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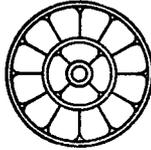
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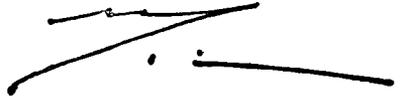
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXVII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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THE TRUTH

SOME STATEMENTS BY THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

What is Truth?

INTELLECTUALLY, the Truth is the point where all the opposites meet and join and make a unity.

Practically, the Truth is the surrender of the ego to make possible the birth and manifestation on earth of the Divine.

6. 10. 1965

THE MOTHER

Knowing and Following the Truth

As long as they are not determined to follow the Truth I can do nothing for them outwardly.

Not the Truth as they see it, but the Truth as it is.

To be able to know Truth you should be without preferences and without desires, and when you aspire for the Truth your mind must be silent.

8. 7. 1971

THE MOTHER

The Mother and Truth

THE Mother cares for the Truth and she has always said that lying and falsehood create a serious obstacle to realisation.

1. 7. 1936

SRI AUROBINDO

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of July 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. The translation of the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother at the time of its first publication as a book in French, came out in book-form in 1973. We are giving this translation below.)

JANUARY 30, 1957

THE CHAIN

“The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains; this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature.

Man is in love with the bonds of birth; therefore he is caught in the companion bonds of death. In these chains he aspires after freedom of his being and mastery of his self-fulfilment.

Man is in love with power; therefore he is subjected to weakness. For the world is a sea of waves of force that meet and continually fling themselves on each other; he who would ride on the crest of one wave, must faint under the shock of hundreds.

Man is in love with pleasure; therefore he must undergo the yoke of grief and pain. For unmixed delight is only for the free and passionless soul; but that which pursues after pleasure in man is a suffering and straining energy.

Man hungers after calm, but he thirsts also for the experiences of a restless mind and a troubled heart. Enjoyment is to his mind a fever, calm an inertia and a monotony.

Man is in love with the limitations of his physical being, yet he would have also the freedom of his infinite mind and his immortal soul.

And in these contrasts something in him finds a curious attraction; they constitute for his mental being the artistry of life. It is not only the nectar but the poison also that attracts his taste and his curiosity.”

(Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*, Centenary Edition, Vol. 16, p.385)

Sweet Mother, what does “artistry” mean?

What the majority of men call “artistic” are just contrasts. Artists say and feel that it is the shadows which make the light, that if there were no contrasts,

they would not be able to make a picture. It is the same thing with music: the contrasts between 'lounds' and 'softs' is one of the greatest charms of music.

I knew some poets who used to say: "It is my enemies' hatred which makes me value the affection of my friends"....And it is the almost inevitable possibility of misfortune which gives all its savour to happiness, and so on. And repose they value only in contrast with the daily agitation, silence only because of the usual noise, and some of them even tell you: "Oh! it is because there are illnesses that good health is cherished." It goes so far that a thing is valued only when it is lost. And as Sri Aurobindo says here: When this fever of action, movement, this agitation of creative thought is not there, one feels one has fallen into inertia. Most people fear silence, calm, quietude. They no longer feel alive when they are not excited.

I have seen many cases in which Sri Aurobindo had given silence to somebody, had made his mind silent, and that person came back to him in a kind of despair, saying: "But I have become stupid!" For his thought was no longer excited.

What he says here is terribly true. Men want freedom but they are in love with their chains, and when one wants to take these away, when one wants to show them the path of true liberation, they are afraid, and often they even protest.

Almost all man's works of art — literary, poetic, artistic — are based upon the violence of contrasts in life. When one tries to pull them out of their daily dramas, they really feel that this is not artistic. If they wanted to write a book or compose a play wherein there would be no contrasts, where everything would be harmoniously pure and beautiful, where there would be no shadows in the picture, it would probably be something seemingly very dull, very monotonous, lifeless, for what man calls "life" is the drama of life, the anxiety of life, the violence of contrasts. And perhaps if death were no longer there, they would be terribly tired of living.

(Long silence)

Concerning what I said in one of the former classes, a question has been put to me:

"The difficulties and obstacles met on the path when one wants to attain a certain aim — are they a sign at times that this decision, this plan or project was faulty from the beginning and that hence one should not persist or, on the contrary, do these difficulties indicate a victory to be gained, a transformation to be attained? Are they a sign that one must persevere and hold on? I am not speaking here of the decision to follow the path of Yoga, but of those little things related to work, sports or other activities. In other words, how to recognise and interpret the Guidance which comes through circumstances or relations with others and through experience?"

I believe this is only an apparent contradiction.

If one wants to follow a discipline of Yoga, naturally before undertaking something one must try to discern and know if the inspiration received is a real one, coming from the Divine, or whether it is quite simply a reaction to outer circumstances and an impulse, either vital or mental. It is quite important, even very important, to try to discern and act in full knowledge of the cause. But there is a very large number of things one does, upon which one has no habit of reflecting beforehand. When the circumstance comes, one obeys it. And, fundamentally, those things, like almost everything else one does in life, are not important in themselves. The only thing which matters is the *attitude* with which they are done. The fact that you do something because that action is there before you for one reason or another and that one is, so to say, always obliged to act as long as one is in the outer life, all that has a certain importance from the point of view of the conduct of life if these are acts which may have sufficiently deep consequences in life, as, for example, getting married or going to live at a certain place or at another or taking up a certain occupation; these are things generally considered important, and they are so to a certain extent; but even for these, from the point of view of Yoga, everything depends much more on the attitude one takes than on the thing itself. And so, above all, for all the very small actions of daily life, the importance is reduced to a minimum.

There are some scrupulous people who set problems to themselves and find it very difficult to solve them, because they state the problem wrongly. I knew a young woman who was a theosophist and was trying to practise, who told me: "We are taught that the divine Will must prevail in all that we do, but in the morning when I take my breakfast, how can I know whether God wants me to put two lumps of sugar in my coffee or only one?"...And this was quite touching, you know, and I had some trouble explaining to her that the spirit in which she drank her coffee, the attitude she had towards her food, was much more important than the number of lumps of sugar she put into it.¹

That's how it is with all the little things one does every moment. The Divine Consciousness does not work in the human way. It does not decide how many lumps of sugar you must put in your coffee. It puts you gradually in the right attitude towards actions, things — an attitude of consecration, suppleness, adherence, aspiration, goodwill, plasticity, the effort for progress — and it is that which counts, much more than the small decision you take every second. One may try to find out what is the best thing to do, but it is not by a mental discussion or a mental problem that these things can be resolved. It is indeed by an inner attitude which *creates* an atmosphere of harmony — progressive harmony — in which all that one does will necessarily be the best thing that could be done in the given circumstances. And the ideal would be an attitude complete enough for the action to be spontaneous, dictated

¹ In reference to this very story, a disciple remembers the Mother telling him something to this effect "Now I should no longer laugh at this poor lady. I am not sure that the Lord does not attend also to the number of lumps of sugar we put in our coffee!"

by something other than an outer reason. But that, that's an ideal — to which one must aspire and which one can realise after some time. Till then, taking care to keep the true attitude, the true aspiration, is much more important than to decide whether one should do gymnastic-marching or not and whether one should go to a certain class or not. Because these things have no real importance in themselves, they have only an altogether relative importance, the only important thing being just to keep the true direction in one's aspiration and the living will for progress.

As a general rule, and so that the experience may have its full benefit, when one has undertaken something one must do it with persistence, without caring for obstacles and difficulties, until an absolutely irrefutable event indicates that one has no longer to do it. That happens very rarely. Generally, things follow their curve and when they reach an issue — either they come to an end or produce the wanted result — one becomes aware of the reason for doing them. But the obstacles, contradictions (or encouragements) should not be considered as irrefutable signs to be followed, for these things may have a very different meaning according to the case, and it is not at all from these outer events that one must judge the validity of one's undertaking.

When one is very attentive and very sincere, one may have an indication, so to say, inner but quite perceptible, of the value of what one has undertaken or the action one is in the course of doing. Truly, for one who is entirely good-willed, that is, who wants in all sincerity, with the whole conscious part of his being, to do the right thing in the right way, there is always an indication; if for some reason or other one launches upon a more or less fatal action, one *always* feels an unease in the region of the solar plexus, an unease which is not violent, which doesn't compel recognition dramatically, but is very perceptible to one who is attentive, something like a sort of regret, like a lack of adherence. That may go as far as a kind of refusal to collaborate. But I repeat it, without violence. Without a brutal self-assertion: it makes no noise, does not hurt, it is at the most a slight uneasiness. And if you disregard it, if you pay no attention, attach no importance to it, after a little while it will disappear completely and there will be nothing any longer.

It is not that it increases with the growing error, on the contrary, it disappears and the consciousness gets veiled.

Hence, one cannot give this as a sure sign, for if you have disobeyed this little indication several times, well, it will no longer come again. But I tell you that if in all sincerity you are very attentive to it, then it will be a very sure and precious guide.

But if there is an unease, it comes at the beginning, almost immediately, and when it doesn't show itself, well, no matter what it is one has started, it is preferable to do it to the very end so that the experience may be complete, unless one receives, as I said, an absolutely precise and categorical indication that this should not be done.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER

WITH COMMENTS BY SRI AUROBINDO

(Adapted from Sri Aurobindo Circle, No. 15, 1959, pp. 16-17)

IN the course of an interview in June 1937, which the Mother granted to a professor of philosophy from an Indian university, [most probably Dr. Mahendranath Sircar], she explained to him certain questions relating to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy which he [had] put to her. After the interview he wrote a report of it and sent it to her for making the necessary corrections. The report was seen by Sri Aurobindo who made corrections and gave comments on five points in it to make the Mother's views fully explicit.

These five points in the professor's report are briefly stated below, followed by Sri Aurobindo's corrections and comments on them.

Report of the Interview

(1) When the psychic being comes to the front, it establishes a relation with the spiritual consciousness which covers the whole solar system.

(2) The realisation of cosmic consciousness is higher than the realisation of the Nirvanic calm because it brings the fullness of the cosmic life, whereas Nirvana is only an escape from the turmoil of life and liberation from the limitations of individual existence.

(3) Nirvana is a short escape from life and it is easy to reach it. It is often called calm because it shuts out the dynamic spiritual action; but this is not the calm which is the basis of the cosmic consciousness and which promises the perfection of the dynamic spiritual realisation in the wider ranges of being beyond Nirvana. The true spiritual life begins after Nirvana.

(4) The spiritual life embraces, so far as our experience is concerned, the solar system. Our cosmic order has its own laws even in the realm of spirituality which differ from the laws of other cosmic orders. Our experience will be therefore different from the experience of the beings in other cosmic systems.

(5) In the final realisation the triune cosmic expression of Sachchidananda is realised, but beyond that cosmic expression there is the transcendent Divine which cannot be realised by us because our experience cannot go beyond the cosmic expression.

