mouthfuls and started walking again beside him. When, after having climbed down the mountain and passed by the Gangotri glacier, we came to the so-called Gomukh cave, it was late in the afternoon. I was then quite myself, conscious — awake.

Makaranda assured me, "I must leave you at the Gangotri temple — Devi's bidding."

Nearly in the evening I caught a glimpse of the steeple of the Ganga temple "There we are. Look, friend — we have arrived!" I said to Makaranda who had been coming behind me. But where was he? Where was Makaranda? As I turned to look behind me I could see no one.

After having reached me to a safe place he had cleverly — cunningly — vanished out of sight without my knowing it, leaving a void in my heart.

Alas, he did not even give me a chance to speak the last word. The feelings of my heart the Lord of my heart alone shared

(Concluded)

DIALOGUES

Chapter I

ONCE upon a time, at the beginning of everything, the Divine divided himself into two — although some have been known to say three or four or seven or nine. And surely each must have its truth, for the Divine was always such an innovator of epics, riddles and tales, that he liked to invent many at once, and have all of them running side by side to suit the infinity of his pleasure.

But for this story, the division of two is the one we must select, for it is the division that fits most snugly into the sweetest inner memories of man — the one he most clings to in his dreams and songs — the one to which he always returns during the hard labour of a life: in it he sees the Divine as the One, and himself as the Other. In the beginning, however, only the multitude was to be seen — all the world's children pouring into creation like granules of gold sifting through the fingers of their universal Mother.

Immobile, ingathered, suspended in the stillness of his own infinity, her divine partner watched — Lord and witness at once of her splendid creative act. But for the children themselves only a dim recollection of their divine parents remained, as they continued to drift slowly down, always away and away...

She was no different from all the others, small, specklike, alone with just that little thread of memory to bind her to anything whatsoever...memory of the divine Mother who had held her in her arms but so short a time ago, and of the divine Lord of the universe whose unfolding joy had infiltrated all her tiny being and made it limpid with light.

Further she drifted now and yet further — why, where? At what point would this floating end? Would even the thread of memory snap? There was no more time to think or wonder. Like a bird she felt herself about to land — where? how? why? Her being tensed. A coldness sprang upon her — fear. But no, just now it was no more than a coldness — fear was yet a shadow of the future. And then suddenly everything stopped — memory, light, space, thought. For an eternal moment of night *she* stopped and was no more.

Light and life returned fitfully in flashes and brilliant intimations. But now as she awoke to consciousness, she could remember nothing that had gone before. Nothing but the night that contrasted with the glare of the high noon sunlight to which she now revived. She looked about her and drew in her breath. A great statue in a temple courtyard towered before her, outlined against a white-blue sky, and she remembered — something, a vagueness — an image seen as though through a dozen broken mirrors each reflecting into the other. A voice within her found words, an inner voice that made no sound, but that all the same struggled urgently up through all the weighty coatings that enshrouded its infinitesimal internal home.

“Who are you?” it cried. “I know you — you send a chill through all my being.

Yet something about you is different. Different from what or how? I couldn't say. Tell me, are you the One that I remember? Are you — are you?"

And from the heart of the statue the answer came:

"I am, in my heart, child. Just as you are in your heart the same as the one I too remember as you. And yet we are not the same."

"No, we are not. What curse has fallen upon us then?"

"No curse, child, but the life of man, the vision and the mind of man. Do you not see how he has hewn me out of stone and masked my face in beaten gold?"

"Of course, you had not a face like that before..." She was pensive until her voice went on. "You will not be angry if I say something?"

"No, in my heart I will not be angry."

"The golden mask gives you a cruel look." Suddenly she knew that she had uttered the words of a heedless child and felt afraid. "Oh, but really you won't take offence? I didn't mean it, really I didn't —"

"I said that in my heart I would not. Speak to my heart and you are safe. Speak to my mask and you shall be to me as all the others who must be ruled by the decree of the goddess."

"But why, great Mother? why must it be so?"

"Because men are so, child." She repeated the words so softly and with such a strange and tender sadness that their enchantment made all the little one's being tremble. "Because men are so." Then the great one went on: "And in their goddess they must find what they need — what they seek. So here I sit, my wide eyes staring out of my golden face, my mouth perfectly carved and still and hard, the mass and force of my presence a thing that towers over these desert realms and proclaims to all the terror of its might."

"Oh, but now I am truly afraid."

"Seek refuge only in your heart then. Beyond its confines, all is coloured with some shade of fear."

