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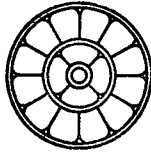
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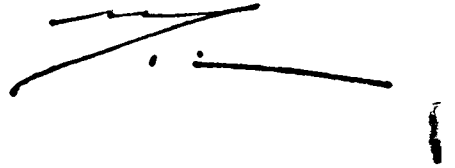


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Vol. XXVII

No. 7

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

DIFFICULTIES come because there are possibilities in you. If in life everything was easy, then it would be a life of nothing. Because difficulties come on your way it shows you have possibilities. Do not be afraid.

22.2.1968

*
**

You can say to X, on my behalf, that he must look at this apparently unhappy circumstance as the proof that the Lord considers that he is ready for spiritual life and that he must no more be attached to any exterior or material thing.

If he takes things that way, he will soon feel that all sorrow is gone away from him....

What I meant was, not to worry about it. Let him take what comes to him without getting upset or sorry, excited or nervous.

*
**

Never grumble. All sorts of forces enter you when you grumble and they pull you down. Keep smiling. I seem always to be joking but it is not mere joking. It is a confidence born from the psychic. A smile expresses the faith that nothing can stand against the Divine.

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

THESE experiences are symbolic in their character, so there is no reason to be horrified by the green waters even if you did drown in a well in the last life. All such experiences should be observed quietly without alarm or depression or other such feelings. One can look at them and try to see or feel their meaning, but too active a speculation in the mind rather hinders than helps the seeing.

If you sink down into an unopened part and open it to the light or empty and clean it, that is a quite salutary and necessary operation and there is no reason for alarm. As for self-preservation, one does not drown in these inner wells — it is only a bath or plunge. And if it happens to be the well of the psychic, nothing more salutary than to plunge into it.

23-3-1937

THE INDWELLING DEITY AND MAN'S FUTURE

SOME WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE indwelling deity who presides over the destiny of the race has raised in mind and heart the idea, the hope of a new order which will replace the old unsatisfactory order and substitute for it conditions of the world's life which will in the end have a reasonable chance of establishing permanent peace and well-being. This would for the first time turn into an assured fact the ideal of human unity which, cherished by a few, seemed for so long a noble chimera; then might be created a firm ground of peace and harmony and even a free room for the realisation of the highest human dreams, for the perfectability of the race, a perfect society, a higher upwards evolution of the human soul and human nature. It is for the man of our day and, at the most, of tomorrow to give the answer.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of June 1975)

(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. We are giving 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 in February 1968. This translation came out in book-form in 1973)

JANUARY 23, 1957

THE END

“The meeting of man and God must always mean a penetration and entry of the Divine into the human and a self-immersion of man in the Divinity.

But that immersion is not in the nature of an annihilation. Extinction is not the fulfilment of all this search and passion, suffering and rapture. The game would never have been begun if that were to be its ending.

Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.

What then was the commencement of the whole matter? Existence that multiplied itself for sheer delight of being and plunged into numberless trillions of forms so that it might find itself innumerable.

And what is the middle? Division that strives towards a multiple unity, ignorance that labours towards a flood of varied light, pain that travails towards the touch of an unimaginable ecstasy. For all these things are dark figures and perverse vibrations.

And what is the end of the whole matter? As if honey could taste itself and all its drops together and all its drops could taste each other and each the whole honeycomb as itself, so should the end be with God and the soul of man and the universe.

Love is the key-note, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience. We know only the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the divine Beatitudes.”

Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*,
Centenary Edition, Vol. 16, p. 384

How can one learn of pure delight?

FIRST of all, to begin with one must through an attentive observation grow aware that

desires and the satisfaction of desires give only a vague, uncertain pleasure, mixed, fugitive and altogether unsatisfactory. That is generally the starting-point.

Then, if one is a reasonable being, one must learn to discern what is desire and refrain from doing anything that may satisfy one's desires. One must push them away without trying to satisfy them. And then the first result is exactly one of the first findings stated by the Buddha in his teaching: there is an infinitely greater delight in conquering and rejecting a desire than in satisfying it. Every sincere and steadfast seeker will realise after some time, sooner or later, at times very soon, that this is an absolute truth, and that the delight felt in overcoming a desire is incomparably higher than the small pleasure, so fugitive and mixed, which may be found in the satisfaction of his desires. That is the second step.

Naturally, with this continuous discipline, in a very short time the desires will be far away and will bother you no longer. So you will be free to enter a little more deeply into your being and open yourself in an aspiration to ... the Giver of Delight, the divine element, the divine Grace. And if this is done with a sincere self-giving — something that gives itself, offers itself and expects nothing in exchange for its offering — one will feel that kind of warmth, sweet, comfortable, intimate, radiant, which fills the heart and is the herald of Delight.

After this, the path is easy.

Sweet Mother, what is the true Delight of being?

That very one of which I am speaking!

Then, Sweet Mother, here when Sri Aurobindo speaks of an existence "that multiplied itself for sheer delight of being", what is this delight?

The delight of existing.

There is a moment when one begins to be a little ready, when one can feel in every thing, every object, in every movement, in every vibration, in all things around one — not only people and conscious beings, but things, objects; not only trees and plants and living things, but simply any object one uses, things around one — this delight, this delight of being, being just what one is, simply being. And one sees that all this vibrates like that. One touches a thing and feels this delight. But naturally, I say, one must have followed the discipline I spoke about at the beginning; otherwise, so long as one has a desire, a preference, an attachment or affinities and repulsions and all that, one cannot — one cannot.

And so long as one finds pleasure — pleasure, well, yes, vital or physical pleasure in a thing — one cannot feel this delight. For this delight is everywhere. This delight is something very subtle. One moves in the midst of things and it is as though they were singing to you all their delight. There comes a time when it becomes very familiar in the life around you. Naturally, I must admit that it is a little more difficult to

feel it in human beings, because there are all their mental and vital formations which come into the field of perception and upset that. There is too much of that kind of egoistic asperity which gets mixed with things, so it is more difficult to touch the Delight there. But even in animals one feels it; it is already a little more difficult than in plants. But in plants, in flowers, it is so wonderful! They speak all their joy, they express it. And, as I said, all familiar objects, the things around one, used by one, there is a state of consciousness in which each one is happy to be, just as it is. So one knows at that moment that one has touched true Delight. And that is not conditioned. I mean it does not depend upon ... it depends upon nothing. It does not depend on outer circumstances, does not depend on a more or less favourable state, does not depend on anything: it is a communion with the *raison d'être* of the universe.

And when this comes it fills all the cells of the body. It is not a thing which is even thought out — one does not reason, does not analyse, it is not that: it is a *state* in which one lives. And when the body shares in it, it is so fresh — so fresh, so spontaneous, so there is no longer any turning back upon oneself, there is no longer any sense of self-observation, of self-analysis or analysing things. All that is like a canticle of joyous vibrations, but very, very quiet, without violence, without passion, nothing of all that. It is very subtle and very intense at the same time and, when it comes, it seems that the whole universe is a marvellous harmony. Even what is to the ordinary human consciousness ugly, unpleasant, appears marvellous.

Unfortunately, as I said, people, circumstances, all that, with all those mental and vital formations — that disturbs all the time. Then one is obliged to come back to this ignorant, blind perception of things. But otherwise, as soon as all that stops and one can get out of it ... everything changes. As he says there, at the end: everything changes. A marvellous harmony. And it is all Delight, true Delight, veritable Delight.

That asks for a little work.

And that discipline I spoke about, which one must undergo, if it is practised with the aim of finding the Delight, the result is delayed, for an egoistic element is introduced there, it is done with an aim and is no longer an offering, it is a demand, and then ..., It comes, it will come, even if it takes much longer — when one asks for nothing, expects nothing, hopes for nothing, when simply it is that, it is self-giving and aspiration, and the spontaneous need without any bargaining — the need to be divine, that's all.

Mother, will you explain this "drop of honey"?

Oh! honey But that is an image, my child.

He says: "if one could imagine" It is simply to give a more concrete approach than intellectual abstractions. He says: If you can can imagine, for example, a honeycomb, well ... a honeycomb which would have the capacity to taste itself and at the same time each drop of honey; not only taste itself as honey, but taste itself in each drop, being each drop of the honeycomb, and if each of these drops could taste

all the others, itself and all the others, and at the same time if each drop could taste, could get the taste of the whole honeycomb as if it were itself.

So, that would be the honeycomb capable of tasting itself and tasting in detail all the drops in the honeycomb, and each drop capable of tasting itself and individually all the others and the honeycomb as a whole, as itself It is an exact image. Only it needs a power of imagination!

Like that I understand. I am asking what it signifies.

Honey, it is something delicious, isn't it? So, these are the delights of divine joy.

And just now, when I was recalling this joy which is in things, spontaneous, simple, this joy which is at the heart of everything, well, for the physical body that has something truly — oh! naturally, the taste of honey is quite crude and gross in comparison — but something like that, something extremely delicious. And very simple, very simple and quite complete in its simplicity; quite entire in its simplicity and yet very simple.

That, you understand, is not something to be thought out, one must have the power to evoke it, one must have some imagination. So, if one has this capacity, one can do that only by reading, then one can understand It is an analogy, it is only an analogy, but it is an analogy which has truly a power of evocation.

But everyone will imagine something different, won't he, Mother ?

Obviously. But that doesn't matter! That will be good for him.

(Silence)

Is that all?

I had brought the questions put to me, but I believe it is already a little late. (*The Mother glances at some questions.*)

There is one which is terribly intellectual which we shall leave for another day. There is another ... which is only a semblance, and then there is a third which is interesting but needs a detailed reply, and this evening it is already a little late.

Here is, however, a question which can be answered very easily, it is from one of my writings where it is said:

“It is a great mistake to suppose that the Divine Will always acts openly in the world.”

And then in Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

“If we see unity everywhere, if we recognise that all comes by the divine will ... etc.”

And another thing from me, in *Prayers and Meditations*:

“It is Thou who art the doer in each thing and each being, and he who is near enough to Thee to see Thee in all actions without exception, will know how to transform each act into a benediction.”

(December 10, 1912)

And so, I am asked how to reconcile these contradictions. But I don't see any contradiction. For in the first sentence it is said: “It is a great mistake to suppose that the Divine Will acts always openly in the world”.... I shall say: it is *extremely rare* that it acts openly. It acts always, but not openly. And when it acts openly, that is what men call “miracles”. And that's something extremely rare. Most of the time it does not act openly, but that doesn't mean it does not act. It doesn't act openly, that's all. So there, there's no contradiction. That was all I meant. It is altogether a superficial contradiction born of a lack of understanding of the words.

The Divine Will acts, but not openly. When it acts openly, well, men call that miracles. That's all. But that does not prevent it from acting.

PRAYERS

PRAYERS read
 are prayers read.
 Prayers sung
 are prayers sung.
 They are not
 prayers prayed.
 Real prayer
 shoots up from the heart,
 and the devotee who prays
 is unaware of the prayer
 even a moment before.

GIRDHARLAL

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of June 1975)

(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 6, 1940

P: There is a German order that ships must keep 12 to 20 miles off the French coast. I suppose it may apply to colonies too.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even if the ships come nearer, what can Pondicherry do? It has no guns.

P: Mohanlal says he saw three sepoys going with guns, on the pier.

SRI AUROBINDO: To shoot the British warship? ... But it seems all communications, trains etc. are going to be stopped between Madras and Pondicherry. The people are in a panic. Hitler has declared that the French fleet is not to be demobilised, (*Laughter*) because he can't get at it and he has threatened Turkey and Yugoslavia. It depends now on what Russia will do because it will be dangerous for Russia to allow Hitler to get control over Turkey which means also an entry into Asia Minor. The position will be that except Russia and Britain everybody will be under Hitler. Spain is practically under his thumb. That is the new world order, I suppose. Only North Africa will be out of it, since it is being guarded by the British Navy.

P: I suppose Turkey will consult Russia before yielding.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Everybody is climbing down. Have you noted Cordell Hull saying that America won't participate in European politics? America will only concern itself with trade!

N: For some time America has been following that policy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: I wonder if it is because of the impending election. Otherwise Knox and the other Republicans said that Britain's defence is their own defence. Are there only two parties in America?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but there is a split in the parties. The Democratic party is solidly behind Roosevelt, I think, while in the Republican party there are isolationists, interventionists etc.

P: France has cut off all diplomatic relations with England, Germany says. In

that case the Indian Government will naturally take stern measures and they won't hesitate to take possession of Pondicherry.

SRI AUROBINDO: Diplomatic relations are already cut off here. It seems the Consul has gone to the North, so also the Vice-Consul. When the British Consul asked the Governor why he was hesitating, he replied: "Your own Government has not decided." That means practically a refusal.