Sri Aurobindo's Corrections and Comments

(1) Solar System? No. Mother was speaking of the universe; the solar system is only a dot in the material aspect of the universe.

(2) It is the realisation of the divine Sachchidananda which is superior to the

Nirvanic calm; the cosmic consciousness is one part of this realisation but not the whole of it — the fullness of the cosmic life is one element of the Integral Reality, an aspect from which the Nirvanic push is an attempt to escape. The normal experience of cosmic life from which Nirvanic calm escapes is not its fullness, — the fullness only comes by the realisation of Sachchidananda.

(3) No, it is not easy to reach Nirvana — except for a very few. What Mother said was that it is easy in comparison with the supramental realisation which establishes the consciousness in the wider ranges of being beyond Nirvana. Nirvana satisfies the spiritualised mind by giving it an escape from itself, from the limitations to which Mind in the universe is subject.

(4) Again, no. Mother spoke of this universe. What she said was that Nirvana was a spiritual mood of this universe. There are many universes and each has its own law and way of being, so different from each other that there is no contact between this universe and others.

(5) This is not quite the thing. The cosmic expression of Sachchidananda in the universe is one thing, but there is the Unmanifest transcendent and supreme from which all universes come. All are expressions of the supreme Sachchidananda. It is quite possible to realise the full intensity of life in any given universe if one rises to the highest realisation, but that realisation must necessarily transcend mind — one can then proceed to the realisation of the supreme Truth and give it expression here. That expression must be an expression of the triune Reality. The Unmanifest is not a denial of that Reality — the full intensity of the manifestation can be there, only the ways of expression may differ.

What Mother said was simply that no universe can “exhaust” the Unmanifest; she did not enter the question farther than that. I may say however that in the mind which is a creator of differential contradictions there is supposed to be a perpetual incompatibility between the transcendent and the cosmic states of the Divine — as also between the Personal and Impersonal, the One and the Many. The supramental consciousness, on the other hand, does not raise these problems, for there the way of experience of the mental Ignorance is abolished and the basis of things is an indefeasible unity — whatever expression is there cannot diminish or contradict this unity (which is essential and not numerical) but lives in it and by it, never losing the hold on the supracosmic Reality which it expresses. This difference between Supermind and mind is difficult to explain fully to the mind, for it contradicts the logic of the mind and substitutes a way of knowing which is *svayamprakāśa*¹ and rooted in a knowledge by identity of which the mind at its best can only grasp a thin reflection or a shadow. But it makes an immense difference in the possibilities of consciousness, a difference which one can only realise, not by thought, but by experience.

4-6-1937

¹ Self-revealing

THE SUPERMIND IN EARTH-CONSCIOUSNESS AND EARTH-LIFE

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(This is the first of two letters written to Dr. Mahendranath Sircar, author of Eastern Lights, when he visited the Ashram in 1937. The second letter will follow in the next issue of Mother India.)

I

THERE is not much profit in mental and intellectual speculations about what precisely the results would be of the introduction of a supramental principle and a supramental organisation and order in the earth-consciousness and the earth-life. In all probability the speculations would be quite beside the mark or, even where they hit on some broad lines, would draw them wrong and all awry and out of proportion; for the intellectual mind is a different and inferior power of consciousness; it is analytical and synthetic, pulling things to pieces and putting them together in order to understand and deal with them, proceeding by representation and abstraction and formulas and schematic figures; it imposes a rigid logic on an illogical world in order to bring about a fixed and mechanical order; it cuts up, divides, compares, contrasts, confronts one element of existence contradictorily with another; classifies according to similarity and difference. In the end it produces a system of things explained and intelligible; but each such system is only a segment of truth dried up into a formula. Life compelled into these systems either escapes and flows through its hard set lines and undermines and slowly or quickly upsets or transmogrifies the system till it is no longer what it pretends to be or else it remains fossilised and cramped within until it dies or until an explosion of its suppressed forces liberates it into a new order. Supermind is a totally different power. It has a whole-vision and an essential vision; it reposes on an all-seeing authority of Truth which spontaneously produces harmony according to the inner Truth of the One and the inner truth of the Many in the One. Out of things that to the mind are opposites and incompatible contrasts it takes in each its essence and joins them harmoniously into a single piece. This it does by raising them beyond their separated appearances and putting them in the light of the one Truth where they can find their reality and their reconciling principle. The things that in the mind are in constant conflict or with only a patched-up truce between them, liberty and order, commonalty and individuality and the rest will in supermind find their natural harmony because they are not only indispensable aspects of the essential whole, but themselves one. But for this our existing materials mind, life, body must be supramentalised; otherwise the discordances and oppositions of mind will remain oppositions and discords, the confusions and conflicts of life will remain confused

and conflicting, the cramps and limits of form will prevent plastic change, perfection, fulfilment. Mind has failed to liberate and perfect life, because it has imperfectly mentalised life and form, without finding their secret by which they can find themselves and their perfection through a higher light than their own half-conscious self-feeling. Supermind will supramentalise fully mind, life and body and in the very doing of it liberate their own perfection because it is in supermind that the full and perfect secrets of mind, life and form are treasured and await their time of descent into terrestrial nature.

*
**

That brings me to your second question, the missing Harmony and the actual disharmonies of earth, a dissonance out of which like most people you build a justification for a saving flight towards Nirvana, — although in the true theory of Mayavada harmony and disharmony are of equal value or rather of equal non-value: for the glory of Heaven and the joy of the gods are as much an illusion and, if anything, a greater illusion than any ugliness of life or redundancy of human suffering. But I agree with you that disharmony is what is the matter with the world here and it is harmony that is the one thing desirable. There the whole question is whether harmony is intended to be found or not or whether the very nature and condition and grain of life is a disharmony that, because the very root of life is ego and division, is incurable. The Mayavadin contends that it is; Buddha also decided that the only way out of suffering and disharmony was out of life into the permanence or perhaps the nothingness of Nirvana. But the question is whether what is now, is the base of existence or only a temporary phase of existence here. Is life radically just an expression of ego and division? and is there nothing else, is there not behind it the unity of the Divine? and cannot it be brought out, — cannot we get rid in the end of the little things on the surface and express these greater things behind it? If, as spiritual experience shows us, the unity of the Divine is there at the very base and if as both ancient and modern knowledge declare, there has been a spiritual evolution from down upwards, — though the modern speaks only of an evolution of the body with the consciousness depending on it and the ancient, as in the Tantra, only of a spiritual evolution of the soul from vegetable life-form to the human mind-life, — then there is no reason why this spiritual evolution should not arrive beyond its present incomplete and therefore still disharmonious consciousness in man to its logical consummation, an expression of the Divine. There is not only no reason why it should not, but such an arrival is inevitably pointed to both by the logic of reason and the gaze of intuition. Not only so, but the first step towards solution has been taken by the Yogin's extension of consciousness beyond ego and division; spiritual experience has shown that the embodied soul can arrive beyond ego and division to consciousness governed by the unity of the one Self or the Divine; and the existence of the Jivanmukta proves that one can thus exceed ego and division and yet live and act, so that life in the Divine is not an imagination or a fable.

The ascension above ego and division is no doubt only a first step achieved in rare individuals, but in evolution it is the first step which counts and makes all the rest possible. Also, no doubt, to stand above an egoistic and divided world and act on it from the egoless heights of the spirit is not enough — a power is needed and a process, — the descent of a power that can bring harmony because in its nature it is at once superior, fundamental and comprehensive and discovery of the process that fits the power. All achievement in embodied life has been made possible by the discovery of the necessary power and the effective process. It must so also be done in the achievement of harmony in a still discordant earth-nature.

Is there any conclusive reason for declaring such an achievement or spiritual evolution impossible? The only argument you advance amounts to this only, that it has not been done yet and that shows that it cannot be done. That reasoning has not much value. It is the usual logic of the physical intellect which is bound by what is and believes that to be definitive. It has been urged against all new or yet unaccomplished ideas or achievements and when they have been accomplished, still urged against their successors. The physical mind always comes in with its fixed line of the present and “No farther” and when the fixed line of the present is unfixed and overpassed, it again erects a new line and cries “No farther”. If an “elemental” who had attained to the physical mind had been present at the different stages of the earth-history he would have argued like that. When only matter was there and there was no life, if told that there would soon be life on earth embodied in matter, he would have cried out, “What is that? It is impossible, it cannot be done. Life is possible only in a subtle body. It has never been and will never be embodied in gross matter. What[?] this mass of electrons, gases, chemical elements, this heap of mud and water and stones and inert metals, how are you going to get life in that? Will the metal walk? can the stone live? will you take mud and water and make out of it a body that can move, feel, act, desire? But life came in spite of the impossibility and living forms were developed — plant and tree and living bodies were built out of the protoplasm.

SOME COMMENTS ON SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1975)

2

Savitri opens with a single self-sufficing line — a complete sentence in iambic pentameter consisting of eight words:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.

This line is the shortest start of any epic. The *Iliad* has a dactylic line starting the theme with a greater number of syllables proper to the quantitative hexameter — a number which Pope is obliged to match by a full heroic couplet:

*Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumbered, heavenly Goddess sing!*

Virgil's *Aeneid* has two hexameters and an extra foot for the initial grammatical unit. C. Day Lewis represents them by:

*To tell of the war and the hero who first from Troy's frontier,
Displaced by destiny, came to the Lavinian shores,
To Italy...*

Dante's *Divina Commedia* runs its start into a trio of lines setting the *terza rima* moving. In Dorothy Sayers's version we have:

*Midway this way of life we're bound upon,
I woke to find myself in a dark wood,
Where the right road was wholly lost and gone.*

Milton's *Paradise Lost* beats all by his long-drawn-out overture:

*Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one Greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heav'nly Muse...*

But Sri Aurobindo's opening, though the shortest, is not by any means the sim-

plest. As we have seen, it precludes the most tough “knot” of the whole poem. It has cosmogonic overtones, metaphysico-religious implications, and refers to a religio-mythic concept: the moment of the Gods’ awaking.

The next line —

Across the path of the divine Event —

at once recalls with its two concluding words Tennyson’s well-known

*And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.*

But there is no direct parity between the Aurobindonian “Event” and the Tennysonian. Sri Aurobindo points to a daily occurrence, while Tennyson presumably talks of the end of universal history. And yet, behind the daily working of divine forces to which Sri Aurobindo alludes, we may discern a final “divine Event”, when the Gods, the Lords of Truth and Light, will awake forever and the *Avidyā*, the Ignorance, in which the world’s consciousness lives at present, will be dispelled for good. As we have already observed, the habitual awaking of the Gods on the particular day with which *Savitri* begins its story is infused with a brief appearance of the ultimate glory: a touch of the “epiphany” is seen for a short while. The “one far-off divine event” is momentarily glimpsed. Yes, a Tennysonian suggestion glimmers in the background. But, of course, the consummation which Tennyson alludes to is not quite the same as the world-fulfilment Sri Aurobindo’s yoga labours towards. Tennyson has a Christian outlook, and strains his eyes in the direction of a world-end leading to a Supreme Hereafter for all the elements of the Creation, which Christ, reappearing, will gather up into God. Sri Aurobindo has in view a crowning of the world’s evolutionary effort by an establishment of the Supermind here in time and space with a divinised mind, vitality and body. Unlike the Christian visionary, he is spiritually this-worldly not only in “organic process” but also in ultimate achievement.