"All, great Mother? All? Can I find you nowhere in this great yellow earth, but in the fearful eyes of men as they prostrate themselves before this, your body and being of stone?"

"Do you see the green spears of grain that sprout in the fields? I am there as food for my children. And the turrets and roof-tops of your father's town? I am there in the bricks and stones that give you shelter. Look upon the little donkeys and the great oxen that do man's work. I am in their labouring muscles and their liquid, patient eyes. I am in the birds of the sky, in the sun and the moon, and the river by which you live, for all obey me without thought or murmur — in all I dwell and spread the love of my being."

The little one asked her the next question in a whisper because it troubled her so: "But man, he doesn't understand, does he?"

"No, child. He understands only this great stone image he has built with his own hands and his own savage fear. For the rest he is blind, blind...blind..."

It was not really that the great divinity's voice faded away to an echo but that it was overpowered by a greater sound, the sound of battle. Somewhere outside the temple precincts a conflict raged. Arms clashed, tore and splintered. Men howled in triumph, in pain or in death. Animals bellowed, whinnied and screamed. The girl's breath strangled in her throat. She suddenly understood what was happening, for she remembered that the men of her household had been talking of war the last several weeks.

"Great Goddess!" she cried. "I am only twelve. I left my family a bare half hour ago. Shall I never see them again? Am I to die so soon?"

All at once her intense fear flung a glaze over her eyes, a tourniquet around her inner voice, a dull, subterranean thumping in her ears. She heard the deity before her reply in a formal, measured, metallic voice:

"Your fate shall be as of all my subjects. Have you not heard that the offering at the temple was short this year? May the enemy fall upon you, and your fields be laid bare. May your menfolk be cut down in their prime, your women be taken as slaves, and your children abandoned and die."

"Great Mother!" Even through her terror she could not help herself. And then the harsh, steely tone was gone, while softly the deity's voice reached out to her and filtered through her trauma. "Turn your eyes away, child. Come to me, quickly into my arms so that you have not to look. Bury your face in my shoulder there, and feel nothing. Stifle your cries in my embrace. Close your eyes — close your eyes. The gates open, they are coming. They are like animals who have tasted blood. Ah, their swords, they will waste no time. Cling to me tightly, tightly. There, at last it is over. Can you feel the darkness about you?"

"Yes," she murmured, and then slept.

When at last she awakened, the air about her had changed. It was no longer heavy with the presence of the great statue, or the fetid fumes of a dying city. Instead, she found herself looking out upon an almost supernatural clarity and brilliance, for such was her impression of that morning on a sunlit hilltop outside Athens. Yawning and stretching, she looked about her languorously. A dream more pressing than reality (or was it reality itself?) hovered in her awareness. She mused, for her experience pressed thoughts and impressions upon her waking mind.

"Ah, beautiful... beautiful." With her arms she made a motion in the air as though to caress an invisible figure in the sky. "Most beautiful god, you do love me, don't you? But no, you are too beautiful. What would you have to do with us mortals? Merciless, beautiful god — yet you permit us into your marvellous world, which Zeus, the greatest among you, carved from a portion of the sky like a precious gem. And we linger on in it hypnotized, enraptured by your perfection. For these moments with you, we would die again and again at your command in the manner of your choosing — because we are bewitched.

"Yes, I see you turn away without a word. Perhaps you are even mocking me. But do you know something? I don't care. I don't care at all. The hillside is a splen-

dour of wild flowers and I will gather them for your altar. I will run through the agora with my offering, through all the distinguished gentlemen of the city gathered there, and will lay all the harvest of the hillside at your feet.

"Dear heaven, how I want to sing, but I have neither lyre nor flute, and my lone voice is too uncertain to venture forth in this perfect air. No, I'll just collect the flowers..."

In her exuberance she began to run, stopping only from time to time to gather her bouquet. Then with her hands full, she made her way down the short stretch of road to the city, ran through all the gentlemen as she had promised she would, and arrived at a small altar in a private shrine beneath the Acropolis. There she laid her offering as she looked up at the image of the god. For a moment she paused, and then shook her head.

"Too beautiful," she whispered. "But here, he is also distant and hard. It was different on the hilltop. Yet the statue doesn't lie. He is like that — on the hilltop he was only pretending to be human to tease me, play with me, perhaps. In truth, a god is a god — he is never hurt and he never dies."

She turned away, looked at herself and made a little gesture of despair at her bare feet and her homespun dress. "A god is a god," she repeated under her breath.

She came out of the small structure and looked at the sky.