N: But he could have done like Indo-China and the British *status quo*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but what if he wants to go back to France? The Pétain Government will be there.

N: Is Hitler trying to checkmate Russia in Turkey or working in league with Russia?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know. But Stalin and Molotov would be off their heads to allow Hitler that. Hitler will next occupy Asia Minor and then Asia. Then Jawaharlal may think that the invasion of India may become real.

N: Can't say. He still may not believe.

SRI AUROBINDO: He may say there are mountains, deserts etc.!

N: But Turkey is in a better position. She has the Allies on her side.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but there is Syria now in between. The British will have to occupy that first.

S: Hitler has made a calculated move. He has first alienated Syria, then he will impose himself on Turkey. He and Italy have warned Turkey and Yugoslavia against an independent policy.

SRI AUROBINDO: If Kemal were there, he would never submit. I don't know about these other people.

N: Italy calls Churchill a criminal gangster because of his action against the French fleet.

SRI AUROBINDO: Italy? Of course. A gangster like Mussolini?

S: Where was the Italian fleet at that time?

SRI AUROBINDO: They said that it couldn't arrive in time.

N: Italy has thrown a challenge to the British to come to the Italian naval base.

SRI AUROBINDO: The fact is that the Italian fleet is hiding in the Adriatic. (Laughter)

EVENING

P: There was a great rush at the bank for exchanging French notes for British money.

N: So Pondicherry is becoming a British colony? And diplomatic relations also seem to have been cut off.

SRI AUROBINDO: The French *chargé-d'affaires* in London has resigned. But why "resigned"? They are called back in such cases. Is it a new term?

P: Perhaps he is in sympathy with the British and so has resigned to Pétain. The French fleet has been asked to scuttle itself.

SRI AUROBINDO: The British also have made the same offer to sink it.

RAO: What do you think of Gandhi's offer to the British?

SRI AUROBINDO: The result of the offer here has been that those officers who wanted to fight don't want to any more. They say: "If submission is heroic, why fight?" The French forces stopped fighting not because of non-violence but because there was no hope. If there had been hope they would have fought on.

P: Any news of the Congress Working Committee?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, they are still holding sessions. Something important seems to be going on there, otherwise they wouldn't have taken so many days.

RAO: There is a rumour of a mysterious letter sent by the Viceroy through Aney to Gandhi.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rumour from where?

RAO: *The Indian Express*. (Laughter)

(As Rao didn't know the joke about the *Indian Express*, he looked from one person to another.)

SRI AUROBINDO: The paper comments that the Simla office circle is hard in its attitude.

P: It seems Grig is against any wide reforms.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the resistance of Simla that stands in the way. I am sure the English people would give larger terms. The *Manchester Guardian* describes the Viceroy as rigid and asks Amery to visit India.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

A CORRECTION

In "A Talk by Vasudha" in the June *Mother India*, the sentence in the middle of p. 466 — "My brother had naturally to make arrangements for our coming over here permanently" — should read: "My brother had naturally to make arrangements for our living, before he came over here permanently."

RECONCILIATION OF THE AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE TEXTS IN THE SCRIPTURE: SHANKARA AND SRI AUROBINDO

I. Introduction

It is a common conviction that all the Upanishads aim at teaching one thing — the nature of ultimate reality, Brahman. The Mundaka Upanishad, for example, declares that the knowledge of Brahman is the foundation of all knowledge, and so asks: “What is that by knowing which all is known?”¹ But the language and ideas of the Upanishads are such that we very often fail to properly comprehend their teaching. They belong to an age far removed from ours and hence this difficulty. Talking about the language of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Sri Aurobindo writes:

If its ideas are remote from us, its language is still more remote. Profound, subtle, extraordinarily rich in rare philosophical suggestions and delicate psychology, it has preferred to couch its ideas in a highly figurative and symbolical language which to its contemporaries, accustomed to this suggestive dialect, must have seemed a noble frame for its riches, but meets us rather as an obscuring veil.²

This has led some western scholars, as also some Indian scholars trained in their way of thinking, to conclude that here is a body of conflicting statements and contradictory views. Not knowing that they are projecting their difficulties into the writings of the ancients, the scholars began also to invent theories as to why the Upanishads lack unity and completeness. But neither Shankara nor Sri Aurobindo subscribes to this view. Shankara in his commentary on the Brahma Sutras not only accepts the basic standpoint of the aphorist that the Upanishads are perfectly homogeneous and self-consistent but also addresses himself to the task of showing how they consistently set forth the nature of Brahman. He tries his best in almost every page to prove that the Upanishadic thoughts constitute a systematic whole where each complements the other. Giving his comment on the aphorism that the authoritativeness of the scripture with regard to Brahman exists on account of its synthetic unity, Shankara writes:

In all the Upanishads the texts become fully reconciled when they are accepted as establishing this very fact (the teaching of the nature of Brahman) in their fullest import.³

Sri Aurobindo too has demonstrated in his commentaries on the Isha and Kena Upanishads and elsewhere that the Upanishads are a body of consistent teaching about Brahman. For instance, talking of the Isha, he writes:

There is a consummate harmony in the rhythm of the thought as well as in the rhythm of the language and the verse. The result is a whole system of knowledge and spiritual experience stated with the utmost brevity, with an epic massiveness and dignity, but yet in itself full and free from omission. We have in this Upanishad no string of incoherent thoughts thrown out at random, no loose transitions from one class of ideas to another, but a single subject greatly treated with completeness, with precision, with the inspiration of a poet possessed by divine truth and the skill of a consummate architect of thought and language.⁴

From what we have said it becomes clear that a proper interpretation of the Upanishadic texts is quite possible and indispensable. For in its absence it is impossible to bridge the wide gap that exists now between the language of the Upanishads and that of our age, much less to comprehend properly their teaching about Brahman.

Generally speaking, conflict between texts may arise in three ways: (1) between the text of one Upanishad and the text of another; (2) between one text and another text of one and the same Upanishad; (3) between one part and another part of a text of a given Upanishad.

As for the texts of the first kind, we may consider the Mundaka and Katha. While the former affirms that Brahman is the source of the world, the latter says that nothing can be positively said of it. By implication it denies the possibility of Brahman being the source of this world.

(a) As a spider sends forth and draws in (its thread), as herbs grow on the earth, as the hair (grows) on the head and the body of a living person, so from the Imperishable arises the universe.⁵

(b) The (self) without sound, without touch and without form, undecaying, is likewise without taste, eternal, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the great, abiding, by discerning that one is freed from the face of death.⁶

As regards the second, attention may be called to the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. While a text of this presents Brahman as having attributes, another of the same presents Brahman as having no attributes.

(a) This self is indeed Brahman consisting of the understanding, mind, life, sight, hearing, earth, water, air, ether, light and no light, desire and absence of desire, anger and absence of anger, righteousness and absence of righteousness and all things.⁷

(b) That, O Gargi, the knowers of Brahman call the Imperishable. It is neither gross nor fine, neither short nor long, neither glowing red (like fire) nor adhesive (like water). (It is) neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor space.⁸

Regarding the third, the Shwetashwatara Upanishad is a suitable example. A text of this talks of Brahman as both possessing qualities and no qualities.

The one God hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the inner self of all beings, the ordainer of all deeds, who dwells in all beings, the witness, the knower, the absolute, devoid of qualities.⁹

Unless such texts are properly interpreted it is difficult to understand the true import of the Upanishads.

II. Conditions of the Scriptural Interpretation

Three conditions are laid down for undertaking the scriptural interpretation: (1) that the knowledge of Brahman is not possible except by means of the scripture; (2) that the scripture as a whole is valid; (3) that the authority of reason is subordinate to the authority of the scripture.

(1) The aim of the scripture is to declare that Brahman is the ultimate reality. The Seers, the authors of the Upanishads, arrived at the knowledge of Brahman on the basis of what they saw (*dṛṣṭi*) and heard (*śruti*) in their soul. It is for this reason that the teachings of the Upanishads are considered to be infallible and most trustworthy. As the faculties of truth-vision and truth-hearing transcend the faculties of ordinary humanity, we have no means of acquiring knowledge about Brahman except by a complete reliance on the scripture.

Shankara unconditionally affirms that Brahman cannot be known without the aid of the scripture.

(a) Brahman is known from the scriptures alone¹⁰.

(b) The Upanishads are the only authority about it¹¹.

Sri Aurobindo emphasises the indispensability of the scripture, when he says that in its absence a comprehensive understanding of the nature of Brahman is out of the question.

The Upanishad alone of extant scriptures gives us without veil of stinting, with plenitude and a noble catholicity the truth of the Brahman; its aid to humanity is therefore indispensable.¹²

Elsewhere he describes the Upanishads as the lamps given to us by God.

They are God's lamps that illumine the stairs by which we ascend and descend no longer bound but freely and at will the whole scale of existence, finding Him there in his ineffability, concealed in utter luminousness, but also here in the garden of light and shade, manifest in every being.¹³

(2) If the Upanishads are the only authority about Brahman, it follows that all the Upanishadic texts are equally valid or authoritative. While interpreting the scripture one is very likely to nullify certain texts in favour of certain other texts with a view to form a flawlessly logical system. It is not wise to choose some texts and exclude the rest. That the scripture as a whole is valid is therefore a word of caution. An interpretation that disregards this word of caution lays itself open to the charge of exclusiveness.

The aphorist of the Brahma Sutras makes a pointed reference to the total validity of the scriptures.¹⁴ Shankara approvingly comments thus:

(a) It is not proper to interpret some Vedic sentences (that is, the Upanishads) as having meaning and the others as meaningless, since they are all valid.¹⁵

(b) It is not proper ... to invalidate the Vedas.¹⁶

While writing his commentary on the Gita, which is regarded as the thirteenth Upanishad, Sri Aurobindo calls attention to the need for taking the scripture as a whole.

But we must take, here as elsewhere, the thought of the Gita as a whole and not force its affirmations in their solitary sense quite detached from each other, — as indeed every truth, however true in itself, yet, taken apart from others which at once limit and complete it, becomes a snare to bind the intellect and a misleading dogma; for in reality each is one thread of a complex web and no thread must be taken apart from the web.¹⁷

In this connection he quotes the Gita itself which emphasises the value of whole-knowledge:

The Gita itself makes a distinction between those who have not the knowledge of the whole, *akṛtsnavidāḥ*, and are misled by the partial truths of existence, and the Yogin who has the synthetic knowledge of the totality, *kṛtsnavid*. To see all existence steadily and see it whole and not be misled by its conflicting truths, is the first necessity for the calm and complete wisdom to which the Yogin is called upon to rise.¹⁸

More specifically, referring to the texts of the Upanishads, Sri Aurobindo says:

These ... taken together are all-comprehensive: it is possible for the mind to cut and select, to build a closed system and explain away all that does not fit within it; but it is on the complete and many-sided statement that we must take our stand if we have to acquire an integral knowledge.¹⁹

Interpretation of the scripture involves two processes: first, discovering the larger

or central thought; second, determining in the light of this thought the respective position of each of the other thoughts. If the central thought is really central, then all thoughts, however conflicting they may be, can be accommodated. Hence a valid interpretation has no reason to discriminate between the texts. It proceeds on the view that every text is as much valid as every other.

(3) Interpretation of the scripture assumes four things: (1) that the scripture is the only source of knowledge of Brahman; (2) that the scripture has a thought structure of its own; (3) that its thought structure can be brought to light by a suitable process of analysis; (4) that the knowledge of Brahman is possible only when the thought structure of the scripture is brought to the surface. Of these the third aspect — that the thought structure of the scripture can be brought out by a suitable process of analysis — calls for explanation, for it represents the last condition laid down for the scriptural interpretation. What do we mean when we refer to the above aspect — the third aspect? We mean that in bringing out the thought structure of the scripture by a suitable process of analysis, we are recognising the authority of reason too. Hence our knowledge of Brahman depends not on one but two authorities: *the scripture and reason*. An effective utilisation of these two demands that they function according to a specific form of delimitation. As for the first, since it is the only valid source of knowledge about Brahman, its authority is supreme with regard to both its *thoughts* and the *thought structure*; as for the second, its authority is of subservient nature as it mainly concerns the *explication* of all the thoughts of the scripture and their original structure, as also the *detection* and *elimination* of errors in such a process.

Knowing as he does that the function of reason is merely explicative, Shankara affirms that the place of reason is subordinate to that of the scripture.

(a) Here is commenced an ascertainment of the meaning of the texts of the Upanishads with the help of reasoning not opposed to the Upanishads themselves.²⁰

(b) Empty logic (logic independent of the scripture) cannot find any scope here; for logic, conforming to the Upanishads, is alone resorted to here.²¹

Sri Aurobindo too emphasises that reason should be totally subservient to the scripture. Hence his endorsement of the theory of subordination.