We may note in passing that Sri Aurobindo does not particularise his “Event” by qualifying it as “this” or “that”: he employs only the general definite article “the”. A sort of known generality is indicated: there is no pinning down of the Event to a specific occasion nor is any direct attention focused on it: it is named unobtrusively in spite of its magnitude — as if it were a matter of recurrent greatness, a common uncommonness — a splendour to be repeated interminably. The use of “the” rather than “this” or “that” turns us away again from some once-and-for-all Event and conforms to the pattern we have drawn of a night like any other in the long series of dark intervals, except that Satyavan is to die during the ensuing day.

In the line that follows —

The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone —

what is it that is foreboded? One may argue that it must be an unpleasant thing — a deeper and larger gloom — rather than a pleasant thing, namely, the light to come. One may imagine the deeper and larger darkness to be the original Inconscience, which was the beginning of the world; but how can that Inconscience be boded in advance? “Fore” implies a future, not a past. What is symbolised is not the same as what is anticipated. We should think only of the light to come. But then the atmosphere of gold that would go with this light would stand in the way: forebodings are gloomy, whereas the anticipation of light would be cheerful. However, we must remember two points. First, it is gloom that is in an anticipatory state: so the anticipation has itself to be gloomy, sharing as it does the nature of the anticipating entity, even though what is anticipated is bright. Secondly, what is anticipated would spell the end of gloom and surely gloom anticipating its own end cannot be cheerful about it! Psychologically it cannot help being gloomy about the event which would deal a death-blow to it.

“The event” — there we have named the very identity of the blow-dealer. What the mind of night forebodes is the preceding line’s “divine Event” — the moment of the Gods’ awaking. Actually the word “before” of the first line of *Savitri* should identify the object of night’s foreboding activity.

Now we may dwell on the literary, as distinguished from the psychological quality of the participial adjective. From Sri Aurobindo’s manuscripts we learn that the third line of *Savitri* originally ran:

The huge unslumbering spirit of Night, alone —

and was followed, two lines later, by:

*Lay stretched immobile upon Silence’ marge,
Mute with the expectation of her change.*

Later the final line became:

Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change.

In the present version of the opening passage the substance of both forms of the line in question has been concentrated in “foreboding” in the immediate context and later assimilated into two lines:

*An unshaped consciousness desired light
And a blank prescience yearned towards distant change.*

We are pointing this out by the way; the literary problem we should like to raise is: how would an adjective like “expectant” or “previsioning” do as a substitute for “foreboding”?

“Previsioning” would not be quite amiss, especially in view of the verse coming some 150 lines or so afterwards about the Dawn-Goddess:

On life's thin border awhile the Vision stood.

But “previsioning” will introduce an anapaest in the line's third foot and spoil the steady, slow and even sombre movement: a kind of skip would come with the anapaestic intrusion. Besides, the quantitative values of the word — one semi-long and three intrinsic shorts — would be out of accord with the large-vowelled rhythm:

The huge foreboding mind of Night alone.

There are six intrinsic longs and all the five stresses of the pentameter coincide with five out of these six voice-lengths. The line remarkably bears out by its sound the sense of the immense solitariness of the brooding Night-mind.

If one may be forgiven for recalling some verses of one's own I would quote:

One with night's incommunicable mind

and

A loneliness of superhuman night.

But, though here too by Sri Aurobindo's estimation is overhead poetry and at least in the last line a pure Mantra, still there is not such a succession of long vowels mostly driven home by strong stresses as in Sri Aurobindo's picture — a picture supported grandly, after a one-line interval, by the vision of the verse which is concerned directly with the disposition of Night's mind:

Lāy stretched immōbile upon Silence' mārge

— again six quantitative longs and five stresses rendered more effective by the long quantities under them, particularly the stupendous opening spondee which seems to give a Presence extending right across the whole horizon that is “Silence' mārge” at this occult hour with which *Savitri* breaks upon us. (“Stretched”, I may remark, has a vowel which for all its intrinsic shortness is stretched out by the three consonantal sounds following it no less than preceding it.)

As for “expectant” instead of “previsioning”, it is still worse. Even apart from the ridiculous suggestion of a woman expecting the birth of a baby, the poetry suffers an irremediable fall. There is a lack of suggestion in the adjective — it has a drab vacuous neutrality. It makes an abstract prose statement — no conjuring up of a presence,

no calling forth of Night's characteristic mentality. And the whole sound rings flat and false, coming between "huge" and "mind". "Previsioning" had at least four syllables to suggest some kind of length making up for the brevity of the vowel-values. "Expectant" has nothing except three short vowels.

Finally, both these adjectives are wanting in the peculiar beauty and aptness of the two long *o*'s that belong to "foreboding". Without their occurrence the long *o* of "alone" concluding the line would itself be alone and the word in which it figures would toll its bell as if in a void. Perhaps a more appropriate way of speaking would be: the void which the line suggests would be a dead one instead of a living "fathomless zero" (to quote a *Savitri*-expression a little further on) if "alone", which rounds off the verse, were not prepared by what we may call — using a term from elsewhere in the poem — the "ciphered round" of each of the two *o*'s earlier in the line. Echoing them, it fills out with a vibrant mystery.

What we may consider in contrast an insubstantial vacuity is caught in the line which intervenes between the two that are actively related to Night's mind, namely,

In her unlit temple of eternity.

The rhythmic antithesis to those two verses is complete: there is not a single quantitative long in the 11 syllables — short vowel follows short vowel to create the impression of a sheer lack of substantial reality. The semi-long of the first *e* in "eternity" hardly avails as a break. In addition to the short-vowelled character of the line, we should observe that there are only three real stresses as against the five in the other pair. Further, the line begins with an anapaest, as though a quick movement were easily possible in the utterly unresisting "atmosphere" of the temple. Lastly, we have no strong close as with "alone" and "marge" but a weak falling away into some endless unknown: "eternity" is without a true accent in its terminal syllable, a sort of half-pressure falls there merely because the line comes to an end: no actual end occurs and we get the sense of an indeterminable void with no life in it.

One more technical remark. In the earlier version of *Savitri* when there was "the huge unslumbering spirit of Night", our line stood:

In her unlit temple of immensity.

Now, with "eternity", Sri Aurobindo does not describe the temple's dimensions but the object to which the temple was dedicated: Night serves eternity in her temple. This change further takes away "substance" from what is described. "Immensity" is a positive term and indicates magnitude, the power of a spatial extension: "eternity" is non-indicative of any spatial as well as of any temporal continuity. We are carried off into the indefinite and imponderable.

The three lines about Night's mind lying lonely upon the marge of Silence in eternity's temple bring to my mind the three that come much later (in Canto 3 of Book One):

*The superconscient realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.*

The lying immobile and silent and lonely recur, though the ultimate mood is different — the all-freeing tranquillity of an unnamable Nirvana instead of the ominous profundity of a hushed emptiness. What, from the standpoint of literary psycho-phonetics, links the two passages is the end-term “alone” in the second line of the one and in the closing line of the other. We encounter this effect elsewhere too in *Savitri*, but not so impressively as here, nor does it confront us with such a self-contained poetic generality — except once, as we shall soon see. No doubt, “foreboding” actually points to a particular object — the divine Event of the Gods’ awaking — yet it can stand on its own as the expression of a psychological movement typical of and natural to the mind of Night, a movement fraught with a formless fear of the future. Again, in the other line the “And” at the start points to a special context and is necessary to the progressive revelation, yet metrically it is a superfluous conjunction, making the initial foot a glide-anapaest when the line could be a perfect pentameter without it and have the first foot an iamb.

Comparable self-contained small-scale masterpieces with the same termination to various descriptive, reflective or suggestive phrases may be cited. There is Housman’s delightfully atmospheric snatch from *Nature*:

*The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
In leafy dells, alone*

There is the deeply poignant religious conviction of an early Sonneteer:

All love is lost except on God alone.

Wordsworth’s greatest moment is that unfathomable phrase about Newton’s bust at Cambridge with its silent face that is the marble index of

*a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.*

John Chadwick, “Arjava” to the inmates of Sri Aurbindo’s Ashram, matches the Upanishadic mystery and magnificence of Wordsworth by his lines:

*This patter of Time’s marring steps across the solitude
Of Truth’s abidingness, Self-blissful and alone.*

A mixture of the descriptive, reflective and suggestive in four verses of terrific power,

with a cosmic sweep of imagination, meets us in Canto 2 of *Savitri*'s "Book of Fate":

*As a star, unaccompanied, moves in heaven
Unastonished by the immensities of space,
Travelling infinity by its own light,
The great are strongest when they stand alone.*

These verses have a special interest and importance for us because they are some of the absolutely last that Sri Aurobindo dictated to Nirodbaran a little before December 5, the day when not Satyavan but Sri Aurobindo himself was to "die" and when, as a result of his passing into the inner planes, his co-worker and companion, the Mother, would undergo the fate of loneliness on the visible earth-stage — although

God-given her strength can battle against doom.

AMAL KIRAN

THE NEW LANGUAGE

THE Birds of Wonder
call to me
in many keys
of ecstasy
to come to come

But where or how
they do not cry
and I am left
by love to die —
or learn the tongue

whose beating wing
lifts up the heart
to sing to give
and I am found
by love — to live.

SEYRIL
Peace, Auroville

A TALK BY PRADYOT

(This is the transcript of a talk delivered at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on 29-3-1975 before a gathering of the students of the Higher Course.)

HERE I am, to make an attempt to answer questions in the time allotted, that is to say, in three-quarters of an hour! Let the questions come.

Q: Why is it that we, in India, face a power crisis almost every year? Is it not possible to meet this power shortage through proper planning?