"Ah, but really," she mused on. "The world belongs to them and not to us — it is too perfect, too unkind in its perfection. But how odd it is that I should seek kindness. Is it because I am not yet full-grown? It must be — I can't even remember when my mother died. All I know is that I didn't have her kindness with me as long as the other children. Now they are already strong — especially the boys who are all but fit for war."

"But with what stupidities I'm filling my head today. I too must spurn weakness. Because I must soon bear sons myself who will be Hellenes and warriors... Yet..."

Tilting back her head she looked up the craggy, grey-white face of the Acropolis towering above her. Directing her thoughts to its summit, she whispered to herself, "Only she, the great goddess, knows the answers to our human fate. Will she look upon me if I go to stand before her altar? Even as a giant would look upon an ant? well, I suppose it can't be otherwise, still I must go."

Slowly she wended her way up the path leading to the complex of buildings on the heights of the Acropolis. There were many people there when she arrived — soldiers, priests, townspeople, a few conspicuous foreigners. But inside the central temple to Pallas Athene, she had eyes for none but the goddess. The great image dominated its own house, composed, all-powerful and serenely beautiful. Captivated, the girl stood before the divinity in utter silence and waited. Then at last she heard the voice.

"My child, I have been waiting for you." The words reverberated somewhere in her heart, remote from her immediate human sense of hearing, yet as clear as a physical utterance. "You have been slow in coming," the voice went on. "Were

you lingering by the roadside, or playing in the mud like a little scamp while your Mother fretted for you?"

Her answering cry burst from her: "Oh, my Mother — how good it is to hear you speak! I have longed for you too, but my heart is mortal and my mind is weak. I had too many thoughts along the way until I felt there was no kindness or anything else left on earth for poor mortals like me — not even you —"

"You met Apollo then?"

"How did you know?"

"He always has that effect on men. He drives them mad with his beauty, his sorcery —"

"And his indifference?"

"And yes, indeed, his indifference."

"It was that that affected me the most—are all gods like that?"

"Yes and no. They are not the same as human beings, certainly. You must have learned that by now. They have not the human heart or mind, yet they are not without feelings and directions, or a will of their own."

"But most important, great Mother, they do not die like us. Isn't that the greatest difference of all?"

"Not as great as you would imagine, my little one. Mortals tend to overrate death. But see, even among mortal warriors of your own race, they care little for it. They fear neither its oblivion nor its pain. They are truly my children and their mortality is but a show. After all, did you not survive a recent 'death' cradled in my arms? And have you not reawakened safely into the splendour of an Athenian summer morning?"

Pallas Athene had spoken clearly enough, but for the first time, the girl heard her utterance as a garbled hum. Around her heart her human consciousness clung in its dimmed torpor, and she felt nothing but confusion.

"I don't know," she mumbled distractedly. "I don't know so many things. I forget so easily. I do not even hear well. Being human, how weak and frail I am. You tower above me in all the grandeur of your crested helmet and aegis, in all the perfect beauty of your eternal wisdom, and beside you, beneath you, I know myself to be nothing, utterly nothing."

"Did you feel yourself so when you were with Apollo on the mountain a few brief hours ago?"

"No." She became dreamy again as she remembered. "I felt myself one with him, his equal, because he had cast his spell over me for a fleeting moment. But it was a delusion."

"Delusion, or magic, or spell. The language of man has many words that glance past the truth like badly aimed javelins against a shield. Were it not for the gods no mortal would move a step, or think, or feel, or breathe, so intimately bound is he in essence to the great beings he considers so far beyond him — the gods, with their endless invisible threads of Fate by which they are compelled to guide him."

"Then if these threads be not delusion, magic or spell, are they not bondage?"

"Sleep awhile in my arms, child, and you will see that it is a bondage of love. Fierce and searing as the sun or gentle as summer rain, it is love and such that no man or god can escape. It ties one to the other in a web that spans the cosmos. So dream of it, child, and understand. Dream in my arms..."

All too willingly, she sank down upon the floor, rested her head against the pedestal of the statue, and closed her eyes.

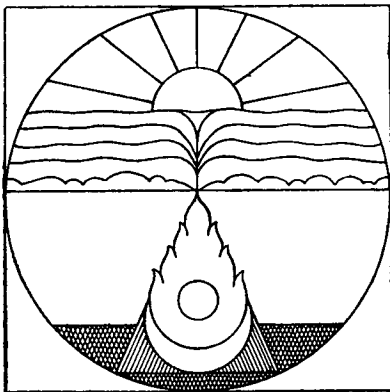
(To be continued)

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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle, Thirty-first Number (Sri Aurobindo Society Annual, 1975), pp. 141, price: Rs. 6.