Indian philosophers, respectful of the heritage of the past, adopted a double attitude towards the Truth they sought. They recognised in the Sruti, the earlier results of Intuition or, as they preferred to call it, of inspired Revelation, an authority superior to Reason. But at the same time they started from Reason and tested the results it gave them, holding only those conclusions to be valid which were supported by the supreme authority. In this way they ... proceeded with the united consent of the two great authorities, Reason and Intuition.²²

In another context he explains very clearly what the theory of subordination means

in actual practice. It means total submissiveness to the scripture.

(a) But if a man can make his mind like a blank state, if he can enter into the condition of bottomless passivity proper to the state of the calm all-embracing Chaitanya Atma, not attempting to fix what the Truth shall be but allowing Truth to manifest herself in his soul, he will find that then it is the nature of the Sruti to reveal perfectly its own message.²³

(b) To listen in soul to the old voices and allow the Sruti in the soul to respond, to vibrate, first obscurely, in answer to the Vedantic hymn of knowledge, to give the response, the echo and last to let that response gain in clarity, intensity and fullness—this is the principle of interpretation that I have followed.²⁴

This is what Sri Aurobindo means by submissiveness to the Sruti. He even claims that this was also the method the ancients themselves adopted in order to understand the Vedas.²⁵

(To be continued)

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5. *Mundaka.*, I.1.7.
6. *Katha.*, I.3.5.
7. *Brhad.*, 4.4.5.
8. *Ibid.*, 3.8.8.
9. *Sveta.*, 6.11.
10. *SBS*, p. 23.
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FRANCIS THOMPSON AND THE METAPHYSICAL POETS

(Continued from the issue of June 1975)

It is in Richard Crashaw that one finds the most convincing anticipation of Thompson, though Thompson thought he “resembled Cowley”, as Everard Meynell informs us.¹ The reason of such a comparison between Crashaw and Thompson is not far to seek. Their poetic craftsmanship, religious feeling, attitude to love, lyrical gift and some similar biographical conditions supply the clue to such a likeness. Thompson is hailed as a religious poet who was the most “deeply imbued with that spirit since Crashaw.”² An anonymous writer said just within a week of Thompson’s death that “the resemblance to Crashaw was clear”, while there was, no doubt, “a touch of Cowley in the quaintness of some of his imagery and his observation of correspondence.”³ The impression still holds water and modern writers find Thompson the poet with “the affinity of Crashaw”,⁴ who sings the “praises of nature in the language of Crashaw and Donne.”⁵

Crashaw’s religious passion in its exalted heights is Divine Love, and, as he tells us in his “Apologie” to the hymn on St. Teresa, it was his “reading” of her works that revealed to him the true conception of Divine Love. Thompson, the unwedded Catholic poet — like Crashaw, whose sole love was the God to Whom he so readily surrendered all — put into his devotion and into the poetry which enshrines it the entire ardour of a flaming heart. Whenever Crashaw thinks of God as the lover or bridegroom of other souls — of the martyrs, St. Teresa, or the anonymous gentlewoman — to himself love is primarily maternal. The love of a man for a woman, when sincerest and the most complete, contains the element of filial love, and she becomes a mother to her lover. Thompson expresses this idea beautifully when he says about Alice Meynell:

For this was even that Lady, and none other,
The man in me calls “Love”, the child calls “Mother.”

(In her Paths)

This maternal element runs through the poetry of both Crashaw and Thompson, and their poetry abounds in such maternal references as breast, milk, womb, child, etc. Crashaw writes:

Heav’ns bosome drinkes the gentle streame,
Where the milky Rivers creepe.

(The Weeper)

Here is Thompson:

The earth was suckled at thy shining breast.

(*Ode to the Setting Sun*)

And Crashaw says;

My womb's chaste pride is gone, my heaven-born boy
And where is joy?

(*"Quaerit Jesum suum Maria"*).

And Thompson writes:

Mother unguessed is she, to whom
We still are in the womb.

(*Of Nature: Laud and Plaint*)

These maternal references can be ascribed to the longing for maternal love in the life of both Crashaw and Thompson. Both lost their mothers at an early age and died unmarried. Thus they were deprived of a mother's affection as well as a wife's love and care. They sought affection and protection elsewhere. Crashaw found his mother-substitute in Mary Colet who was thirteen years older than he, and Thompson enjoyed motherly affection under the protection of Alice Meynell who was twelve years senior to him. Both adored these women, in spite of their difference in age, with a feeling of homage and reverence not unmixed with tenderness and the spirit of a knight's devotion to his lady. The maternal references allude to the craving for a place of shelter and warmth under the wing of mother-love. This is the underlying motive of both the poets' emotional and poetic choices. But such tenderness thus expressed is not, however, in any bad sense effeminacy — for it goes hand in hand with the strength of a mighty passion of spirit. Jim Hunter, a modern writer, thinks that Crashaw "makes more impression, and is more generally remembered, as a poet of sensual excitement."⁶ But Thompson is more childlike and less voluptuous than Crashaw.

The ornate, decorative image — the 'Baroque conceit' — is the very basis of Crashaw's as well as Thompson's poetry and it is lovingly handled but sometimes too lovingly fondled. Much of their imagery is traditional Christian imagery: censer, sanctuary, blood, fire, jewels, sun, moon and stars, the day, the night and the seasons. But the sheer lushness of Crashaw's use of them, as Jim Hunter remarks, "makes the image more interesting and moving than the idea,"⁷ whereas in Thompson's use of imagery the idea is not eclipsed by the bright picture though sometimes it is obscured temporarily. Further, George Restrover Hamilton finds the imagery of Crashaw "lacking both variety and subtlety."⁸ For instance, "weeping eyes" occurs so often in Crashaw that the image might be described as an obsession. But Thompson's imagery is not free from such defects. He has a weakness for the "heart" and the "wheel" imagery.

In his essay on Crashaw, Thompson praises him for his lyrical quality and "ardorous abandonment."⁹ In his opinion Crashaw's power lies in "his brilliant imagery, rapturous ethereality."¹⁰ Crashaw the artist seems to have influenced Thompson more than Crashaw the religious poet. Thompson was a great artist himself and what he said in a review on Crashaw's merits and demerits as an artist could be applied to his own craftsmanship. Thompson wrote:

"... Crashaw is an artist to the finger-tips. So rare an artist, he was also an unsteady artist, of the most capricious taste.... His sins are virtues which have overshot their marks. He is a wonderful *virtuoso*, who will follow the most thrilling feat with a flourish of unpardonable eccentricity. His passion is rather for close felicity of expression ... always he is the artist in purpose, though his execution for whole passages may fail. You are moved by something of the same feeling as in the childlike quaintnesses of a pre-Raphaelite painter. Perhaps there are analogies between Crashaw and Botticelli."¹¹

It is true, Crashaw's faults and beauties are his own. But Thompson is more complicated in thought and more "literary" in expression. "Thompson," writes Peter Westland, "derives partly from Crashaw and the seventeenth century, which is one reason why his verse is extremely 'literary'."¹² George Saintsbury in the *Cambridge History* article says that the opening stanza of *The Hound of Heaven* "is the best following of Crashaw in his Saint Teresa vein that has ever been achieved," but hastens to add that the "anticipated pre-Raphaelitism of the Fletchers has been called to blend with Crashaw's often extravagant, but seldom too gaudy, diction."¹³ Rev. Arthur Little remarked about Thompson that though "believing himself to be a disciple of Shelley he could not help revealing himself that he was actually a disciple of Crashaw."¹⁴ Thompson, in reality, was in deep sympathy with the Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century, but the preferences of his taste returned to the ardour and the freedom of the Elizabethans. He did not stop there, but in him the desire for subtlety tended to outdo that for exuberance, and on account of this fact he "chooses to give his homage to the Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century"¹⁵ (Louis Cazamian).

J. C. Reid, on the other hand, is not prepared to accept Thompson as a "metaphysical" poet. He finds the resemblances to Crashaw and the Metaphysicals of the most superficial kind. "Thompson," Reid remarks, "is like, say, Donne and Herbert only on the principle of 'Salmon in both' — the three poets write about religion, or like Crashaw, in that the language of both poets is often ecstatically verbose."¹⁶ In Reid's opinion, what there is of the metaphysical manner in Thompson is almost wholly borrowed. While the seventeenth century poets were concerned with the exact rendering of ideas and emotions, with the use of unusual analogies to create a special mood or attitude, with the search for the quiddity of the thing, in Thompson's case it is not a matter of inscape at all; he is striving to project his feelings most of the time without really giving anything away. "Hence," says Reid, "he must garnish the facts with the coloured lights; he must swathe the emotion in dyed muslin."¹⁷

In our view, the truth lies between these extreme opinions.

(To be continued)

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THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of June 1975)

8

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

(a)

IN connection with Teilhard's oriental bent and yet his "rather condescending attitude towards Eastern mysticism, the less excusable perhaps in that he seems to have had no first-hand knowledge of it," Zaehner¹ tells us: "this is the greater pity since he might have found there insights akin to his own and used them to strengthen his position against the legalist postures of Rome. This he for a moment realized when he met a missionary in China who assured him that 'there existed ... the old Buddhist preoccupation to sound the rhythm of the world, to establish a perspective of its countless evolutions, to await the supreme Buddha who is to redeem all things. Such assurances,' he says, 'confirmed me in my old hope that we could perhaps learn from the mystics of the Far East how to make our religion more 'Buddhist' instead of being over-absorbed by ethics ... and at last discover a Christ who is not only *a model of good conduct* and of 'humanity', but the *super-human* Being who, for ever in formation in the heart of the world, possesses a being capable of bending all, and assimilating all, by vital domination."

Elsewhere Zaehner characterises Teilhard here as speaking "in a moment of truth."² Teilhard has also other moments of truth. A few particularly relevant may be marked. One not unrelated to the above is what he³ writes on first coming into contact with the people of the Far East and with their ways of thinking: "When I look at this extraordinary variety and this vast mass, seeing it as it really is, I feel more strongly than ever that we must free our religion from everything in it that is specifically Mediterranean.... I do say that if you look at these forms, worn out though they

¹ *Evolution in Religion: A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972), pp. 17-18.

² *Ibid*, p. 24.

³ Letter of 27 May, 1923, quoted in Emile Rideau's *Teilhard de Chardin. A Guide to His Thought* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 525.

may be, you will find such a proliferation of possibilities in human philosophy, mysticism and morals that you can hardly continue to see mankind entirely and finally shut up in the narrow network of precepts and dogmas in which some people imagine they have expressed the whole broad sweep of Christianity." No doubt, Christianity for Teilhard is still the *summum bonum*, yet varied and widened enormously, so that in its present version it is not itself the desired end but simply, as he goes on to say, "the axis along which the religion of the future is developing".

Another "moment of truth" is rather directly affined to the very first. Teilhard writes:¹ "I was positively moved by the serenity and majesty of a Buddha in Peking: we have no finer representation of Divinity!" His usual attitude to Buddhism is well ticked off by Zaehner after quoting his resolve not to try to extend himself throughout the universe of matter without discernment. Zaehner says:² "This merging into the material All Teilhard gratuitously identifies with the Buddhist Nirvāna which he seems to think is synonymous with 'effortless enjoyment', oblivious of the fact that one of the parts of the Noble Eightfold Path is 'right effort' and that Nirvāna, so far from being a merging into the infinite stream of matter, is, on the contrary, a total dissociation from all that is impermanent, that is, from matter itself."

The next "moment" is analogous. It comes in the wake of Teilhard's practice of labelling as antipodal ways "the road of the East" (Vedanta) and "the road of the West" (Christianity) — one leading to "dissolution of individuals in a diffuse immensity" where all "tension" is lost in mere "expansion", the other to "tension and centration" and personal completion in the Divine. Abbé Jules Monchanin pointed out in a letter of 1934 that Teilhard was indulging in a certain pragmatist emphasis and a too exclusively Western presentation.³ Teilhard⁴ replied that he was only outlining a schematic picture and that all he wished to do was "to distinguish two possible essential types of mysticism" without claiming that either was ever to be found "in the pure state". But if the extreme claim is dropped, the whole polemic against Vedanta loses its point; and it becomes imperative to consider how the two mysticisms are Vedantically reconciled: the wedge Teilhard's Christianity drives between them must grow suspect.

Again, in 1950, even while defining as "two converse forms" or "two isotopes" of Spirit the Vedantic "fusionism" and "the centric and centrifizing character" of Christianity, he⁵ admits: "Mystically speaking, it is difficult not to be aware of considerable traces of fusionism in the appeals directed towards the inexpressible by an Eckhart or even a St. John of the Cross: as though, for those great contemplatives, the two isotopes of the spirit were appreciably confused." The "moment of truth"

¹ *Letters to Léontine Zanta* (Collins, London, 1969), p. 53.