A: The reasons are many. Firstly, to my mind, lack of appreciation that power is so very essential to the life of a nation. In pre-independence days, priority used to be given to revenue collection and security. We inherited that sort of mentality when we became independent. The result is that there is not enough of installed capacity to begin with; and then we don't add enough capacity every year to meet the growth of the demand and obsolescence. The main sources of power in this country are water and coal (and lignite), then some amount of diesel and lately nuclear power. There are a few gas turbines here and there; solar power has been thought of but nothing of importance has come forth so far. Now, water depends on Nature; sometimes there is draught and so there is not enough water. For coal-fired boilers, the kind of coal we get, especially in the eastern regions where the coal mines are, is very inferior, with a very high ash-content, of the order of anything between thirty to forty-five percent. Such coal is never used in any other part of the world but we have to use it because the other type of coal, superior coal, is not plentiful and we have to conserve it for other uses — steel making, etc. Now this high-ash coal is very abrasive, it tells on the steam-generating equipment and there is a great deal of wear and tear. For maintaining these boilers, we have to have, first, spare parts and then skilled men. Spare parts are difficult to get because they involve foreign exchange, for most of our equipment is imported and, as long as we depend on imported equipment, this kind of thing will happen. We are trying to build something in this country but we started in a small way and we have got to put up with it for some more time. Regarding labour, the politicians and trade unions have got into it and they see to it that the workers only demand their rights, but are forgetful of their responsibility. And as I said to begin with, there is a lack of appreciation also: I remember about ten years ago we used to have a planning body here. I happened to mention that power cuts were not necessary. They asked me how? In those days the Suez Canal was open, equipment could be imported within three months. I said: "Have a couple of gas turbines." Fuel then was not so much of a question. And the answer I got was "We are better off in this State than in other States." But realisation is beginning to grow in us that something has to be done about these power cuts. I suppose with more of nuclear power, more of indigenous equipment, things may take a turn for the better. For the future, we have to look into

other sources of power, nuclear power for example, for coal will get exhausted in a few years, oil is not there, so if this kind of civilization is to last, we have to look to new sources, which do not get exhausted so soon. Water power is there, solar power is there and wind and tidal power and something which is not so very complicated, such as direct chemical reaction to electricity, as they call fuel cells — all these should be attempted. So it is possible to minimize the crisis, it is possible even to avoid it completely.

Q: How rich is India in oil potential?

A: Very poor.

Q: Can India in the near future prove self-sufficient in meeting all her oil requirements?

A: Well, till the Cambay and the Bombay high reserves are known — the known reserves of oil amounted to about 44 million tons. Our production is about 7 million tons and our requirement is over 22 million tons. So if we could use all our reserves, which is not possible, then we would finish it up in two years. As it is, we get only thirty percent of our needs. But then no country can depend on oil, those which are rich in oil today will soon have their reserves depleted. So we must think of other sources, such as I mentioned before.

Q: Has India been justified — economically, also politically — in exploding a nuclear device? Should India try to develop her nuclear capability at all costs?

A: What do you mean by “all costs?” I don’t know. Anyway, it is better to develop nuclear capabilities because it is a source of power and power is always useful, unless you misuse it. Nobody has asked us to make bombs! But nuclear power has many useful features which we can utilise in our national life.

Q: Why is Indian Science not thriving as much as one would have wished? Why is India’s position so insignificant in the world map of creative original research, in spite of the fact that we have established a long chain of national laboratories with highly sophisticated equipment? How to rectify the lacuna?

A: “A long chain of national laboratories” would not necessarily produce a scientist! These are necessary but that is not the prime condition. Have you ever seen Sir Jagadish Bose (I don’t think any of you have seen him), who discovered and proved to the world that the plant has a life comparable in some ways with animal life? He developed his instruments in his laboratory with hardly any facilities. He could show the heart beats of a plant on the screen; we also saw how he killed a plant by using a “black box”, he called it the death ray. He didn’t have very much of laboratory facilities. So what is required is to get rid of our physical inertia and mental flabbiness; if you really concentrate on doing something, it will be done. Laboratories are a help but not so essential as people think. Men are essential.

Q: Is it good from the long-term point of view for a developing country like India to purchase and import technological know-how developed abroad? Or should we try to develop a fresh technology within our own country in order to foster the spirit of inventive genius?

A: The answer is already there, in the last few words. You have to import something for sometime, but don't depend on importing for all time. When you want to develop quickly and you have no time for developing everything you need, you have to import. But that's no substitute for indigenous effort.

Q: How long will new admissions to our Centre of Education, excepting perhaps at the Kindergarten level, remain suspended? Should not our Centre grow and expand?

A: What is "growing" and "expanding"? In bulk? Remember: this Ashram is a laboratory. The physical size of a laboratory is always limited. The admission to the Centre of Education is, as you say, primarily at the Kindergarten level because, as you know it better than I, the ideal of our school is considerably different from that of outside schools. Grown-up students transferred from other schools may not easily fit in. So if you have got limited size and accommodation and limited facilities, it is better to have new entrants when they are quite young. However, how long new admissions for grown-ups to our school will be suspended, I don't know. But that does not mean that activities are suspended.

Q: Can no new aspirants possibly get admission to our Ashram? If a sadhak from outside wants to join our Ashram now, what is his position? What should he do? Whom should he apply to? Who will take the decision whether he should be allowed to join the Ashram or not?

A: Getting into the Ashram has never been easy. I was refused — I don't know how many times, maybe ten to twelve times! When I asked the Mother "Shall I come?" the Mother used to say "No". When I settled in my mind not to worry, she called me. If a sadhak wants to come here, he has to prove himself. How? It depends on individuals. For example we have people outside, associated with the Ashram for a long time, and they have so proven themselves that if they want to come personally, I don't think they will be refused. Also some people in our school who have been with us for a long time and who are satisfactory, if they want to stay to serve the Ashram, I don't think they will be refused.

Q: When the Divine Mother has withdrawn from her physical frame, who at present will guide the sadhaks in their spiritual pursuits? Are individual sadhaks left to their own capabilities and inner receptiveness to the Mother's abiding but intangible action? But in case of spiritual crises and confusions, whom should they approach now?

A: The answer is in those words, "the Mother's abiding but intangible action". Well, that's it! And if they need some person to go to, I suppose they have their teachers who can guide them. Or they can go to anyone they have confidence in.

Q: Can you please enlighten us [Impossible ... I can't] on how you personally envisage the future of the Ashram as a spiritual institution? Is there any risk that with the passage of time its spiritual character may get diluted?

A: Though Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are not physically there, it is primary knowledge that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were not merely physical beings, they are consciousnesses. Sri Aurobindo has promised to be here in the earth consciousness till the work is done — and people who are capable of seeing him do see him — and the same applies in the case of the Mother: you can see her, you can feel her — then where is the question?

I shall illustrate my point with an example. I have a friend who is not a very brave man — normally. He doesn't even like to go by air. Once he got into a plane with his wife, but was so frightened that he told her, "Let us get down, jump out, otherwise when the plane goes up, we'll be killed." Now, that man had unfortunately a grave disease, cancer — cancer of the throat. The doctor said he must have suffered greatly, he was at times choking to death. But looking at him you would not know that he was suffering. He was not only calm when people were there, but when he used to be alone in the hospital, he used to swing his legs (like that) and nobody who is suffering can do that kind of a thing. Therefore my inference is he was not suffering; but the doctors said he must have suffered greatly. So the suffering was not felt because there was some intervention. What does that show? One thing — some power did that for him. So that power acts very concretely. That's only one example: there are many others. And remember, these great personages when they say something, they mean it. When they say that they will be there till the work is finished, you can take it that they are here. So this fear is not quite well founded.

Q: How is our Ashram organisationally run nowadays? Are important decisions collectively taken? In case of divergence of opinion among those who count, who gives the final decision?

A: Well, no one gives the final decision. The decisions are collective but not forced. How is that possible? It is possible because the real authority does not lie with any person, it lies in the correctness of the decision one takes. So when a problem comes up, it has been found that, although in the beginning there may be many opinions, all these people who gather together, who are supposed to be the Trustees, come to an unanimous decision — at least so far they have done so. I have learnt that in Japan, in business meetings, they don't decide by votes; they come to a consensus. I have found that no one has to compromise his views here. Even then there has not been till now any great difference when it came to the question of taking decisions.

Q: Is our Ashram tending to maintain the status quo in all matters of importance, or is it contemplating venturing out into new developmental activities? If so, who decides whether these ventures and innovations are in perfect accord with the Divine Mother's will or not?

A: This question I have not understood.... If there is any specific question — I might try to answer it.

One thing is certain, nothing remains stationary. But remember, we have a job to do. What is that job? The job of Transformation — not done yet. Anything that helps this will definitely be considered.

Q: So long as the Mother was there in her physical embodiment, all our mutual relations in this Ashram were centred in her, routed through her. Now when she has physically withdrawn, we the young children of the Mother feel a great loss. For, sometimes we feel that there is a communication gap between the senior members of the Ashram and the younger generation here. Is it a happy situation? If not, how to rectify it?

A: If you feel that there is a communication gap — what steps have you taken to bridge that gap? Have you approached your teachers? Have you been rebuffed? Or have you approached anyone you think should be approached and have you been rebuffed? Well, what gives rise to this kind of question? I suggest that in case of any real difficulty you approach some people. If I knew the person who has this problem, I could tell him, “Go to so and so”, but not knowing the particulars I can’t answer very fruitfully.

Q: Why did the Divine Mother decide to leave her physical frame without apparently completing the task of transformation that Sri Aurobindo is purported to have entrusted to her? We feel at times totally confused when we come across so many different views and conjectures and theories published in the pages of Mother India and other Ashram journals. Can you please help us in this matter, giving us your considered view, based perhaps on your personal experience?

A: There will be another confusion! My considered view is this: we have a job to do, let us finish that job. Believe me that the Mother has not left us and will not leave us till the work is done.

Q: What are the prospects of Indian technology in developing countries?

A: You want to export your Indian technology? Well, prospects are bright. I am quite friendly with some of the concerns who are at present working in Venezuela, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and even Iran.

Q: In which fields?

A: Technology — power, cement, paper....

Q: Can the Ashram become a self-sufficient community, economically, without depending heavily on financial offerings from outside?

A: This is a very important question. I can only give you my personal opinion. It may not be the opinion of the Ashram as a whole or of the Trustees.

My opinion is that we should not put too much stress on self-sufficiency. De-

crease wastage by all means.... Why am I saying this? This is based on my conversation with the Mother sometime in 1957. In those days we used to go to the Mother in the mornings. She used to stand at the head of the staircase. When I went up there one morning, she called me aside and said she had had quite a lot of money but she had spent everything on the maintenance of the Ashram. At that moment she had nothing. And the Ashram must go on. But if people did not appreciate the necessity of this Ashram and did not give the money that was necessary then she would disband the Ashram and go to the Himalayas. Remember the words: "If people did not give the money to support the Ashram, she would disband the Ashram and go to the Himalayas." Of course, the money came and she did not go to the Himalayas, as you can see. So based on that I do not think she had the idea of making the Ashram particularly self-sufficient. But she always insisted on reducing wastage.

If some people want to produce something they may do so. But too much of business, I find, may distract our attention from the main purpose. Of course, all depends on individuals — some people may want to do something, that way lies their self-expression. For me, I did not get any idea from the Mother that she wanted the Ashram to try, above all, to be self-sufficient.

TWO INSIGHTS

WHAT IS SURRENDER?

To close the entrance
To all lovers
Except the Supreme Lover.

And then
To live in His embrace
Moment to moment
And for ever.

It is something almighty
But has no pride in being the mightiest.

HARMONY, UNITY, LOVE

Is there only one Harmony, one Unity
and one Love?