THE thirty-first number of the *Sri Aurobindo Circle* opens with some photos and extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and of the Mother. It is always an inspiration to read their words and to look at their pictures. It is remarkable and significant that this fact remains true even when we are constantly bombarded by them from every side. Especially noteworthy among the selections from the Mother are four terse answers given by her to a series of questions. Example: "What is the best way of making humanity progress?" The Mother's answer: "To progress oneself."

The first of the longer features is a collection of "Some Answers from the Mother". Most of these I have never read. Then come Sri Aurobindo's writings. Of particular interest is "*The Life Divine*": *A Commentary on the Isha Upanishad*. This lengthy fragment, first published in the *Supplement* to the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, is perhaps not known to many readers. It certainly deserves to be known. It is probably the last of the many commentaries on the Isha which Sri Aurobindo wrote before pouring out his distilled interpretation into the classic *Arya* exegesis. This "*Life Divine*" commentary — the reason for the title is not certain, it has nothing overtly to do with the book of that name — was written around 1913. This means it was written about a year before the work in the *Arya*. It is filled with the same clear insight, the intuitive insight of a master of Jnana and Yoga. In addition it evinces the same clear and scrupulous dealing with ancient text, which marks out Sri Aurobindo as a true scholar as well as a Yogin.

The Editor of the *Circle* has written that "*The Life Divine*" was composed in Baroda. It in fact was written in Pondicherry. The note in the *Supplement* is clear enough about this, but, in order to set aside all doubt, I asked a friend of mine who I knew had gone through the original manuscript. He confirmed that it was written in Pondi, and he added that thereby hung a tale. It appears that this particular notebook has, in the front, compositions that are clearly of Baroda origin. They are written out neatly in the characteristic printing which Sri Aurobindo used at that time. "*The Life Divine*", however, was scrawled out in pencil, apparently at vertiginous velocity. Its handwriting shows that it is certainly of Pondicherry origin. As to why an old notebook with its carefully written stuff had been used for a rapidly written draft, my friend had this plausible explanation. It appears that paper was quite scarce in those days (Sri Aurobindo, the reader will recall, was living then in utter poverty), so perforce he had to write down his immortal compositions on any blank sheet that he could find.

The remainder of this *Circle* is made up of six articles and two speeches. The first contribution is "The Hour of God in the Life of Humanity", a speech delivered by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar in Belgium. It reads quite nicely, and I am sure it was

very well received. Dr. Iyengar is a widely-read man, and his writings are always well-seasoned with a fine mixed *masalla* of quotations. The present speech is not an exception. Indeed, towards the end it becomes somewhat over-spicy. Dr. Iyengar, however, is no pedant. His citations, for the most part, are used to back up his argument. This kind of use, especially from the podium, is permissible. But Dr. Iyengar might have depended much more on his own real power as a writer. His point at any rate is brought home. But one wonders, when all has been said, if asingle citation, the Mother's "To progress oneself", might not have sufficed. Her answer, however, would have made for a rather short speech. The author writes in his usual, readable style. It is true, that his pet words or phrases are there: "divers" occurs at least once. Nevertheless his speech deserves the attention of all.

Kishor Gandhi's "Essential Requirements of Yoga" is a compilation, but it is a compilation with a difference. Basing himself, like a true disciple, entirely on the works of his Gurus, he is skillful enough to be able to weave of their words a tissue both attractive and useful. No one who reads this speech will fail to benefit by it.

Another compilation is "A City at the Service of Truth" by Shyam Sunder Jhunjhunwala. Here statements by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the subject of Truth are strung together to make a rosary that is worthy of use for one's *japa* of this sacred *mantra*.

Then there is K. D. Sethna's "An Obscurity in Early Yeats". This is a most entertaining *jeu d'esprit*, in which the learned author attempts to show that when the young Yeats once wrote "purple" he really didn't mean purple at all! Mr. Sethna is known to be a serious scholar and his handling of his material here shows why he has acquired that reputation. His scholarship is known, but what is not well known is that Mr. Sethna is a great, if sometimes an unconscious, humourist. By keeping a straight face while narrating at truly remarkable length the history of the word "purple" in Latin and English and Yeats, he succeeds in creating a piece that, much like the Latin "purpureus", has a happy "completeness of shining".