² *Op. cit.*, p.22

³ See *L'Abbé Jules Monchanin* (1960), pp. 162-75 "Formes, vie et pensée" (Forms, life and thought").

⁴ Letter of 29 April, 1934.

⁵ *Activation of Energy* (Collins, London, 1970), p. 225

constituted by this assertion signifies that, whatever theoretical or dogmatic distinctions we might draw, the actual *via mystica* at its height kicks over the traces. Neither Eckhart nor St. John of the Cross was making a confusion: in their experience the two so-called converse forms were merely variants of the same mysticism. We may observe that this moment is in glaring contrast to Teilhard's own statement in *Comment je vois* (No. 33). De Lubac¹ reports: "He notes 'the extreme confusion' that runs together or identifies the Inexpressible of the Vedanta with that of St. John of the Cross..."

An earlier "moment" finds Teilhard demurring, in a letter, to his fellow Jesuit Auguste Valensin for having dismissed too summarily, in an article on Pantheism, "living pantheism", the pantheism of the poets, which, according to Teilhard, was "the mysticism of which Spinoza and Hegel were the theologians".² Obviously, the explicit and systematised pantheism of the two philosophers, though not directly approved, is left uncondemned and even seen to have a background-connection with the "living pantheism" which is not to be set aside. What the latter represents may be gathered from two other Teilhardian sources. The first is a letter where he says that the "pantheism" of the poets is "a lived psychological force" and contains a part of "lived truth".³ The second is a context⁴ where he describes the urge from which he has escaped: "To be all, fuse myself with all." He writes: "This is the mystical act to which, following poets and Hindu mystics, I would logically have been drawn by an innate and imperative need to find my level..." Helped by this conjunction of "Hindu mystics" with the pantheistic "poets", what had intensely pulled him in youth but had been resisted owing to several factors and was afterwards repeatedly blackwashed shines out in its true sense through his words in that letter to Valensin. We may mark that the pantheism of the poets is there considered "living" because it is "mysticism" and that in the context referring to his youth we have again mysticism — the "Hindu" or Vedantic. This makes the Valensin-letter imply an instinctive defence of "living" Vedanta as being, to borrow the phrase of the other letter, a part of "lived truth".

A still earlier "moment" is Teilhard's admission⁵ in "A Note on the Universal Element" (December 1918). "In addition to *materialistic pantheisms* (which look for the 'universal element' in a plastic or *informable principle of the world*) there is a whole category of spiritual pantheisms (which believe that this element may be found in a plasmatic or informing principle — vital or intellectual — of the universe). One can, for example, conceive a theory in which universal Being could be seen in the form of a soul which is the Soul of the World, in process of being formed from the sum of all individual souls — these being particles of it." Then Teilhard makes a most import-

¹ *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 332, note 15.

² Letter of 28 August 1919, quoted by de Lubac, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

³ Letter of 17 December, 1922, quoted by de Lubac, *Op. cit.*, p. 333, note 32.

⁴ Quoted from Teilhard's *Le Cœur de la Matière* (1950) by de Lubac, *Op. cit.*, p. 336, note 56.

⁵ *Writings in Time of War* (Collins, London, 1965), p. 273.

ant pronouncement: "This theory differs from the theory I am adopting only in this respect: it regards the universal Centre of the world as entirely immanent, and the monads that concentrate around it are (or rather become) entirely divine as they join it." A pronouncement equally important follows to the effect that what the theory in question lacks is the seeing of the universal Element as "not only something that is everywhere present" but "also, and primarily, something *Absolute*". The absolute character, according to Teilhard, cannot be possessed by "a mere sum-total of contingencies, which is what a World-Soul, purely immanent and in a real process of becoming, must be". However, in Teilhard's view, spiritual pantheism can admit something absolute into its universe by the one single means possible — namely, by attributing to its informing principle "a certain transcendence (by making it emerge from the stream of evolution)".

What is eye-opening in these statements are two points. First, the possibility is suggested of a pantheism whose Soul of the World is both transcendent and immanent. Second, the implication is that Teilhard's own theory is a pantheism of this order: the transcendence possessed by its Soul of the World goes hand in hand with the immanence ascribed to the World-Soul in the pantheisms which he finds one-sided and therefore criticisable: in other words, his theory is pantheistic in the essential sense even while exceeding the pantheistic formula familiar to him.

A complete confirmation of the second point comes when in a slightly subsequent and longer essay (February 1919) on the Universal Element he¹ sums up the latter's properties after equating it to Christ: "We can see, then, that what characterizes the Universal Element as we find it realized in Christ, is not that it is a quasi-matter, a plastic or informable element, an agent of absorption, but a quasi-soul, a plasmatic or informing element, a force of determination." Here, in spite of the partial haze spread by the two "quasi"s, we have quite conspicuously the same operative expressions as in Teilhard's definition of "spiritual pantheisms" and we are particularly led to the comparison, between those pantheisms and his Cosmic Christ as the Universal Element, by the footnote his Roman Catholic Editors give to the passage. They² observe: "The manuscript reads *plastique*, where the sense calls for *plasmatique*, which we find, moreover, in the 'Note on the Universal Element' (p. 273)."

There can be no denying that, on one side of him, Teilhard's Cosmic Christ is Pantheos in the essential sense. What commonly covers up this truth and misleads one to cut this Christ off from pantheism is his other side: his transcendence of the cosmos and, by virtue of the transcendence, God becoming describable as "essentially distinct from creation."³ But that distinctness makes no odds to the fact that, along with a recognition of it, the Christian "has a need that will take no denial to apprehend the divinity under the form of a universal element,"⁴ by virtue of which "in every creature there exists ... *something of Christ* ..."⁵

The way in which there can be essential pantheism without the exclusion of transcendence is indicated equally in the first essay and in the second. The "plasmatic or

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

informing element” of the latter possesses, as one of its capacities, the capacity “of dominating us, as a power that assimilates us”¹ and yet completes us² and it is visioned as “a supreme ‘cosmic’ Reality, present in all things.”³ It is thus that it is distinguished from the merely “plastic or informable element”. In the former essay the same indication of dominance and supremacy strikes us from a footnote of Teilhard’s, which says: “... instead of looking for the *universal element* in an *informable principle* of the world, we should recognize it in an *informing supreme principle*. If that principle is not operative, we immediately have multiplicity.”⁴ The term “supreme” is common. What is called “operative” in the later version is equivalent to the act of domination mentioned in the earlier, and the equivalence is driven home by a sentence on the very page where the footnote occurs. It is a sentence about the Universal Element itself: “The *more dominating its position in the monads, the more fully are they realized ‘in unitate universi’* [‘in the unity of the universe’]”. The two versions of the Teilhardian “Universal Element” do not differ at all and so this Element must have the same relation in both to “spiritual pantheisms”: it subsumes them from a superior level.

Perhaps there will be a protest in the words of the Roman Catholic Editors’ own introductory comment⁵ on the earlier essay: “The whole of this note, attached to the manuscript of ‘Forma Christi’, has been crossed out in pencil. Père Teilhard was evidently dissatisfied with it; as would appear, too, from the existence of a new essay entitled ‘The Universal Element’ in which, only two months later, he treated the same subject.” But would this imply Teilhard’s resilement from the “Note”? Not in the least. We can easily understand why he must have been dissatisfied with it. For one thing, the treatment in the “Note” in about four pages was evidently insufficient: what he had in mind receives nearly thirteen pages later. For another, the second thoughts which the “Note” gives to pantheism, correcting the wholly materialistic interpretation by throwing a glance at “spiritual pantheisms” in a passage introduced by the sentence about the preceding formulation: “this paragraph is too cut and dried”⁶ — the second thoughts pinned Teilhard down to making the cosmos one in substance with God despite God’s being transcendent no less than cosmic. They left him with no face to show his Church.

Actual resilement would mean a later contradiction of the second thoughts. But that “quasi” repeated twice and connoting “seeming” or “almost” is there merely to throw dust in our eyes. It can only amount to saying: “To pantheism the Universal Element is as if it were matter, while to Christianity it is as if it were a soul.” But in the same essay Teilhard⁷ writes that “from the pantheist point of view ... either ... the universe is born from an involution (deduction) of thought, or ... it emerges from an evolution of matter.” This remark bringing in “thought” as a possible world-basis, grants *en passant* the existence of “spiritual pantheisms”. A little further, apropos of “the multiple elements of the world” or “the various individual determinations”, we read⁸ that one of the visions of pantheism about them is: “their differentiation and

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 275, fn. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-3.

the progress they make are used for building up a consciousness, a universal soul, in which every elementary consciousness is destined to be lost." Here again we have a pantheism that is spiritual and the actual word "soul" occurs — and that too with the qualifier "universal". The sense, therefore, we are obliged to put into the term "quasi-matter" is simply that, just as a reversal to a state of homogeneous matter would dissolve all particular entities, so also even in spiritual pantheisms the particular consciousnesses disappear. "Quasi-matter" does not and cannot exclude the type of pantheism envisaged, as we have found, in "A Note": "a theory in which universal Being could be seen in the form of a soul which is the Soul of the World, in process of being formed from the sum of all individual souls — these being particles of it." On the other side, the term "quasi-soul" has no power to exorcise from the Christian Universal Element, for all its transcendent aspect, the presence of the same World-Soul undergoing the identical process; for, Teilhard after speaking of the Universal Element as "ultimately Christ"¹ goes on:²

"Of the cosmic Christ, we may say both that he is and that he is entering into fuller being.

"He has already appeared in the world; but a long process of growth awaits him in this world, either in isolated individuals — or still more, perhaps, in a *certain human spiritual unity*, of which our present society is no more than an adumbration."

Do we not have here the picture of "the Soul of the World, in process of being formed from the sum of all individual souls"? The answer has to be an emphatic "Yes", especially in view of the footnote³ Teilhard gives to the end of his passage: "It is possible in fact that side by side with our *supernatural unification* in Christ a *natural unification* of Spirit may be taking place in the world (= the work of natural human effort, the natural term of progress), the latter providing the *foundation* for the former. On that hypothesis, Christ would act vitally upon the universe by means of (by taking the place of) what would almost be a 'Soul of the World'."

Nothing could more clearly establish that Teilhardism's transcendent Christ does not shut out Christ as the World-Soul in a spiritually pantheistic connotation. That "almost" in regard to "a 'Soul of the World'" is an echo of the "quasi" and appears to be inserted as a safeguard against the charge of pantheism, against the danger that despite the mention of a transcendent aspect his Cosmic Christ might be understood as Pantheos pure and simple. A Soul of the World is an inalienable part of Teilhardism, as is proved by the essay, "The Soul of the World", written nearly a year and a quarter (December 1917) before "The Universal Element". The Editor's introduction to that essay informs us, in Teilhard's own words, that originally "a natural cosmic entity (= the soul of the world), which is the natural form of the absolute in our universe" was conceived by Teilhard as "intermediate between the world and Christ"⁴. The essay elaborates this theme and explains: "Christ and the soul of the world are not two opposed realities, independent of one another, ... but one of those realities is

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 297

² *Ibid.*, pp. 297-8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 298 fn. 7

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

the medium in which we are transformed into the other".¹ Moreover, the World-Soul "holds together only through the unifying action of a centre which we must assume to be transcendent"² — namely, Christ; and "the soul of the world and Christ ... carry their being further in the identity of one and the same Reality."³ It is thus that Teilhard gives "a satisfactory answer to the questions that modern minds, haunted by pantheism, are asking"⁴. He even considers his answer to be true to Christianity itself by arising in a pantheism-haunted atmosphere: "The current of 'pantheist' (cosmic) mysticism is no stranger to Christianity.... But we Catholics ... regard such types of spiritual attitude as inferior or questionable: we accordingly leave them out of account ... We can afford to wait no longer: we must *explicitly Christianize* the compulsion that leads us to divinize the world."⁵

The pantheist strain in the essay is unmistakable. And what Teilhard subsequently came to believe does not remove it one jot. The Editors, exhibiting his final position, quote him as saying: "I want to show that the life of our Lord Jesus Christ flows through all things, the true Soul of the World."⁶ The only difference now is: there is no intermediary any more to serve as the World-Soul, for Christ himself is conceived as such and is called the Cosmic Christ who is at once transcendent and what the spiritual pantheisms have posited to the exclusion of transcendence. All he has done is to transpose these pantheisms into Christian terms. We should be in gross error to follow the trail along which he often seems to lead us — to the effect that the pantheistic inner oneness of the world with God has been avoided. The very fact that in "The Soul of the World" he rejects "any religion that offers [men] a God ... who appears completely other than the world"⁷ testifies to the non-avoidance.