No.

They are, each one of them, many.

Then the question is:

Who is to solve this problem of one
and many?

And the answer is:

None except the Supreme Master.

GIRDHARLAL

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

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1975)

V

Sarvam Brahma: The Key to the Interpretation of the Upanishads

THERE is one fundamental practical condition the fulfilment of which is equivalent to the fulfilment of all the three conditions of scriptural interpretation — submissiveness to the scripture without reservations: in this condition it is not possible to think of a greater means to the knowledge of Brahman than the scripture; it is also not possible to exclude, directly or indirectly, some texts in favour of certain other texts of the scripture; it is not possible either to study the scripture with a purpose other than that of an exegete. Stated in objective terms it comes to this: *the scripture is its own authority*. Hence Sri Aurobindo's declaration:

The Sruti itself is the only eternal authority on the Sruti.⁴³

What is the meaning of this formula? For exegetical purposes the scripture may be broadly divided into two parts: the part comprising statements about Brahman from different points of view where it is difficult to find how they are related to each other, where the harmonising idea is presupposed rather than stated; the part consisting of statements about Brahman which suggests the harmonising idea making it possible for a harmonious arrangement of the statements of the other part. It is precisely in this idea that we discover the *logic* of the scripture. Needless to say, here one part of the scripture is understood in the light of another part. This is what we call interpreting the scripture by the scripture. The harmonising idea is to the scripture what Brahman is to the world: by knowing this all else in the scripture is known.⁴⁴

It is extremely difficult to discover that part of the scripture where the harmonising idea is waiting to be sought and known. It is a point of crucial test for many commentators including Shankara. Often it has proved a point of shipwreck to all of them, for none of them was prepared for the total submissiveness demanded of them as exegetes. No doubt Sri Aurobindo, playing the part of an exegete, imposed on himself a condition of total submissiveness to the scripture.

(a) The humility of the seeker after truth in the presence of one of its masters is, I have thought, the proper attitude of the exegete. In the presence of these

sacred writings, so unfathomably profound, so infinitely vast in their sense, so subtly perfect in their language, we must be obedient to the text and not presume to subject it ignorantly to our notions.⁴⁵

(b) Any apparent incoherence, any want of logical relation and succession of thought in the text must exist by our deficiency of understanding and not in the Seer's deficiency of thinking. This view I base upon my constant experience of the Upanishads; for I have always found in the end that the writers thought clearly and connectedly and with a perfect grasp of their subject; for my own haste, ignorance and immaturity of spiritual experience has always been convicted in the end of the sole responsibility for any defect imputed by the presumption of the logical understanding to the revealed scripture.⁴⁶

Hence the scripture revealed itself to Sri Aurobindo, placing into his hands the master-key to the true and integral understanding of the Upanishads. By reason of this unique position Sri Aurobindo is far beyond the deficiencies of Shankara. In practice as a commentator Sri Aurobindo cannot be convicted of the errors of his counterpart.

The originality of Sri Aurobindo's commentaries on the Upanishads is largely due to his discovery of this master-key. It is true that he wrote these commentaries in the light of his profound spiritual knowledge. But unless there is a parallel in the scripture to that knowledge it is not possible to write such commentaries. When we talk of that part of the scripture which holds the harmonising idea or the master-key, we only refer to such a parallel. Though he keeps this key in his mind when he writes his commentaries on the Upanishads, nowhere does he raise the question about the importance or discovery of that key in the Upanishads. So far researches in the writings of Sri Aurobindo also do not seem to have touched this point, namely, the source of his method of interpretation of the scripture. But once we raise the question it is not so easy to answer it. Perhaps here too, to find the answer, a kind of submissiveness to the writings of Sri Aurobindo is asked of us, a submissiveness analogous to the one referred to above. I submit that Sri Aurobindo must have found the key in the texts which talk of Brahman as all, *sarvam brahma*.

The Upanishads speak of three kinds of realities: the individual (The inner Self of all beings: Svet., 6.11), the universal (The person is truly this whole world, whatever has been and whatever will be: Svet. 3.15) and the transcendental (Greater and other than Time and Form and the Tree of the Cosmos: Svet. 6.6). Brahman is not only separately each of them but also simultaneously all of them. It is with the pronounced intention of knowing the reality as a whole that the Mundaka asks the important question:

What is that by knowing which every thing is known?⁴⁷

Another Upanishad speaks affirmatively that all these realities are simultaneously Brahman:

Sarvam khalu idam brahma, Verily all this that is is Brahman.⁴⁸

Sri Aurobindo regards this as the 'fundamental tenet of the Vedanta in the Upanishads⁴⁹ as 'the best' and 'the highest' because it 'embraces all other truths whether truths of this world or of other worlds or beyond all phenomenal existence'.⁵⁰ Mark the word Sri Aurobindo uses: 'embraces'. It brings out the idea of simultaneous reference.

The Gita, which is a practical exposition of the truths of the Vedanta, is aware of the central significance of the above text and reaffirms it in its own language.

Vasudevaḥ sarvam iti, All is Vasudeva.⁵¹

Unfolding the significance of this, Sri Aurobindo writes:

a) This is what is intended by the phrase, *Vasudevaḥ sarvam iti*; the Godhead is all that is the universe and all that is in the universe and all that is more than the universe⁵²

b) The Divine Being is all, *vāsudevaḥ sarvam*, and therefore if he is known integrally.....then all is known.....⁵³

The Gita, like the Upanishad, teaches that the Divine Being or Brahman is simultaneously the universal (all that is the universe), the individual (all that is in the universe), and the transcendent (all that is more than the universe) Note the word 'integral' (*vide* footnote: 53). Again it indicates the idea of simultaneous reference. In short, the concept of *sarvam brahma* is a concept of the integral Brahman that is at once the transcendent, the universal and the individual.

The concept of the integral Brahman appears to be very difficult to comprehend. The transcendent is neither the universal nor the individual, hence Brahman is indeterminate. The universal and individual are expressions of the power of self-limitation, hence Brahman is determinate and not indeterminate. As a result it amounts to a contradiction to say that Brahman is all these at once. The difficulty is due to a two-fold error, conceptual and verbal: conceptual, because we fail to understand that indeterminability (negation) and determination (affirmation), as *ideas* applied to the Indivisible, should not be treated as relevant to what is divided by space and time; verbal, because we fail to remember that indeterminability and determination, as *words* used in the context of the Illimitable, should not be regarded as applicable to a context of rigid definitions and irreconcilable oppositions. The failure is due chiefly to the fact that our notions of indeterminability and determination, negation and affirmation, have developed originally in response to a need for geometrical precision of ideas and words. In other words, when we apply these notions to Brahman we forget that we are referring to the Indivisible and Illimitable. Or, to put it differently, when we come across these notions in the scripture referring to Brahman we forget the real con-

text of the scripture, the context of the Indivisible and Illimitable, and think of the original context of these notions, the context of rigid linguistic definitions and logical oppositions. The remedy for overcoming the difficulty is to remember the real context of the scripture and the need for understanding the notions of indeterminability and determination in accordance with that context. If we do so, indeterminability and determination would cease to be contradictory notions and present themselves as complementary ones.

What do these notions mean in the context of Brahman as the Illimitable? The Illimitable is free illimitably. Brahman is indeterminable in the sense that it is free from limitation by anything other than itself, as also limitation by its self-determinations. It is not a negation of determinations but only of the restraining effect of them. Otherwise Brahman would be bound by one determination or by a sum of determinations. A Brahman so bound is not really illimitable. The indeterminability does not mean that Brahman is incapable of self-determinations. If so, Brahman is bound by its freedom from self-determinations. Again, a Brahman so bound is not really illimitable. In fact, Brahman, though free from self-determinations, is not bound by that freedom. It is the natural and necessary condition of its freedom of self-determinations. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

The Absolute is not limitable or definable by any one determination or by any sum of determinations; on the other side, it is not bound down to an indeterminable vacancy of pure existence. On the contrary, it is the source of all determinations; its indeterminability is the natural, the necessary condition both of its infinity of being and its infinity of power of being; it can be infinitely all things because it is nothing in particular and exceeds any definable totality.⁵⁴

In the context of Brahman the Illimitable, we discover that there is no real opposition between indeterminability and determination. Between negation and affirmation, between the transcendent that negates self-determination, and the universal and individual that affirm the power of self-limitation. The negation is not really negative but positive: if Brahman as the universal and individual *affirms* its freedom of self-determination, as the transcendent it *affirms* its greater freedom from self-determination. They are but "obverse and reverse affirmations" of the freedom of Brahman. Then the opposition between indeterminability and determination disappears. It is quite conceivable now that Brahman can be all the three at the same time: the transcendent, the universal, and the individual.

The concept of the integral Brahman, *sarvam brahma*, is really a concept of absolute or integral freedom of Brahman, *sarva svatantram brahma*. It is freedom *of* as well as freedom *from* self-limitation. Such is the real meaning of the Vedantic text, *sarvam brahma*.⁵⁵ It is in this context that the ancient sages spoke simultaneously of Brahman as both *neti neti* and *iti iti*. Sri Aurobindo writes:

The ancient sages spoke indeed of Brahman negatively — they said of it, *neti neti*, it is not this, it is not that—but they took care also to speak of it positively; they said of it too, it is this, it is that, it is all; for they saw that to limit it either by positive or negative definitions was to fall away from its truth.⁵⁶

The credit of bringing out the significance of *sarvam brahma* as the Brahman of integral freedom goes entirely to Sri Aurobindo. In this respect he is easily the foremost among the later Vedantic thinkers. By itself his insight into the idea of *sarvam brahma* is remarkable indeed. It is much more so when we know that this has enabled him to offer the most natural and synthetic interpretation of the Upanishads, to understand the ancient wisdom even as the ancients themselves understood it.

VI. The Affirmative and Negative Texts: Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation

Now that the harmonising idea in the scripture is found out the rest of the work is to take the conflicting texts and present them in the context of that idea. Every time we try to interpret the conflicting texts in this way we are made to see that the conflict is not so much in the texts themselves as in our understanding of them, their ideas and words. It is by an illegitimate transference of our deficiencies to the scripture that we see inconsistencies and conflicts in the texts. Hence in interpreting the scripture we are only trying to modify our way of thinking in such a manner that it conforms to the way of knowing natural to the thoughts of the scripture. Referring to the need for such a change in understanding the scripture, Sri Aurobindo writes:

Our way of knowing must be appropriate to that which is to be known.⁵⁷

Since our purpose is merely to illustrate, we shall choose a few conflicting texts and interpret them from the standpoint of Sri Aurobindo.