Perhaps the most solid contribution, all things considered, is Sisirkumar Ghose's "Sanskrit Poetics and Western Literature". The paper is subtitled "Towards an Inquiry" and appears to be the preface to a more considerable work. I hope that this is the case. For these few pages, which are mostly an examination of *The Future Poetry*, are so well and clearly written that one must look forward to the publication, perhaps in the *Circle*, of such an interesting comparative study as the one proposed. If it is not too overburdened with inadequately explained citations from the classical writers, it will be, I am sure, a most illuminating study.

A comparative study already in progress is Prema Nandakumar's "*The Divine Comedy and Savitri*". One of the pitfalls of the comparative method is the finding of "remarkable parallels". The last chapters of Mrs. Nandakumar's essay were so full of this imaginative defect that I was hesitant about even looking into the present installment. I did, however, and I was honestly glad that I did. These chapters on the characters and on the symbols and images in the poems have enriched my

appreciation of both. One might question, however, what Indra, Varuna or Agni, or for that matter Vaughan's "great Ring", have to do with "nature symbolism". What the Rishis and the English poet perceived were not "natural phenomena" (as "natural" is commonly understood), but supernatural and mystical realities. I had thought that the exclusively naturalistic interpretation of Agni and Indra and Varuna, or even of Parjanya and the Maruts, had been effectively done away with by Sri Aurobindo in *The Secret of the Veda*. "*The Divine Comedy and Savitri*", nevertheless, is a fine contribution by a hardworking and conscientious writer. But one wishes that Mrs. Nandakumar would give us more of that solid, factual scholarship which gave to her studies of Sri Aurobindo's plays, for example, such real and lasting value.

The remaining two articles are attempts, by and large, to examine some aspect of Sri Aurobindo in the light of Western psychology. In "Reflections upon the Undivine Maya", H. P. Sullivan considers the Indian idea of the Asuric creation, the *ādevī māyā*, and shows how certain ideas found mostly in Jung point more or less to the same thing. Other Ashram writers would do well to imitate his footnote style. Sitaram Jayaswal gives an intelligently written study of the "Nature of Personality". The definitions culled from Western psychologists are interesting, and show the superficiality of the "scientific" approach to this subject. An analysis of Sri Aurobindo's approach is also given, and although it is mostly well-managed, it is not all that one might hope for. Sri Aurobindo does indeed distinguish a physical, a vital and a mental being and does find a psychic being, but this is behind, not above, the lower triple personality. And above is not a "spiritual being", for this is over-simplification, but a many-layered range of spiritual-mental being which leads to the supreme Supramental Being. There is also the central being or Jivatman, which is a portion of the Nature of the One Divine Being. It would be better not to try to cram all that Sri Aurobindo has said about personality (and he has written a considerable amount) into a single cut-and-dried formula.

The get-up of the *Circle* is admirable. This year its distinctive gold-winged swan soars up from a violet background. The letterpress is a paragon of good printing.

PETER HEEHS

The Gnostic Circle: A Synthesis in the Harmonies of the Cosmos, by *Patrizia Norelli-Bachelet*. AEON BOOKS, USA. 1975. 309 pages, colour charts, photographs and Index. Rs.45/-; U.S. \$ 12.90

WITH the appearance of *The Gnostic Circle* we are presented on a golden platter, as it were, with much of the occult knowledge pertaining to our age, the Age of Truth Consciousness. Here profound aspects of the work begun by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are treated with an exposition of the earth's and man's position within

the ongoing process of evolution in terms of formerly hidden knowledge of symbols. With numbers, zodiacal signs, planets and their relationships within time and space, knowledge is revealed from the third angle, thus to complete the Trinity of this age.

The organization of the book itself reveals a symphonic harmony moving as it does ever closer to the center of Truth. The author is not merely giving out information, as most books attempting to deal with this subject do, but has chosen to present us with the possibility of understanding these cosmic harmonies without getting caught in their details and thus losing the sense of the greater movement. Here the effort is to trigger the reader's inner experience in order that a true and deep knowledge may arise and with it an understanding of material that otherwise may appear to be only a clever game. For the serious reader, each new review of the contents will bring forth deeper understanding of the work that has been given to us. That which seems obscure in other presentations here becomes clear and shines forth casting its light on hidden mysteries. We are given another way of seeing the perfection of the Divine Mother in Her ongoing and ever expanding manifestation. For one who responds to this channel of Knowledge, *The Gnostic Circle* is overwhelming in its scope and implications and can only be recommended to others of similar response for study with the hope that it may open the way to Truth as it is intended to do.

BARBARA WHITE

"Love must not cease to live upon the earth;
For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,
Love is the far Transcendent's angel here;
Love is man's lien on the Absolute."

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