What precisely is avoided and what is not is demonstrated in the course of "The Universal Element". Teilhard seeks to define "*something* that corresponds"⁸ to the "special intuition", the "specifically characteristic psychic state" which he names "cosmic consciousness".⁹ This consciousness consists in "apprehending a *universal physical element* in the world, which establishes at all times and in all things, a relationship between [men] and the Absolute — both in them and around them".¹⁰ It is the "impassioned vision of a supreme 'cosmic' Reality, present in all things".¹¹ Teilhard has a further shade to add: cosmic consciousness "is, essentially, the need for, and joy in, *union with Another* (this Other being the universal element)."¹²

On the strength of this shade he discards "the *pantheist answer*" to his problem of discovering the source and ground of the world's unity. According to him, pantheism is characterised by "total immanence, absolute monism"¹³ and therefore in it "there can be no 'Other' (and, even more certainly, no higher Other to whom one can *give oneself*)".¹⁴ Here he has taken a rather superficial view, in which "the Absolute is *integrally convertible* into its fragmentary elements, and *vice versa*",¹⁵ so that

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 185.² *Ibid.*, p. 186.³ *Ibid.*, p. 187.⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 189.⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 292.⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 291.¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 290.¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 294.¹² *Ibid.*, p. 293.¹³ *Ibid.*¹⁴ *Ibid.*¹⁵ *Ibid.*

when the parts exist as parts there is no actual whole existing and when the whole as such exists no parts remain in existence. Surely a pantheism is possible, where the whole is not a universal soul that has to be built up by the progress the parts make, but an already existing cosmic Being, of which they are phases or aspects progressively moving towards a realisation of it, collective as well as individual. The pantheist then can recognise "Another" — a divine Whole, the universal All — with which or with whom he yearns to unite and so heal his own finitude and fragmentariness. Of course, this "Another" is ultimately his own cosmic Self — the single infinite and complete Self whose phenomenal expressions are the many limited selves — the numerous psychisms that are the subjective side of phenomena (the countless "withins" which Teilhard discerns behind all "withouts" from matter up to man). But, just because there is basic identity between part and whole, the part as it is cannot be put on an equality with the whole: the whole is "certainly" a "higher Other". And, in the pantheism of an already existing Self of selves, there would be this Self's transcendence of the universal nature-movement, though there would not be a transcendent Super-Person with whom the parts could have a varied intimate relationship: only an impersonal higher consciousness basic and common to all would be there. A different order of pantheism — such as we discover in the ancient Vedanta where we have the One who is both the cosmic Self and the supreme Lord — would be required to allow that Super-Person. And it is Teilhard's feeling of this lack in the pantheisms intelligible to him that compels him to look beyond them.

However, the so-called Christian solution he offers has in fact nothing truly Christian about it. For he recounts three successive stages through which he passed before being able to make his "way to God in all the sincerity and fulness of a soul that is irrevocably 'cosmic'"¹ Out of these stages only the first two are Christianly acceptable. They are "the *Will of God*, conceived as a special energy instilled into beings to animate them and order them towards their end",² and "God's *creative action* ... entering the sphere of external experience in which we move"³ — this second stage corresponding "more or less exactly to the views developed by St Ignatius in his meditation *ad amorem*".⁴ But even the Ignatian stage, which should have sufficed for a member of the Society founded by the Saint, fell abysmally short. Teilhard⁵ confesses: "For all God's intermixture with my being through his almighty action, there still remained between him and me a hiatus, a void, an icy gap, representing the distance that separates necessary from participated being. I felt that I was *not united* to him but *juxtaposed*." He could feel united only when he took as the principle of universal unity "*the cosmic influence of Christ*".⁶ His conclusion⁷ runs: "It is through the organic unity of the total Christ ... that God's will and his creative action finally come through to us and make us one with him." By this unity "every being ... has its own particular essence crowned by a certain quality, a certain *form* (common to all) which makes it an integral, rightly adapted, part of the single Whole with which it shares a natural harmony".⁸

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

Ibid.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

Ibid., p. 297.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

Teilhard attempts to read in his Cosmic Christ traditional Christianity's "mystical Body of Christ ... haloed by a *cosmic body*, that is to say by *all things* in as much as they are drawn by Christ to converge upon him and so reach their fulfilment in him, in the Pleroma".¹ But what he actually obtains by his "panchristism", by Christ as the Universal Element, is spiritual pantheism's "Soul of the World" open instead of closed to a transcendent status of itself.

That such is the position we can further demonstrate from the essay "Forma Christi" to which "A Note on the Universal Element" was "attached as an appendix" and with which the later and longer article on the same theme must be taken as connected. In "Forma Christi" Christ is given us as "in a very real way the only concrete end awaiting the universe,"² but Teilhard immediately adds "that his Being operates through extensions of his aura in which his divinity is not always equally embodied, and therefore manifests itself to us through a *gradual* and *creative* attraction".³ Explaining his additional remarks, he⁴ writes:

"It would seem that through a first surface of himself that he presents to us (the most external and most 'ambivalent') Christ acts upon our hearts as an ill-defined, impersonal, generic centre of universal union. When life in its lower stages is moving towards consciousness, when men are passionately striving for the complete freedom and unanimity of their spirit, when thinkers and poets thrill with excitement at the emergence of a 'world-soul', it is in fact Christ whom they are all seeking — Christ who still keeps hidden his personal and divine being, but nevertheless Christ himself....

"Under this *natural form* assumed by *his supernatural being in order* to enter into our universe⁵ Christ arouses and claims for himself what we have agreed to call the natural demands of the heart of man ...

"The time comes, however, when God, speaking through the Prophets or his Son, allows his influence to be openly apparent. He manifests himself as living and personal ...

"Thus the felt attraction of Christ — which was almost without form, no more than a general summons to rise higher, in the pagan soul — gradually grows richer in power in the Christian ...

"It is, therefore, a mistake to distinguish in man two different attractions that influence him: one towards a hypothetical natural end of the cosmos, and the other towards the supernatural end that awaits us in the presence of God. There is only *one single centre* in the universe; it is at once natural and supernatural; it impels the whole of creation along one and the same line, first towards the fullest development of consciousness, and later towards the highest degree of holiness:⁶ in other words towards Christ Jesus, personal and cosmic."

Ibid., p. 297 ² *Ibid.*, p. 254. ³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 254-56.

⁵ "If the *supernatural* term of the world did not at the same time 'round it off' *naturally*, it would leave the universe facing a void, and our hearts impervious to feeling" (Note by Teilhard)

⁶ "That is, first towards the fulfilment of the natural monads *in se*, and then towards their association *in Christo*." (Note by Teilhard)

The thrilled "excitement" of "thinkers and poets" "at the emergence of a 'world-soul'" — the excitement which is considered "the *felt* attraction of Christ" from behind a veil hiding "his personal and divine being" and which is defined as "no more than a general summons to rise higher, in the pagan soul" — this response to "a first surface" of Christ serving "as an ill-defined, impersonal, generic centre of universal union" and is recognised by Teilhard to be Christ "cosmic" rather than Christ "personal" is evidently identical with the perception we can ascribe to "*spiritual* pantheisms" with their "theory in which universal Being could be seen in the form of a soul which is the Soul of the World, in process of being formed from the sum of all individual souls — these being particles of it".

And what would inevitably follow if the theory of spiritual pantheisms were absorbed into panchristism — namely, that "side by side with our *supernatural unification* in Christ" there would be "a *natural unification* of Spirit" — is here taken as a fact and not put forward a little shyly as in the later article on the Universal Element, a fact of evolution on the way to the Parousia. It is here the necessary preparation for that supernatural event, the result of the same all-fulfilling divine focus that is also a divine milieu, a cosmic component complementing the personal component in the one Christ.

Thus "Forma Christi" aligns the two articles beyond all doubt. And we come back to the early "Note"'s "moment of truth" which straightforwardly convicts Teilhard of being a pantheist in the direction of the mode whose full flowering is in the Vedantic synthesis of the cosmic and the transcendent.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

FRIENDS

FOR that sweet, high music within my grateful heart
 From a far world of beauty where once I sang
 Midst playmates just like me, shaped by a godly art,
 Singing and sparkling in a living dance divine,
 Oh deeply do I long; to live again the part
 Of life that is fully noble, high and fine.
 I love the strains of memory that start
 Again in me the beauty vast from which I sprang,
 Till we are all together, no longer far apart.

LORETTA

ODE TO MAN

THE man stood at the gate a little bewildered, hesitant;
Corridors there were many, which one to take was hard to guess,
Heaven help me if I should lose my way now — he thought,
So he took to the one which offered the most light for his way.

Man's soul arrived at the far-away shore, dragging
His heavy feet of clay, clinging still to his frame.
Humbly and a little afraid, he cast his eyes down —
Accustomed to small gains — and called out with caution,
Hoping to be heard. "Where may I sit? I need a rest you see,
Where is my place, please — where may I stay?"
No reply came, though he waited long — an awesome hush was
Tenant of the place, loud silence the only sound.
He knew how to wait long, knew it very well and so he stayed there
And pitted his heart against another long waiting now.
Weary as he was and in need to arrive at some place at any cost,
Yet not unlearned in wisdom's ways, he knew this to be
No ordinary place — knew that patience would keep him good company here.
Somewhere a gate opened — he could make out from the sound,
A light grew unbearably strong — someone spoke to him.

"Man, you have come at last, from so far, from so low?"
True, this was true — this much he also knew — and where
Was he to hide his shame; so heavy on his feet and rather sadly
Bent — he nodded in silent agreement to the charge.
Betraying tears — they come when a man needs most to be strong —
Who will plead my case, he thought — surely this is the end
Of the line — all is gone, will all be lost as well?
Shone the light and beamed the voice on — "Your eyes are still wet
From earth's dew, you are afraid to raise them still. Your back is hunched,
Once proud and strong — where are your loved ones and all you fought
And struggled for? You stand here naked to the bone, abandoned by
Strength, love and youth — afraid to rest, even now to claim
A seat for your own — like a hunted begger you come."
"Forgive it, Sir, I wandered in here, having lost my way,
There was no one directing at the gate — and it is because of my
Poor sight; it blinds me, all this light. I'll get along;
Only, give me a break to catch my breath, Sir, the road was steep
And hard — now I shall press on."
But the voice came again — would it not give him mercy for a spell? —
Where will you go Man of Earth, if going from here, where?
Stay here you must, or don't you know where you are?"
Hope is a fast rising flame — just a touch of the flint —

"Oh thank you, Lord, I thank you truly — I need little room,
 You will see, and I eat but little food — there were so many mouths
 To feed, you understand — I will make no demands."
 A ray of joy stole into him; here was a new start, he knew.
 "There is some fight left in me yet! I can do some work still,
 Is here a place for a man of good toil and soldiering and trade?"
 Then shyly added, "I can still hum a fresh tune when the day is new."
 Silence again — then the voice, gently toned, came colouring the void.
 "Oh Man, true Man, unsung hero of my strength, these arms are aching
 Lonely for you — my waiting was as long as your plight.
 You have acted out all my plays, I looked at my own thoughts
 In your acts. From your pains and errors I have learnt
 My new and better ways. In you, I was the victor and the slain — the proud
 Conquerer and the vanquished hero was I. In you I was sister and wife;
 Mother who bore and nursed, and the child who wept, loved and left.
 I am your youth of splendour, and your old age am I — all your plays,
 All your hopes, tears and joys are mine!"
 The man stood straining to understand all he heard,
 And half to himself, half aloud mumbling —
 "Excuse me, Lord, simple I am and cannot comprehend,
 But what you say is good — it is very good," he mused.
 "May I look at your face please? I don't mean to be bold."

The source of light dimmed for a spell, large tears
 Sat like diadems in the sun-eyes of the Lord — then rolled
 In rapid way on, as ones that know their ways, settled
 Glittering down at the feet of man. He looked at them
 Marvelling now — now at their source — and stood.
 An unearthly light glowing covered the vast planes,
 Nothing was here that was not bathed in bliss.
 "From me to you," spoke the Lord. "My light and yours are one.
 Indeed — you ask, where is my place? My jewelled self, my own,
 This warm embrace waits. Come! Come! Come!"
 Then, a moving splendour slowly turning, called into the void.
 "Messengers of my victories and of my delights, be summoned
 And attend. The golden clarioners, come hither,
 Note what here you see and hear, and on your rapid ways
 Go to carry the word of this event! — Hear, oh heavens,
 Hear, oh earth and all the intermediary realms —
 Man has come home today, his place from lowest
 To highest to take!"