(a) The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says:

There are two forms of Brahman, the formed and the formless.⁵⁸

(b) The Svetasvatara Upanishad states:

He is the possessor of qualities.⁵⁹ He is absolute without qualities.⁶⁰

These texts set forth conflicting views about Brahman. To resolve the conflict we have only to recognise the wide and flexible meaning of these statements. We have to disabuse our mind of the habit of forgetting the real context of these statements and of taking them in the ordinary linguistic context of narrow and rigid definitions. This we can do only when we awake to the central significance of the concept of *sarvam*

brahma. This is what Sri Aurobindo does while interpreting the texts. Let us quote from Sri Aurobindo in order to interpret the texts in question. First the Brihadaran-yaka:

The Divine Being ... is at once Form and the Formless.... The formlessness is the character of spiritual substance, the spiritual substance of the Reality; all finite realities are powers, forms, self-shapings of that substance: the Divine is formless and nameless, but by that very reason capable of manifesting all possible names and shapes of beings. Forms are manifestations, not arbitrary inventions out of nothing; for line and colour, mass and design which are the essentials of form carry always in them a significance, are, it might be said, secret values and significances of an unseen reality made visible; it is for that reason that figure, line, hue, mass, composition can embody what would be otherwise unseen, can convey what would be otherwise occult to the sense.⁶¹

The apparent contradiction does not correspond to a real opposition; the Formless is not a negation of the power of formation, but the condition for the Infinite's free formation: for otherwise there would be a single Form or only a fixity or sum of possible forms in a finite universe.⁶²

Now to turn to the other text of the Svetasvatara:

A quality is the character of a power of conscious being; or we may say that the consciousness of being expressing what is in it makes the power it brings out recognisable by a native stamp on it which we call quality or character.... So too the power of a drug to cure is its property, a special force of being native to the herb or mineral from which it is produced.... All qualities, properties, features are such powers of conscious being thus put forth from itself by the Absolute; It has everything within it, It has the free power to put all forth; yet we cannot define the Absolute as a quality of courage or a power of healing, we cannot even say that these are a characteristic feature of the Absolute, nor can we ... speak of the Absolute as a pure blank incapable of manifesting these things; on the contrary all capacity is there, the powers of all qualities and characters are there inherent within it.... Here ... it is undue finiteness of thought conception and verbal expression which creates the difficulty, but there is in reality none....⁶³

The statement of illimitable freedom (*i.e.* the Absolute without qualities) is positive, not negative; it does not negate ... but on the contrary provides an indispensable condition for ... a free and infinite self-expression in quality and feature.⁶⁴

So interpreted the texts cease to be contradictory. On the contrary they comple-

ment each other. The key to the reconciliation of the affirmative and negative texts is to be found in the saving word of Sri Aurobindo:

All affirmations are denied only to lead to a wider affirmation of the same Reality.⁶⁵

(Concluded)

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NOTES

43. *Supplement*, p. 305.
44. Cf. *Mund*, I.I.3.
45. *Supplement*, p. 302.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
47. *Mund.*, I.I.3.
48. *Chand*, 3.14 I.
49. *Supplement*, p. 328.
50. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 2. ABCL, 1972, p. 722
51. *The Gita*, 7.19.
52. *EG*, p. 301
53. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
54. *LD.*, p. 316
55. It is not without significance that the chapter expounding the integral freedom of Brahman in *LD* has as one of its epigraphs the *Gita* text, *vasudevah sarvam iti*. *Vide LD*, p. 295.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 378
57. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
58. *Brihad*, 2 3.1.
59. *Sveta*, 6.16.
60. *Ibid.*, 6.11.
61. *LD.*, p. 337.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 334-35.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

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 July 1975)

(8)

TEILHARD'S "MOMENTS OF TRUTH", HIS COMMITMENT TO PANTHEISM, 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

(b)

WITH "the universal Centre" of Teilhard revealed in a "moment of truth" as essentially, though not exclusively, pantheistic, the single problem remaining over in connection with this Centre is the nature and destiny of the "monads that concentrate around it". Here Teilhard's cynical contention is, as a later text has it, that in a pantheism like the Vedantic "the elementary egos" disappear, whereas in his own theory "they reinforce one another as they come together".¹ The reason for the difference lies, according to him, in the absence of "love" in the Vedantic consummation. Referring to Teilhard's differentiation of the Vedanta's "Inexpressible" from St. John of the Cross's, de Lubac further cites *Comment je vois* (no. 27) to say: "... it is 'love that enables us to distinguish' those two inexpressibles."²

The theme of love, along with the question of destiny of the individual soul loving God and being loved by Him, keeps recurring in Teilhard. This theme and that question attain perhaps their most succinct expression when he sums up the supposed incompatibles, the "two converse forms" or "two isotopes" of Spirit — the Vedantic and the Christian pantheisms: "Pantheism of identification, at the opposite pole of love: 'God is all'. And pantheism of unification, beyond love: 'God all in all'."³ Zaehner⁴ also, refers to the incompatibles in a translation by himself of the above phrase. "God all in all" is a key-refrain in Teilhard and he interprets St. Paul's words to involve a three-fold truth: a persistence of the human person even in its final

¹ *Activation of Energy* (Collins, London, 1970), p 221.

² *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 332, note 15

³ *Activation of Energy*, p. 225.

⁴ *Evolution in Religion. A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p 20

consummation in the Divine Being, a persistence due to a basic difference between soul and God as between creature and creator, a persistence rendering possible by virtue alone of such a difference that supreme relationship — love — between soul and God, since there can be no love if there is no “Other”. In Teilhard’s eyes, pantheism is excluded as well as found wanting by the Pauline “God all in all”.

An element significant to Teilhard in his argument is the way he construes St. Paul’s phrase. The Greek runs: *theos panta en pasin*. The Latin is: *deus omnia in omnibus*. Here *pasin* and *omnibus* can be read either in the neuter gender or in the masculine; “all” can be equated to “everyone”, “all persons”, as well as to “everything”, “all things”. As Zaehner¹ shows by his quotation from Teilhard, Teilhard translates *en pasin* and *in omnibus* not by “*en tout*” (neuter) but by “*en tous*” (masculine). De Lubac² also makes a note of the point and lends Teilhard the support of an eminent Pauline exegete Fernand Prat: “... Teilhard habitually translates Paul’s *en pasin* (*in omnibus*), ... as Prat does by ‘in all’ (*en tous*) and not ‘in all things’. His universe is a personal universe.” Thus the separate existence of souls, instead of their pantheistic submergence, is sought to be emphasised. In one context Teilhard³ has: “everything to everyone.” This reading can be matched from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible as well as the Moffat translation, in contrast to the Jerusalem Bible and the New English Bible which follow the older rendering “all in all”. The unusual reading removes the Pauline phrase from the arena of controversy over pantheism. We shall come to the new universe of discourse later. At the moment we may add only that Zaehner, although sticking to the Teilhardian metaphysical “slant”, is himself not consistent. In one place he⁴ translates: “God, whole in all things” — thereby employing the neuter gender.

Actually the issue of genders involves hair-splitting. The distinction is not crucial so long as we keep the formula within the scope of conflict between pantheism and non-pantheism. For, “all things”, broadly speaking, can include persons no less than objects and may even be taken exclusively to mean them. Otherwise N. M. Wildiers⁵ would not be able to write: “the return of Christ must be prepared for by the gradual building up of the Mystical Body, that is, the unification of all men around and in Christ — for the total Christ consists of a Head *and* the members. All things are to be brought into unity under the one Head, Christ (*recapitulare omnia in Christo*: Eph. I. 9-10), so that the whole world is made the ‘pleroma’ (fullness, the completion of Christ).” Wildiers quite legitimately makes *omnia* cover the totality of human beings. And the role the word plays here, as in several other places in the Pauline Epistles, is akin to the one called for in *pasin* or *omnibus* if this locution is taken to mean the

¹ *Ibid.*, p 15

² *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning* (A Menton-Omega Book, The New American Library, New York, 1967), p. 40.

³ *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), p 151.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵ *Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin* (Fontana Books, Collins, London, 1968), p 20

members collected in the pleromatic Mystical Body by the Head. Such a role strongly pleads for the neuter gender in this locution.

Be that as it may, can we really drive a division down to bedrock between "God is all" and "God all in all"? The very logic of all-ness, in whatever shape, should involve a basis of the One. If in all entities God is the whole reality—and that is what is meant by His being "all" in them — then, in spite of their continuing as themselves, God must be their essential constituent. This would not be the case if He were just something or the main thing or the most thing in them: He is said to be everything. No ultimate room is left for any reality except Him. Hence, essentially, none can be other than He, though existentially all may retain their individual characters as modes or phases of the One. The pantheism of unification must have for its ground the pantheism of identification.

Indeed, to read the latter as implicit in the Pauline formula would seem the natural procedure even from the fact of linguistic usage. The naiveté of making out of that formula a special case for the preservation of personality in the Universal is perceived as soon as we attend to H. D. Lewis's account of the non-Christian type of mysticism "which claims that, in the last analysis, the distinction between us and God disappears". Lewis¹ writes: "We become God or are absorbed in the being of God, or we realise that, rightly understood, the distinction between finite beings and God is an illusion. God is strictly all in all..." The Pauline formula really takes away the stress from any ever-separate finite personality.

The naiveté of Christianising pantheism on the strength of St. Paul's words can be linguistically exposed by looking at the very definition of pantheism as originally given. "The term 'pantheist'", says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,² "was introduced by John Toland..., who also gives its essential tenets: 'All things in the world are one. What's all in all things is God' (*Pantheisticon*, 1770, part ii)."

St. Paul himself took his formula from a pantheist context. Teilhard³ refers in general to the latter when observing how philosophers of all times have followed the poets by making intellectual constructions of their concern for the Whole: "There is no need for me to labour the point — you can see it in the powerful ventures into monism of the earliest Greek philosophers, and in the Alexandrians' subtle attempts to establish the existence of the Logos, and in the Stoics' contemplation of the soul of the world." Mgr. Lucien Cerfaux⁴ focuses our attention on St. Paul's source in the last-named of Teilhard's examples with the most relevant exactitude: "The ancient Stoic formulas, pantheist in tone, the identity of the one with the whole, God all in all, are Christianized." The specific expression under debate may have been Christianised, but Teilhard's claim that it is totally at variance with "God

¹ *Philosophy of Religion* (Teach Yourself Books, English University Press, London, 1965), p. 199.

² Ed 1960, Vol 17, "Pantheism", p. 190, col. 1.

³ *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 59.

⁴ *Le Chrétien dans la Théologie paulienne* (1962), p. 212

is all" and can only involve a "Christian pantheism", in which the soul is persistently other than God, is false. It was, in St. Paul's own time, vitally associated with pantheist paganism and, whatever Cerfaux may say, it is doubtful whether the old content can quite be washed out of the form unless we take the Apostle to have used the expression in an entirely different manner that had no bearing on any issue between a pagan pantheism and a Christian one.