A CRY FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA: 22.7.1973

JUST a year ago: July 22nd 1972—

I was allowed to leave the 'Special School', which had been 'accorded' to me as a punishment, but which I accepted as a Blessing... And really I could study and even teach over there.

I do not know if anybody believes in my most sincere proclamation that I am taking all as a unique opportunity to live through what cannot be learned elsewhere, under other conditions.

Most 'people' over there, and most of those who never experienced something similar or only in a very common way, do not grasp, much less understand, my GRATITUDE for the little things, which each man can daily enjoy, but is not paying attention to — perhaps he does not even know that such treasures are constantly at hand ...

I feel rich and unspeakably happy—while people round me complain and lament that their life is so very poor, miserable, not worth living.

They always called me a "dreamer", someone who never went through something called 'pain' or 'suffering' ... And I really did not, though ...

Well, I never spoke about, never remembered so-called 'ugly', 'bad' things of the past days. I ever longed and hoped for something better, ideal, heart-warming — loving and worthy to be appreciated and loved ... I ever tried to distribute my inmost inborn riches enthusiastically, selflessly — called nothing a disillusion, a hard blow — bad luck — terrible misfortune ...

Ideal, noble people were attracted to me quite naturally. I never reflected whether I merited such Grace, such a Blessing — but tried to give to them all I was conscious of, spontaneously, whole-heartedly, leaving nothing aside for so-called 'meagre days'.

During this last year I have lived through so much Happiness, while others were looking at me as at ... Well, I do not mind — though I would be still happier if I could share my riches and happiness with as many people as I daily meet and think of —with all those who, being materially "well-to-do", prosperous, are not satisfied, harmonious, healthy — rather bitter than grateful.

Yes, there is a general shortage of Understanding of one's inmost I Am, of the unwritten Law that one's own selfless merits pay the greatest Interests unfailingly

I love to be a sower of creative thoughts. I need very little of material things for myself — and the world I am living in and with is most generous, beautiful, lovable... — undescribly more after July 22nd, 1972. PRAISE: deepest and warmest for all!

RICHARD SPACEK

A MODERN MYTH

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS*

Cast of Characters:

The Sage
The Unicorn
The Three Gods:
 Love
 Joy
 Beauty
The Old Woman, later the Earth Spirit
The Man, her husband
The Son, their adopted child
The Dragon

Act I Scene I

A Sage, obviously ancient and surpassingly wise, as well as immortal, sits on his cloud throne and observes the sky around him. The colours keep changing and there is the sound of distant, rolling thunder. An air of vague menace pervades the atmosphere.

The Sage holds out his hands in a questioning gesture.

SAGE: Ah, it comes ... it comes. *(Withdraws into himself in seeming resignation.)*

(Unicorn enters. He is a dazzling white, with an unearthly lightness of foot and an exquisite grace. He too observes the sky, then circles the sage before facing him.)

UNICORN: Master, I have a message. *(His voice can be clearly heard but should appear to be a whisper.)* We must act or she will surely die this time. The Great Gods have finally tired of her.

SAGE: So it is her time that has come? Yes, indeed. That must be the import of the omens in the air — that grumbling thunder, those spears of lightning, this wind that moans ever so faintly as though with some secret sorrow. *(Pause)* Ah, well, I suppose she's been at it long enough — but she's been a fine spectacle to be sure, all these ages.

UNICORN: Yes, to be sure, she outdid them all.

SAGE: Outdid all the Gods put together! *(He laughs.)* ... With her little bits of this and that mixed together, her great stews and fuming cauldrons of things in every fantastic combination ...

* This play was produced in the Ashram Theatre on September 30, 1974

UNICORN: But you must admit, Lord, that the kitch odours were sometimes a little over-spiced, and at other times even downright smelly.

SAGE: All part of the charm, my dearest pet, all part of the charm. (*Suddenly becoming serious*) But now what is to become of her...?

(*He is interrupted by the entrance of Beauty.*)

BEAUTY: Venerable One, do you know that I have suddenly become very funny, a kind of cosmic joke with splashes of paint on my nose and tin cans hanging around my neck? Nor do I any longer sail through the air like a gazelle but go crashing through it in a smashed-up automobile. (*Sarcastically*) Truly, I am the wonder of the worlds.

SAGE: Beauty, my dear ...

BEAUTY: These are all the latest innovations of the old hag. Why, she is in ecstasies gloating over the whole thing.

SAGE: The Earth Spirit "an old hag"? Well, perhaps, perhaps — we were just saying something of the sort, but not exactly in those terms. (*Looking at her in a concerned way*) Beauty, my dearest, you've quite let yourself go. Come here, sit beside me. You look as ruffled as an unhappy bird of paradise.

BEAUTY: (*muttering*) That's right. A bird of paradise with bottle tops tied to its tail feathers.

SAGE: Now, now. (*Comforts her by patting her head in a paternal way.*)

(*Love and Joy rush in. They are laughing, full of delight in each other. They take no notice of anyone but dance, absorbed in their own happiness. The Sage withdraws in thought, then looks up.*)

SAGE: (*calling to the two*) Love ... Joy — come, children. Tell me, have you visited the Earth Spirit lately?

JOY: The Old Woman?

SAGE: Well, if you must refer to her that way.

JOY: Oh, sort of visited. But you know as well as I do, my Lord, that she is almost blind, and in her blindness she finds her pleasure almost entirely in Dragon. He's practically the only thing she can still see. Imagine "Joy" in the guise of Dragon, the monster. It's quite an insult, is it not? (*He laughs delighted again, as though it is all a huge joke.*)

LOVE: The Old Woman and Dragon — what a combination, what a love! What a transfiguration of myself ...

SAGE: Well, surely, my boy, it is not easy to love the Primeval Ignorance — yet the Old Woman has managed it.

JOY: (*Tongue in cheek*) She is a marvel of creation.

SAGE: Who will rapidly destroy the Earth she is in charge of unless we do something quickly. The heavens are already flashing their warning beacons, and I feel the Divinity within calling upon me to act.

ALL: (*Immediately becoming very serious and concentrated*) Instruct us, Lord, and we will proceed as you wish. We are the hands and limbs of the great Gods: the

body, the voice, and the force of their desire.

SAGE: Listen then — and I will tell you what we must do. Look there and observe the vision that unfolds against the sky. What do you see?

ALL: An abandoned infant lying in a distant, flowering grove.

SAGE: Yes, with none about him — none that could bring him to the notice of the Old Woman.

UNICORN: Indeed, nothing and no one seems to have touched him so far.

SAGE: There, then, is our chance. Fly, my perfect ones, and bewitch him. Make him yours in his heart, for we shall then be able to send him forth as the new Earth Man.

BEAUTY: (*Incredulously*) Against the Old Woman?

SAGE: We shall see, my goddess, we shall see. None at this moment can predict the course of events. For or against, who knows? We can only prepare our weapon, so to speak, then wait and observe.

Now speed to your task, all of you — time presses.

Scene II

(*An abandoned infant lies in a setting of trees and flowers. First, Unicorn enters, dances around the child and caresses it.*)

UNICORN: A perfect setting indeed for a bewitching! (*Looks down.*) Poor helpless creature about to be caught up in the games of the Gods. But at least he'll be entering the fray on the right side. It's those demon-babies that one really worries about. But quickly now — the incantation and the spell:

(*Chanting*) Soul of God's soul, child of eternity — remember always the purity of white you knew before birth, the gleam of heaven's gold you hide in your being, and the heart's fire that is never quenched, leaping ever upwards.

JOY: (*Entering next and chanting*) Remember the delight in the heart of the lotus, in the pools of the soul, in the ecstasy of the mountain tops under the sun. Remember ... remember the glow in the budding trees, the spark in the grasses of Spring, the flame common to flowers and to the god-spirits of men.

LOVE: (*entering and chanting*) Seek the love that overflows, that knows no wall, no dam to its outpouring, that encircles the earth like the swirling winds, streams to the sea, and embraces the cool beauty of the moon.

BEAUTY: (*entering and chanting*) Adore that alone, perfect in purity, that blooms with the beauty of the Gods — exquisite in harmony, resplendent in motion, alight with a radiance not its own ...

Like the stallion that races across the plain, like the falcon that flies against the clouds, like a dancer whose soul speaks through his body ...

(*All four stand over the child in silent meditation, and then retire to a corner of the stage to see what will happen.*)

UNICORN: Now to see how the drama will unfold. How will the Gods proceed? Ah, there — someone's coming.

LOVE: (*With sudden recognition*) It's Earth Man, the husband of the Old Woman.

JOY: So it is. But he's aged since I saw him last. The Old Woman must have been leading him a merry chase.

LOVE: Quite so. I understand she all but finished him off with that last war of hers.

BEAUTY: (*Critically*) Still, he's not devoid of vigour. He has a lot of life left in him yet.

JOY: Oh, yes. The Old Woman sees to that. I've heard she keeps him going on vitamins and plastic surgery.

LOVE: But don't you find him a little disconsolate?

UNICORN: (*Matter-of-factly*) Oh, he was always like that. How could one be otherwise with the Old Woman for a wife?

JOY: But look — he's about to come upon the child ...

(*They all fall silent and watch with eager interest as the Man shuffles to the centre of the stage and finds the child lying in his path.*)

MAN: Well, well, what have we here? A waif? That's something new in this age of social security. What barbarian yet remains, even in these subtle realms, who would leave his child exposed to the elements rather than hand it over to the State? I must report this to my good woman so that something can be done.... (*Mutters.*) Barbarians in this day and age.... (*Brightening*) But what to do with the little one? He's beautiful enough, and healthy too.

(*Pensively*) I wonder if she would like him — after all she hasn't had any children of her own for so long. An adopted child might please her and relieve these fits of boredom she's been having lately ... especially after all the trouble she had nursing me out of my latest war-wounds. (*Sighing*) I guess I'm growing old and I'm not as strong as I used to be. One more war and I may well need an heir.

Come then, my little man, I'm taking you home. You're going to have a mother and father to take care of you after all.

(*The Man exits with the child in his arms.*)

BEAUTY: He's going to be brought up by the Old Woman as her son? But it'll be the end of him!

UNICORN: No, the drama isn't over yet. Let's follow and see what happens.

Scene III

(*An imperious but aging woman is seated beside a great globe with a dragon curled around her feet. She is wearing an outlandish, multi-coloured dress, and is weaving a carpet or cloth on a loom in front of the throne on which she is sitting. From time to time she spins the globe or runs her finger over it. Beside her lies a big heap of clothes and jewels all jumbled together. When she has tired of her weaving, and of fiddling with the*

globe, she picks up one of the costumes, holds it up against herself, places a crown on her head and poses dramatically.)

THE WOMAN: (*Declaiming*) Alexander... Akbar the Great... Napoleon... (*She gives the globe one last triumphant twirl, laughs, throws down the costume and the crown and sits down.*)

THE MAN: (*From off-stage*) My good lady, are you there? I have something for you!

(The dragon stirs and makes a menacing noise.)

THE WOMAN: Quiet, Beast, let's see what it is first. If it's a little morsel fit for your stomach, you shall surely have it.

DRAGON: What is it, what is it? Dragon don't like.

THE WOMAN: Wait, fool.

(The Dragon is only partly reassured, because he fears all new things. He huddles closer to the Old Woman.)

THE MAN: (*entering with a bundle*) A strange thing, my dear, very strange. You would never guess what I have found.

THE WOMAN: (*suspiciously*) What? Not a meteor, I hope, or the seed of some blight that would upset my latest game?

(Brightening) But you look pleased, Man. Have you found some jewel left lying around by some careless god? The last time that happened, I had a necklace made out of it, remember?

THE MAN: No, no, something far more interesting, but tell that creature to stay out of the way for a minute, will you?

THE WOMAN: Ah, it isn't something he'll be able to eat?

THE MAN: See for yourself....

THE WOMAN: (*Gasping*) You're right! It's really new, really different. We haven't had one of these before.

THE MAN: What do you mean? It'll be a man like myself.

THE WOMAN: Not quite. (*Shrewdly*) Don't you see this one is quite out of the ordinary? How, I couldn't say exactly.... But no, I have it — he's bright — brighter than you, more godly perhaps. (*Aside to Dragon who is showing signs of great agitation*) Have no fear, Dragon, I'll take care of this. (*Going on to the Man*) Yes, bright — but we can use that brightness for ourselves, don't you see? (*Musing*) Such a beautiful brightness, what excitement it will bring on Earth. Everything will be upset, *bouleversée*. There will be new fashions, new fads, even new creeds, to follow this exciting new kind of human being, and he will do exactly what I want....