If we are to save St. Paul from all taint of the former we shall have to change the universe of discourse in which Teilhard has put his phrase. In relation to pantheism the phrase can either introduce an emphasis on a particular shade of it or be just an emphatic manner of saying the same thing. Cut off from it, we must take the ordinary dictionary meaning¹—namely, "of paramount or exclusive importance"—and link it with the specific posture of the terms within the Pauline declaration. Zaehner² has given the precise context: "Through Christ and his Church the human race is destined to grow together until 'everything is subjected to him [and] then the Son himself will be subject in his turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all.'³" Play is obviously made here of the Son having been at one time of paramount or exclusive importance in connection with the whole Creation and of his being now withdrawn from that role, because he had fulfilled the end set up for it, and giving place to God the Father who had accorded to him that primacy — with the result that now God has paramount or exclusive importance.

This understanding of the passage has actually been a widely accepted interpretation, both among Roman Catholics and Protestants. Claude J. Peifer,⁴ O.S.B., has the gloss.... "on the last day, when Christ will have become master of all creation then he will also subject himself to the Father. Then God himself will be in direct contact with all of redeemed creation; there will no longer be any need of a mediator." *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*⁵ also makes the point that God's being all in all is in reference to Christ's "mediatorial kingdom" coming to an end. The same point is implicit in Matthew Henry's reading⁶ which goes on to opine that Christ's delivering up the kingdom to God will show that during his administration as sovereign king he was a subject of God and that his glorified humanity on which divinity and power had been conferred was no more than a glorious creature and that though human nature had to be employed in the work of our redemption God alone has the honour of it and it was altogether divine and His doing.

Most interestingly, Prat himself can be pressed into support of the old reading.

¹ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Fifth Edition (1964), p. 32, col. 1.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

³ I Corinthians, 15. 28.

⁴ *First Corinthians, Second Corinthians* (New Testament Reading Guide, The Liturgical Press, Coleville, Minnesota, 1960), p. 56.

⁵ Edited by James Hastings (T & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1937), Vol. V, p. 366, col. 1.

⁶ *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Marshall, London; Morgan T. Scott, Edinburgh, 1953), Vol. VI, p. 590, col. 2, p. 591, col. 1.

Referring to Ephesians I. 23, where occur the noun *pleroma*, the participle *pleroumenou* and also the expression *ta panta en pasin*, Prat¹ writes that the sense of "completing" for the participle and of "complement" for the noun is "as simple as it is natural". He proceeds to discuss whether the participle should be taken in the transitive voice, so as to "obtain the antithesis: 'The Church is the complement of him who completes all things.'" But he concludes that it is "preferable" to take the participle "in the passive voice (who is completed) or still better in the reflexive (who completes himself)". Defending this construction he continues: "There is no objection to the accusative *ta panta*, for this is an adverbial expression signifying 'in every way, entirely' (Herodotus, i, 122; v, 97; Xenophon, *Anab.* II, i, 1: *otomenoi ta panta nikan*. Cf., Scott's *Lexicon*." Then Prat² adds: "It is well to consult the erudite article of J. Armitage Robinson, 'The Church as Fulfilment of the Christ' (in *The Expositor*, fifth series, vol. viii, 1898, pp. 241-259). The author compares our text with Col. i, 24.... He regards the expression *ta panta en pasin* [in our text] as a sort of adverbial expression, similar to the English 'all in all' or to the Classical Greek *pantapasin*, but with more emphasis, and he invites us to compare I. Cor. xii, 6; xv, 28; Col. iii, 11.³ Finally, he quotes in favour of his exegesis the ancient Latin version [of the latter part of Eph. I. 23]: *supplementum ejus qui omnia et in omnibus impletur*, also the first Syriac version, the Coptic version, St. John Chrysostom, and above all the very acute commentary of Origen, which the biblical catenae have preserved to us."

In view of Prat's warm recommendation of Robinson's reading — a reading which enlists as an example the very formula (I Corinthians 15.28) we are pondering — we cannot attach great importance to his use of "en tous". We may look on it as a tentative passing thought.

As for "everything to everyone", it takes St. Paul's formula outside the pantheism-question, because the preposition "in" which would be pertinent to that question is missing. Hence it cannot but get equated to the sense: "of paramount or exclusive importance."

Incidentally, from Prat's citation we derive a new light on the pantheism-question. In case that issue is valid, what shall we make of the formulas from I Colossians 3. 11: *ta panta kai en pasin Christos* — "Christ is all, and in all", and from the latter part of Ephesians I. 23 in the ancient Latin version: *omnia et in omnibus*? We get a banding together of sheer pantheism and pantheism à la Teilhard, as if they had to be vitally interconnected. "God is all" and "God all in all" are shown up as indivisible. But, of course, the whole issue of pantheism in Paul's utterance of this type is irrelevant.

¹ *The Theology of Saint Paul* (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London & Dublin, 1945), Vol. I, p. 298, fn. 2.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 298-99, second half of fn. 2.

³ The phrases for comparison are: "... the same God which worketh all in all" — "that God may be all in all" — "... Christ is all, and in all". (*The New Testament*, according to the received Greek text, together with the English Authorised Version, Cambridge, 1899), pp. 434, 448, 502.

Teilhard seems to have wrested Paul's phrase out of its true setting of significance and tried to render the violence plausible by calling in the aid of a grammatical *nuance*. His entire attempt to clinch the issue of Christian pantheism by way of Paul's Pleroma is misguided.

His deprecation of the essential oneness of things and his casting about for any means to buttress himself in it stems from his idea that if there is oneness there can be no differentiation and without differentiation there can be no love. He lacks the insight which the original Vedanta had and which Sri Aurobindo summarises in some old notes found among his papers:

"God is the All and that which exceeds, transcends the All; there is nothing in existence which is not God but God is not anything in that existence, except symbolically, in image to His own consciousness...¹ He is always one in His being, yet both one and separate from His symbols, and in that differentiated oneness able to stand quite apart from them...²it is the privilege of spirit that though indivisible in its pure being, it is freely self-divided in its conscious experience and can concentrate itself in many states at a time. It is by this Tapas, by this varied concentration of self-knowledge that Divine Existence creates and supports the world and is at once the same God and Nature and World, Personal and Impersonal, Pure and Varied, Qualified and without Qualities, Krishna and Kali and Shiva and Brahma and Vishnu, man and animal and vegetable and stone, all aspects of Himself and all symbols. We need not doubt therefore that we, recovering our divine reality, shall not be bound to a single condition or aspect...³ we too in our ultimate divine realisation, when we have become one with our divine Self, may and should be able to stand out as the self at once of all things and beings, yet differentiated in the symbol, so as to enjoy a blissful divided closeness such as that of the Lover and Beloved mingling yet separate in their rapture; and may and should even be able to stand away from God with a sort of entire separateness holding His hand still, unlike the pure dualist, but still standing away from Him so that we may enjoy that infinity of human relation with God which is the wonder and beauty and joy of dualistic religions. To accomplish this is the full or Purna Yoga and the Sadhak who can attain to it is in his condition the complete Yogin."⁴

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *The Hour of God* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1959), p. 31

² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

A MODERN MYTH

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1975)

Act III

OLD WOMAN'S VOICE from the wings: Now let's see how he defies me!

(The Woman marches onto the stage followed by Dragon, who is sniffing around in a curious sort of way. She suddenly sees the new pictures, and gasps, even more horrified than the Man had been.)

THE WOMAN: *(Absolutely beside herself)* Vandals! Thieves! Desecrators! What mockery is this of my house? SACRILEGE!!!

No! I won't stand for it. *(She charges up to one picture after another as if to destroy each one, but is forced to shrink back every time.)*

(Raising her arms before her eyes to shield herself) No, no — spare me your curses! Away the evil magic of your gaze — *She lets out a loud wail.*) Ruin! I'm ruined. My house, my temple all ruined — defiled. O wicked Gods, wicked, heartless fate *(she says all this a little melodramatically, as she can never quite avoid playing the Prima Donna. Then she weeps, disconsolate. Meanwhile Dragon for the first time is acting independently of her. He is creeping and sniffing about the stage obviously looking for something. He is even muttering to himself distractedly.)*

DRAGON: Here? No. Here? Lost, lost. But Dragon look, Dragon find...here... maybe here...

(After Dragon has made a full circuit of the stage, Unicorn flashes across and dances briefly but spectacularly.)

DRAGON: *(Watching and clasping his forepaws to his heart, ecstatically)* It's there! It's there!

(Unicorn stops mid-stage. Dragon waddles up and lets out another admiring moan.)

DRAGON: *(Pointing at Unicorn)* You — beautiful!

(Unicorn circles around Dragon and then touches him with his horn. Suddenly Dragon ceases to be clumsy, and becomes lissome and beautiful too, by shedding his outer skin which falls away from him.)

DRAGON: *(Looking at himself)* It can't be true! It can't be true! But yes, I'm once again as I used to be long, long ages ago.

UNICORN: *(Joyfully)* As the Chinese seers saw you, all flashing blue and silver, as you flew through the sky in pursuit of the Jewel of Immortality —

DRAGON: Ah, noble, long-forgotten dream.

UNICORN: No dream, my friend, but once more a reality.

DRAGON: *(After a pause during which he once again examines himself)* What happened to me? I don't understand — all these aeons that have passed — that I

have waited for you in some forgotten corner of my heart and nowhere else through all my scale-encrusted body.

UNICORN: Yes, all those aeons that you carried all the Earth's burden of darkness on your back — you're a hero, you know.

DRAGON: And now at last I'm free again?

(Unicorn nods)

DRAGON: *(Looking adoringly at Unicorn, his deliverer)* I love you, Unicorn.

(Unicorn touches him again and they dance around each other with a stately grace.)

UNICORN: We shall fly again together. All the heavens are ours.

DRAGON: Forever...

(Suddenly, the Woman looks up — all this time she has been buried in her own sorrow — and lets out a little shriek of surprise.)

THE WOMAN: *(Pointing at Unicorn)* What's that thing? *(Then pointing at Dragon)* And you — you, what on earth has happened to you? Come here where you belong! Ah, but that *(looking again at Unicorn)*, it's frightening, I don't like it at all. What is it, What is it? *(distraught)*

DRAGON: A heavenly creature I will gladly follow to the ends of anywhere.

THE WOMAN: *(Horrorified)* You? You couldn't even follow an earth worm, you bag of scales.

DRAGON: But don't you see that I've shed those scales and sprouted wings?

THE WOMAN: *(Screaming)* You've been bewitched, don't you understand, you brainless beast? *(Muttering)* Could never tell the difference between a cucumber and a rhinoceros, and now it speaks of wings.

Once and for all, come here, you idiot.... Even if those ridiculous appendages did get you into the air, the sun would shrivel you up like a paper moth!

DRAGON: Let the sun do what it pleases. We will fly — we will fly together, my beloved...

(Unicorn and Dragon exit, looking ecstatically at one another.)

THE WOMAN: *(Horror-stricken)* It can't be that he's really gone — and left me all alone — so terribly alone? *(Looks around, distraught.)*

No, not one is left. No Man, no Son, no pet — not even one old, familiar picture to brighten up the house. Just crumpled bits of paper and splintered woodwork on the floor.