I'll have to start inventing a new game immediately, with maybe a new and different kind of war at the end to match. You'll have plenty to eat then, Dragon — special titbits, the best in the world, perhaps even a few bites of this "new man", because he is sure to have become tiresome by then with all his new-fangled brightness. (*Putting her hand over Dragon's eyes*) Yes, yes, my pet, I know the glare is already hurting your eyes. (*Turning to the Man again*) So, my good fellow, we will

keep it. It'll be a novel amusement for me.

THE MAN: (*Uneasily*) But you'll care for it well, won't you? After all, for all his brightness, he *is* another like myself, flesh of my flesh, substance of my substance — (*Then suddenly carried away*) oh, but how beautiful...

THE WOMAN: Of course, you foolish oaf — do you think I've never brought up a child before? And with one like this, why, I'll be the envy of all the gods and spirits in creation — you wait and see — just wait and see! (*She cradles the child in her arms and gloats over it as she rocks it back and forth.*)

UNICORN: (*with Gods who have been standing to one side and watching the whole scene*) But it's frightful. She has become much worse than before —

JOY: Really, the prospect is quite terrifying. We must report to our Master at once.

BEAUTY: Come, let's fly.

Scene IV

(*The Sage is seated as before with his four friends about him.*)

LOVE: My Lord, we have done your bidding.

BEAUTY: And we have seen too what happened afterwards.

JOY: The Woman has taken the child to herself as an asp would take a newborn rabbit.

UNICORN: Shall I defend it with my horn? Only your command is needed, Master.

SAGE: No, wait, my loved ones. Defend him, of course, we must. But not with violence. Indeed the child is in no immediate danger, for it is in the Old Woman's interest to raise him to adulthood unharmed. Only then shall our work begin again. Till that time we should be content to observe only from afar, and merely make sure that the Dragon doesn't get out of hand in an unguarded moment, satisfy that bottomless stomach of his, and so spoil our work scarcely before it has begun.

Meanwhile, let us withdraw into repose or go about our normal existence.

BEAUTY: Indeed, I have some new splendours of colour and light to work out in the Aurora Borealis. (*Rises.*)

LOVE: And I to tend the secret garden I so recently planted in the heart of Man. (*Rises.*)

JOY: And I to renew my being in the arms of my Creator —

SAGE: Go then, my dear ones, and we shall meet again at the appointed time.

UNICORN: And I?

SAGE: And you, my marvellous child, shall remain here by my side as my sacred guardian while I retire into my meditations.

(*Unicorn sinks down and puts his head in the Sage's lap, as others exit.*)

(*To be continued*)

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of June 1975)

(5)

WITH a heavy heart we take leave of Florence and start on our way to the next stop, Venice. The routine at the hotel follows the pattern of Rome: morning call at seven to remind people that it is time to get up and get ready, breakfast at a quarter to eight, and on to the coach by half-past eight. Our suitcases have already been taken downstairs by the hotel porters and packed neatly in the belly of the coach.

Rome gave the impression of something that was grandiose; it seemed to compress within a city all the ancient and medieval history of Europe and of the Christian faith. Florence was flower-like; it seemed to charm by the magic of the Renaissance spirit that seems still to hover over this beautiful city on the Arno, a name that conjures up visions that Dante could see and portray in imperishable verse. And now it was to be the turn of Venice. As we crossed the northern spurs of the Appenine chain and sped along the autostrade, past Bologna the ancient university town where stands Marconi's house which we were shown — Marconi the man of wireless fame — and Ferrara whence came the marbles on which the great Italians worked, and on towards the water-logged town that once prided itself as the Queen of the Adriatic, a town built fantastically on a number of islets dotting a shallow lagoon on the coast, we wondered what impression Venice might leave on our minds. Would it really live up to its reputation as a Dream City hallowed by so many famous names in literature, art and history? Even Napoleon its conqueror seems to have fallen a prey to its charms.

We drove on the whole morning, with only a brief pause for lunch. Suddenly, around three in the afternoon, we had the first glimpse of this Fairyland standing out against the background of the sky. It was cloudy that afternoon, and in the half-light half-shadow there stood Venice in all its glory, its pinnacles and domes shimmering in the distant horizon. It held us in thrall, made us spell-bound for a while. One got the impression as if we were going to enter a new world, something that was not quite real, a place that seemed to belong to the future.

Automatically as it were, those lines of Byron came to mind:

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies...

Byron may have thought of this beautiful Queen when he composed these lines...

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How were we going to approach her? By boat as Byron did? Or did he swim across the channel that separates the city from the mainland, for who can tell about that man with the "lava flood" burning in his breast of flame? Ours was cooler and we preferred the more prosaic Pullman coach that took us at a gliding speed across the wide and beautiful causeway built long after the Romantic Revival. There is no other bridge across river or ocean channel that can vie with this modern approach to Venice in its grandeur or perfection; it breathes the open air of the sea and yet never seems to lose touch with solid earth.

As we stepped down on the other shore, we had our first view of the famed gondolas, complete with the romantic gondoliers. For once, the reality did not belie the expectations. Gondola and gondolier, as we came to know them at first hand, truly represent Venice and its old-world charm — the very sound of the names conveys something of its happy abandon and its gay song. And when one sees the fragile craft dancing on the waves in the trail left by the modern launch on the Grand Canal, one cannot help thinking of a long-wonted grace and aplomb laughing at modernity. The gondola and its gondolier remind one at once that Europe is still tied to its medieval past in spite of the jet-set and the yachts. The day it will forget its aristocratic past may not be a red-letter day in its calendar.

But modernity too has its imperative demands. We had come to Venice on a coach and not by boat. There were about thirty of us in that coach; and our very efficient escort decided at once that it would not do to get ourselves lost among the gondolas, at least not to begin with. We must move together and get acquainted with this new kind of city with the help of a motor launch that plies regularly along the Grand Canal and which could accommodate us all and many more at a time. There would be plenty of occasion later for the more romantic adventure — perhaps after nightfall when we could board the gondolas without being tossed about in the wake of the launches which cease to ply at dusk — and we could then join in the gondolier's song, assuming that we could catch the tune.... We saw the logic of the scheme and were ushered into the motor launch waiting at the pier. We were taken practically along the whole length of Venice till we reached its biggest island on which St. Mark's stands. There were a number of stops on the way, and we had a splendid view of the city at its most enjoyable.

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There is a story I have read about an innocent abroad who on arriving in Venice sent a telegram home, saying, "All streets flooded. Advise." We had been advised beforehand, so we decided not to turn back at once. Rather, we were full of curiosity and wonder to see how people could live on these "flooded streets" for centuries and

centuries, and not get wet and catch the flu — people who were no fishermen but rich and magnificent merchant princes who held the purse-strings of Europe in their hands perhaps longer than any other mercantile race — and we were desirous to know how and why they should have chosen this particular manner of living.

When we asked our witty Venetian guide what was this strange idiosyncrasy which drew sensible people from solid ground and made them build palatial mansions on little islets off the shore, “Not idiosyncrasy but necessity, madam,” he replied. “Necessity was the mother of Venice,” and he added in a bare whisper and with a wink in his eyes, “Father unknown.” Our entire group burst into hilarious laughter.

Venice in fact owes its origin to Attila the Hun. He had been scourging Europe with the wrath of God, when his attention was diverted from Rome where Pope Leo the Great was wise enough to offer him the olive branch. Attila marched into north-eastern Italy and the people of Padua and other cities in that region fled before the terror and took shelter in the little islands on the shallow lagoon off the coast where Venice in course of time was to raise her proud head. The first inhabitants were landmen, but within a few centuries their descendants proved themselves to be among the most capable sailors and sea-faring merchants that the Mediterranean had so far witnessed. Like the ancient Greeks on the other side of the Adriatic and the still more ancient Phoenicians on the Levantine coast, they sailed far and wide, established colonies and trading posts all over the eastern Mediterranean — in Dalmatia and Corfu and Crete and Cyprus.

It was the Crusades of the 12th and 13th centuries that helped Venice more than anything else. Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi — Amalfi had the distinction of inventing the mariner’s compass — had long been her rivals. But her position near the mouths of the Po and the shorter voyage to the Levant where the Crusaders went in their thousands to wrest Jerusalem from the infidel gave Venice a tremendous advantage, and she practically monopolised the transport of men and provisions. When the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem came to be established, the Venetians were given special privileges in Jerusalem city that enhanced their prestige and power, privileges like those enjoyed later by the early English merchants in India when they sought to establish trade relations.

Like those English merchants of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Venetians too had little to offer from Europe in exchange for the luxury goods they took back in their ships — the silks and glass, porcelain and precious stones, perfumes and dyes and drugs, camphor and musk, the fine cotton gauze and the savoury spices which the Asian merchants brought to the Mediterranean coast from all over the East. These were costly articles and had almost all to be paid for in solid gold — a circumstance that made the “barbaric doors” of Ormuz and Ind “rough with gold”, excited the jealousy and envy of the Western world, and ultimately led to the discovery of America under the mistaken idea of Columbus and his successors that they had landed in the Indies, and to the subsequent discovery of India and its conquest.

Venice no less became the envy of Europe. The Venetian merchants determined

the prices at which the rich merchandise should be distributed among the European traders who came to buy them in Venice and who carried it through the Brenner Pass into Germany and Flanders and France. And gold filled the coffers of Venice as it later did those of London and New York. It became as scarce on the European mainland for a time as dollars are in India today. Venice thrived on its commerce. The merchant princes vied with one another in displaying their wealth and munificence. These merchants seem to have been men of taste, and the architects they employed — their names are mostly forgotten — spared no pains to add grace and charm to magnificence.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

PROMISE

IN an empty and perishable mood of time
 I pace mechanical steps of being
 Across the waiting room of my spirit.
 My reason offers cause for this hiatus
 In metaphors of mud.
 To fill me brimful with Her nectar
 The vessel must be clear.
 Even pain of rapture is obstruction.
 And though I yearn for light, for freedom
 And seek to sustain causeless bliss
 I know I must stay barren
 If I will not hold it here, in this:
 This life, this world, this body.
 Yet a tranquil, faithful patience
 Like an unflickering candleflame
 Holds mute exchange with all my nature,
 Seeks to calm, to shine. And in that pure light
 So steady and so clear
 What promise of the sun is near!

VIKAS

THE SECRET SOURCE OF THE GANGES

A QUEST IN A STRANGE LAND

(Continued from the issue of May 1975)

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

6

I WAS eager to go around and see the place. I prayed to Devi for her permission. Pointing to the north, she as if suggested, "Today you may go that side, you might see quite a few things." There was no tiredness in me; with an unusual enthusiasm I followed my nose. The word 'unusual' is apt; because never in those thirty years of my life had I experienced such a heady enthusiasm, nor had I found myself to be so strong. After a short walk I saw on both sides small areas like gardens, with houses in some of them that seemed to be washed with snow; but it was not really snow. It was never cold there; where would the snow come from? And yet that was not the familiar whitewash we paint our houses with, either. That colour had a coolness. The rooms of these houses had a peculiar form; from outside they resembled brick-kilns, their tops were domed.

The small garden — every house had one in front — was about two-thirds of an acre; the entrance was always through a beautiful portal, which had no elaborate decorations, yet such was its form that it drew one's attention. A curiosity arose in me as to who lived there. I went past the first garden; just before passing by the second I perceived at the portal an eight-year-old child. He wore a head-dress; all his hair was gathered and tied in the centre of his scalp; gold ear-drops and a necklace, though attractive and precious, seemed superfluous on his body, which was simply lovely, a paradisaic loveliness that words cannot delineate.

With a small golden rod in the hand, he came toddling down the road, then abruptly pulled up keeping me at arm's length. He peered at me warily and stood nonplussed for sometime. I also stopped to look at him. Just then a man of prodigious size came out of the house. His golden *dhoti* fell down to his knees. Three tiers of gold anklets with bells embellished his bare feet. His left hand held an implement which rested on his shoulder. Coming out on the road he enquired something of the boy; only the word '*priyatama*', 'dear one', seemed familiar to me. The boy's reply made the man turn and approach me. Standing in front of me he expressed exuberant joy, as if a perplexing problem had been solved.

Then addressing the child he spoke what I did not understand *instantly*; it became clear to me a little later when without telling me anything this man — he seemed to

me Balaram incarnate — went his way smiling welcome. At last the child neared; clasping my hand he drew me to the portal of their white, excellent abode, as if I had been an intimate family friend.

On the doorway I found a standing idol, the housewife. She looked relatively a little older than my hostess. There was a distinctness in her charm, it was the presence of a blue shade. Most of the ornaments that concealed her breast consisted of deep blue gems. The boy went on, I shadowed him. The objects that I saw inside were silver-brilliant, and the weapons that hung on the pillars had, I believe, no other utility but to add to the attraction of the décor.

Having brought me to his mother the boy talked to her, perhaps about me; she said something, whereupon he again started moving, pulling me along. He led me to another spacious room and let go my hand. All types of commodities were kept neatly arranged in this room. Just as I entered, a honey-sweet odour overwhelmed me. I could not guess what this fragrance was. I surveyed the room. On three sides, upon stools, were piled up eye-catching objects of different shapes. The expertly sculpted figures on the four white, medium-size gurras in four corners pleased me immensely. On one side, upon pot-stands, rested yellow pitchers of a quaint shape with spiry lids; these also had admirable artistic designs on them. I guessed that it was a food room. The objects that had allured me first were piled up in tiers, breast high, on planks; some were cubic, some were like groundnuts, others were round; none was thicker than half an inch or longer than eight inches. Their colour was a blend of dark brown and yellow.

Without asking I picked up one. The boy, who had been watching my reactions with pleasure, now ran towards a gurrah, snatched a white bowl from the range of vessels, brought out of the gurrah a fluid substance with a ladle and poured it into the bowl, then returned to me; plucking that object from my hand he broke a portion off and dropped it in the milky liquid in the bowl. Leaving it there, he cut along and brought a spoon. He frisked with gaiety. Meanwhile that thing started swelling inside the bowl. When it came up to the brim that cupid scooped up one spoonful and held it up to my mouth. At last I discovered what that flavour was which had tickled me. I let the substance drop in my mouth. Its taste was nectarous. I believe this was one of their favourite dishes; they call it '*niravatika*'. Its savour was such that it completely satisfied one's whole being. All the food that we take has a certain smell which influences the body. Usually it acts only on the physical being. There is still another type of smell which acts on the mind, for instance that of flowers. This substance's smell to which I was familiarized that day was incomparable.

Now a well-built lovely young shaver of, say, 24 years came in. From his ornamented cummerbund hung a bright blue cloth down to the knees. A chaddar went round his neck and fell on his back. The entrance of this man was, strangely, almost simultaneous with the disappearance of the boy. He held my hand and started speaking. What he communicated, pointing outdoors, I could not very well follow; only I distinguished the words '*nṛtya*' and '*sāṅgī*', dance and music. We went out

and followed the road which ran in front of the house. My new acquaintance had in his hand a gilded rod worked with wonderful designs. Its handle was carved into the hood of a snake.

We strode jauntily. Hardly had we advanced a few steps when from a house on my left an enormous man attired in a blood-red cloth came out. The cut of his visage had a marked difference from that of the faces of other men here. Also, he had long braids which dangled on his back. Men here tie up the hair on the head, and when they come out of their houses they conceal it under a head-dress. This man had no cover on his head, for he was holding a topee in one hand and in the other a staff. His dirty, dark-brown topee was of a thick fabric. The other distinctiveness was that he wore a woollen buskin.

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Among other characteristics this man had a Tibetan cast of countenance with high cheek-bones. One got the impression that he was not a native of this place. For, faces here are full of grace — a softness — found in the Aryan races; while this figure was rigid, devoid of any charm or elegance. His complexion was more coppery than golden, his cheeks were deeply ruddy.

This oldish-looking man had an appearance of ebullient gaiety. He did not have the two front teeth, and there was no trace of any beard or moustache. His ears, neck and hands displayed many ornaments; a number of necklaces hid his wide chest. What with his plaits of hair down the back and his stagey bearing, he somehow reminded me — so far as the appearance was concerned — of Brihannala (Arjuna in the guise of a woman).

He walked beside my companion with a swinging gait. All three of us stepped merrily together and it seemed to be a very joyous march. Now and then my friend would make a remark — some trifling sally, I guess — and that queer fish would be so overcome at this that he would roar with laughter. The sky was azure, a spotlessly blue vault; there was the sun but no heat. The air was crisp and sweet with the pure love that flows out of the Heart of the Supreme. It was indeed a wonderful, thrilling moment!

Till now I had not noticed that the handle of the staff of that man was a gold ring and on the top of it was an ivory-white ball, most probably a charm. He stopped on the way, lifted his hand upwards with the stick and started flourishing it in a circle. After a few such flourishes I witnessed a big bird in the sky coming spiralling down. Slowly the bird descended and perched on the topee on his head. Milk-white, with a blue beak, red eyes and a pale blue line round the neck: that was the bird. He ceased and brought the bird down on his rune staff. Just as anybody else would have done, my friend held out his bejewelled rod towards the bird, more in a friendly gesture than with an air of challenge — and it hopped on to it without fear or hesitation. He should, however, have known better, because the sorcerer perhaps did not expect the creature to obey my friend; his surprise and displeasure were ill-concealed. He lifted his staff

and touched the head of the bird with the ivory ball — it winged away shrieking in pain. The sorcerer simpered, but my friend knitted his brows. His noble countenance was clouded. We started again walking together, all three of us, but the light-heartedness had probably taken wing and flown away with that charming creature. I felt the air around me a little heavy.

About ten minutes after this incident, my friend all on a sudden struck violently with his rod the ivory ball of the charmer's staff, it broke off and rolled down on the road. Hurriedly he picked it up and held it securely within his grasp. It was now the charmer who showed a glum face. Though we all still marched on together, yet nobody broke the silence, nothing disturbed the lull. A feeling of uneasiness and suspense made my heart go pit-a-pat. Presently we came to a magnificent grove full of elegant trees. Of course from outside it was difficult to guess whether it was a wood or a forest.

Here also I found those attractive trees which I had seen on the riverfront. The trunk was like a round pillar, bare half way from the ground, then the branches started. The leaf had the form of the mango leaf but the top was velvety and sky-blue, and the back was ruddy. The barks of all the trees were glossy, some were blue, some others violet, but always a pastel shade everywhere.

With a special pleasure marked on his face, my friend guided me into this radiant grove. The reason for his pleasure was not far to seek, because soon I also felt a delight, the same that Aladdin must have experienced when he found himself, with the help of the African sorcerer, in a garden whose trees bore diamonds and rubies, sapphires and emeralds. True, the trees of this wood did not bear precious stones, but they had something much more valuable, meaningful and attractive to the heart, and that is — beauty. Such was their magnificence that one got drunk by it.

These trees rose from a snow-white ground, and yet this land had no connections with snow. This white, marbly and bright clay, so soothing to the eyes, is inconceivable for us.

Treading the white carpet of marble we neared a bridge where, upon the bidding of my companion, the bird-charmer speeded off across the bridge and disappeared. In time the stream also heaved in sight; its deep blue waters ran bubbling all the way. Then we beheld a picturesque garden. In it, a little afar, stood a palatial building, remarkable for its masterly architecture. He said something to me of which I recognised three words: '*samkarshan*' (attraction,) '*darbha*' (grass), and '*parameshhti*' (Brahma or guru). The span was bow-shaped and 3 yards wide. It was railed off on both sides by 3 feet high fences, made of creepers of various colours. At the two ends of this 15 yards long span there were two gateways that captured the attention. One could not but be awe-struck at the technical expertise and perfectionist drive of the engineer who built this bridge. My companion disclosed that the architect of this bridge was endowed with occult powers, and that there was a connection between him and Vishwakarma, the Divine Artificer. It seemed most likely.

(To be continued)

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of May 1975)

THE SOUL OF AUROVILLE—THE MATRIMANDIR

मधुवाता ऋतायते । मधु झरन्ति सिन्धवः माध्वीनः ।
मधु नक्त मुतोषसि । मधुमत् पार्थिव रजः । मधु द्यौरस्तु नः पिता ।
मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिः । मधुमानस्तु सूर्यः माध्वी गर्वा भवन्तु नः ।

(*Taittiriyaaranyaka*, X. 39)

“O Thou Lord of the universe, as wind blows showering sweetness, as the ocean and rivers are emanating sweetness, so may the paddy and barley spread sweetness over us by growing in abundance; may the nights and dawns, even the dust particles of the earth be full of sweetness; may the high and glorious sky like a father shower sweetness on us; may the stately wood bedecked with various fruits be sweet unto us; may the sun radiate sweetness, may all our cows be all sweetness to us giving us very sweet milk!”

None, we hope, can deny
a vedic ring is there
in the name of Sri Aurobindo.
In this circular city of Sri Aurobindo
constantly fanned by the sea-breeze
The Matrimandir is indeed
poetry in stone!

In the slow emergence of this massive mansion
from the womb of Mother Earth
struggling to scale the heights of the superconscient,
do we not find
a deep philosophy
pulsating in pebbles!

Is this not a living
example, a marvel
of what the earth can achieve
if modern science walks in the light of
spiritual science?

To give life to the Taj Mahal
those in love with labour
had to work two and twenty long years.
Gone is the great Moghul,
gone is he from the memory of his kith and kin.
But
the Taj Mahal lives
ever fresh, ever smiling, ever new born.
Perhaps, it knows no aging —
death and decay dare not lay their
hand on its grandeur!

The Matrimandir instead
owes its existence to those whose
labour is love!
What message this shrine conveys
to the masses, to the élite of the human race;
what spark will emanate
from the soul of Auroville
he alone will be able to inscribe
who holds in his hand
an immortal pen!
He will show us the way
to immortality.

Will this shrine be an expression
of the inexpressible?
Wait, wait, the bud
is still in its infancy.
Let the Supramental Sun
open its petals!
Then the world will come to know
what power lies enshrined there,
what celestial perfume
it carries within!

A sum of fifty lakhs
were in the hands of those
who launched the project of the Taj.
In the hands of those who
dared to embark on a project
of one crore

were a few spades and crowbars
 And with these the excavation
 for the Matrimandir began.

Though so far
 only one third of the construction
 is done,
 its monumental beauty,
 its awe-inspiring grandeur
 capture the heart,
 voice hymns of hope!

True, hope often betrays
 But
 it keeps us also alive —
 planning and dreaming.

Mind must be trained
 to overcome suffering
 and fight back the tears of frustration;
 then alone budding hopes
 would bloom.

A power remains enshrined
 in the Matrimandir.
 Only the spiritually dead
 cannot fail to feel, to sense
 the blessedness
 the Matrimandir breathes!

Two visions of a comrade on the Path arouse a ray of hope; one day we shall reach the goal.

To reach the land of "No thinking"
 Two decades!
 More than two decades
 X had to pass through bitter struggles.
 Then dawned a day in his life
 When the mind was stripped
 of everything.
 At times he reached the state of Void.
 One fine morning,
 at the moment all was still within,

he felt his heart had turned
into a big chamber, filled with a serene silence.

Nothing, nothing was there
except an awareness —
a thread of consciousness,
 watching the scene like a witness.

Then came to his ears ringing
a voiceless voice
cheerfully chanting, “Ma, Ma.”
Are they drops of nectar?
asked the sleeping soul
awakened after ages.
“Is this called *Nad*,
the Source-Sound?”
 he murmured to himself.

After passing through thick jungles,
rocky, rugged paths, and crossing
a hundred hurdles
with limping steps
X found lying there before his eyes
a long clear-cut, sunlit path
and he was running at full speed.
Having reached the end
he asked, in dismay in dream:
“Have I come to Auroville?”
Finding his eyes fastened
to a golden global edifice
bathed in soft sweet and soothing
light like a moon-silvered night
he wondered:
“Is this the Matrimandir?”

These experiences
are not spiritual
 fairy tales.

O weary travellers of the World,
when your patience dries up
in search of abiding peace,
be not down-hearted,

be not dejected.
 Halt a while.
 Let your limbs
 bask in the Sunshine of the Matrimandir!

It may take a hundred years
 but a day will come
 when this empty city will be called
 "The city of God",
 the one envisaged by seers and seekers
 for aeons.

Slowly but steadily Auroville is becoming a place of great attraction for both home travellers and foreign tourists.

Some idea of the magnitude of the work can be had from the fact that this lotus-shaped construction over the half-opened petals will be 36 metres in diameter and 29 metres in height, resting over four pillars capable of holding a load of 1500 tons. Entry into the 12 sided marble chamber will be through the paired pillars.

On being asked how such a gigantic project would be materialised without money, the Mother's categorical answer was:

"When the Lord has decided something, it is bound to happen, whatever are the resistances."

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Natural Health for The Child by *Tarakanath Bose* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1975), 24 pages. Price Re. 1.

THE author is a practising Naturopath, with 18 years' experience, at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. His newest booklet is positive and balanced in approach, easy and worthwhile to read.

In a few pages it sets forth basic guidelines for proper habits of diet and bodily care. Addressed specially to the mothers, it offers advice on raising healthy children. Moderate and pleasant in tone, the booklet is refreshingly simple, straightforward and sound. The author's text is accompanied by appropriate quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

ROBERT