But what am I without them all? A wraith — just a deserted wraith. *(She weeps bitterly.)* Deserted, unwanted — just a scrap of flotsam in universal space. Ah, if it's so, it shall be so. My heart has gone out of me. My life force escapes — escapes... unwanted...unwanted alone into nothingness. *(She lies down to die, at the foot of her throne, with her head on the heap of clothes.)* Yet I can still see my little green globe spinning on along its trackless path untended...untended, around the white glory of the sun. Without me — without spirit through those terrible black vastnesses. Farewell, my bluegreen beauty — your life force slips from you, poor orphan — dissolves...passes...passes...

(The three Gods enter softly one by one. The Woman looks up and sees them.)

THE WOMAN: *(Dismayed)* Ah no, the Gods must visit when I am on my deathbed. How typically perverse. No, no, stay away. *(She gestures feebly.)* Visit my empty, dying earth, if you must, but don't approach me. Really, you have no sense at all. Don't you see that for me it's already too late? Don't you understand that it's not fitting to call on a shrunken old woman just when she's about to die? After all, dying is a very private affair. *(Peevishly)* Why couldn't you have come when I was a great queen — young and beautiful and strong, with my beautiful young earth in my arms — the most precious child of interstellar space? *(Miserably)* But of course, how could one expect that of the Gods, capricious beings who abandon one to the caverns of Fate when most one needs the light? Never yet have I seen any of you do anything in a sensible or logical manner. *(Grumbling to herself)* They *must* come to visit *only* in one's hour of ultimate shame.

LOVE: Earth Spirit...

THE WOMAN: *(Really exasperated now)* No, no, you mustn't look at me that way. Away, away! I tell you I have no need of anyone now. Long since has love dried in my heart; long since the love flowers of Spring ceased to bloom in my thoughts. *(Her strength ebbs and she whimpers.)* For goodness' sake leave me to a quiet death. *(She starts to sink into a coma but goes on speaking feebly.)* The death of an old haggard witch.... That's what you all think I am, isn't it? That old witch of Earth Spirit with all her ugly pictures and worn-out clothes...*(her voice trails off.)*

BEAUTY: *(Approaching)* My lady, I heard you some moments ago speak of your green, beautiful globe. That beauty came from you. It was *your* soul's gift.

THE WOMAN: Long ago when I was young, goddess. See me now and rejoice in Death.

(While this exchange has been going on, the Man and the Son have entered and are standing to one side. From the other side, Unicorn and Dragon appear. All four stay to watch with rapt attention. The Man still looks timid and unsure of himself as he clings to the Son. The other three are eager to see what will happen and are passionately interested in the outcome of it all.)

JOY: *(Stepping forward)* Seek not your joy in Death, blithe soul. Joy is the breath that lives forever.

WOMAN: Bright God, turn away those eyes of yours — those eyes that make me remember my brilliant hours of noon under a cerulean sky. I have pillaged my earth and squandered my breath away upon my creatures that were born, and that were destined to die after spending themselves utterly upon my whims, my games, my endless devices — that were so useless — all so useless.

LOVE: Earth Spirit, how clear your eyes have become. I see no clouding of Death upon them, nor any blindness of life — you were short-sighted once, remember?

WOMAN: It is because all illusion has passed from me, my child. Only a white void remains now before me.

UNICORN: *(Darting to centre stage to stand with the assembled Gods)* A white void is

a slate upon which the Gods form their thoughts and write their commands. Quickly now before the moment passes and Death himself rushes forward to take up the fateful pen.

LOVE: Revive, Earth Spirit, and let the oceans flow back into your heart. Each particle of water loves and seeks its source in the diamond core of your being. Deny that love no longer. It is too precious for Death's grim, blind embrace. Fling off your last sorry, faded dress. Adorn yourself instead in the soft petals of your forest flowers, and wrap around your shoulders the gossamer mantle of the soul's love — there is so much of it on that earth of yours that no one ever noticed or even thought of using — yet it is perfection itself.

WOMAN: Ah, the pain in my heart! can I bear it?

THE MAN: (*Crying out in great dismay*) O ye gods, do something! see how she suffers!

JOY: Yes, you will bear the pain, my queen, and you'll see that it will pass. Meanwhile, call back to yourself your green, lovely globe. The highlands are alive with the thawing of Winter, the vigour of March winds, and the skipping of squirrels among the pine needles. Men wander through valleys and along riversides aglow with plans for the coming year. None dreams of Death, yet all are so doomed by your decree. Fill with the joy they are breathing forth, Earth Spirit. Take back into yourself the delight of those you nurtured once. Too harsh and joyless a fate is such a death as you bring upon them all.

(*The Earth Spirit says nothing. She has fainted.*)

UNICORN: Ah no, she's unconscious!

MAN: (*Appalled*) Almighty Gods!

SON: (*In stage whisper*) Courage, Father. Something must surely come of this.

BEAUTY: (*With calm resolve*) Have no fear. I'll exercise the healing arts the gods have taught me. (*She places her hands on the Earth Spirit's shoulders.*) Earth Spirit, I take your life between my hands and offer it to the High Gods. The void shall not disperse that life, nor Death make a spoil of it and drag it to his lair. Instead, the High Gods shall look upon it with their calm, perfect eyes, and you shall know the truth of their inner will, the beauty you have forgotten, the loves and joys that have slipped away, the meanings that were once so clear but have been so mutilated by your long, exhausting trek through history.

(*There is perfect silence. The lights dim, and all on the stage freeze into immobility. Then slowly a soft, celestial music begins to play. Ever so gradually, the lights come back, with one difference. The back portion of the stage is also lighted to reveal the sage sitting immobile on his throne overlooking all the action.*)

Slowly, the Earth Spirit revives. She is completely transformed and god-like, but, to start with, is not entirely sure where she is — like a person reviving from anaesthesia.)

EARTH SPIRIT: Dear heaven, what kind of dream, what kind of nightmare...? But no, it was real — all real — all that happened through those long, cruel millennia.

(*She looks around, suddenly sees something, and breathes a huge sigh of relief.*) Ah,

thank the Gods, it's still there — my blue-green darling, my exquisite cosmic jewel, my globe spinning serenely on in space. My dearest love, my joy, my beauty, my child....

(Then as though talking to someone) We brought it up together didn't we, when we were young and so much in love — *(She suddenly stops short.)* Oh, but I *am* raving — I forget myself. He isn't even here, hasn't been since those ages that he left me. Like a mad-woman I have allowed myself to be transported back to my youth...

SAGE: *(From his high seat behind — all gasp as he begins to speak, for none has noticed him before)* Dearly beloved, I *am* indeed here. I have been waiting for you through time.

EARTH SPIRIT: *(Turning around and looking up, shocked)* I can't believe it — my Lord — sovereign of my heart. *(Edging closer to the sage, but not daring to ascend to the height of his throne)* But how can I approach you now? A moment ago, I thought it was you that deserted me, yet now I see that you fled from my own betrayal of you — how I betrayed your trust, Lord! How I plundered our inheritance. I am defiled and no longer fit to stand in your presence.

SAGE: Oh no, you shan't escape me so easily — now that I have found you again. *(He holds out his arms to her, and she climbs the steps to his throne as though hypnotized — slowly, not able to resist the pull of his call. When she reaches him she sinks down at his feet. He looks at her with the fondness of long intimacy.)* Remember our first earth season together? Remember the meadows and mountain slopes of our love, the wonder and beauty of your youth? You're still like that, you know. As beautiful, as rich, as captivating as you were then.

EARTH SPIRIT: My Lord, you make me blush, as I used to blush when I was still fresh with innocence. But now, how can you pass so lightly over what has passed in between, after you departed for your still heavens, and I could no longer see your face or feel your touch in every breath of air around me? The terror, the violence, the passion ...

SAGE: *(Interrupting)* Dearest, feel no shame, for you did your appointed work as I did mine. And you did it well. It was decreed from the very source of Being that your lovely Earth should be a hard training ground for its children. And that it has been — you have made it so as you were intended to do. Scarcely a hardship remained that you did not devise to test your creatures. Indeed you drove them to the very brink of extinction.

EARTH SPIRIT: *(Softly)* Indeed, I did. Yet now I find your heights more still and beautiful. My heart aches for the quiet balm of your presence. I see far below and behind me war and death, strife and cruelty and pain.

SAGE: All that has passed away.

EARTH SPIRIT: Only here in my heart, my Lord. But my little Earth continues in the habitual ways I so strictly taught it.

SAGE: Then we will teach it again.

EARTH SPIRIT: Have we not left it too long? Has Earth not learnt its lesson too well?

SAGE: Earth must learn again or die.

(At these words the Man is again seen to show great anguish. He is immediately comforted by the Son, and all strain forward to see what will happen next.)

EARTH SPIRIT: Yes, my Lord, but what must I do to save it?

SAGE: Come here, my dearest, and I will show you. The secret lies in this little box. *(He takes out a small box.)*

EARTH SPIRIT: *(Half rising to look at it better)* What is it, my Lord?

SAGE: The treasure of the earth I was entrusted to guard when I left you at the end of our last glorious Summer, before Earth history took its savage turn, and you were forced to go on your own harsh way alone.

EARTH SPIRIT: A treasure, how marvellous! I had forgotten that we ever *had* any treasures...but so small!

SAGE: Oh, yes, but it will expand.

EARTH SPIRIT: Enough to encompass the whole Earth?

SAGE: More than that, beloved. Enough to encompass infinity. Now open the box.

(All on the stage strain forward anew to see what is going to come out of the box. Earth Spirit takes it, stands up, and faces the audience as she takes off the lid. When she sees what is inside, she lifts it out and takes a deep, ecstatic breath.)

A rose! a fragrance! Dear God, was there ever such a fragrance in creation? It passes through my whole body, it swells, it warms, it vibrates.

(She turns to the Sage, enraptured.) I love you, my Lord, as I have never loved before. I love you — my small, perfect Earth spinning through the vasts of space.

May kindness enfold you and heal your poor wounds.

May every earth creature hereafter be born in joy — the tranquil, perfect joy of the Gods.

May terror and darkness pass from the hearts of my children.

May all dwell and breathe in the oceans of compassion that now flow through my being.

May my body be forever clothed in the petals of heaven's rose, refuge of all life.

(She remains standing for sometime as the spell sinks in, to the strains of heavenly music. Then finally, upon sensing the right moment, she sits down again at the Sage's feet and looks all around her.)

EARTH SPIRIT: It is done. All begins to change. All is born anew. *(She turns to the Sage.)* And now surely your exile is over, my Lord, and you can return with me to the new Earth that awaits us? So much yet remains to be done.

SAGE: Indeed, my beloved, nothing could keep me away — so keenly have I longed for this moment, this new beginning. *(Standing up, along with Earth Spirit, and slowly descending with her to stage level)* Come, my Godly children — the Earth beckons to us all, tender and flushed with expectation. We mustn't disappoint it.

(The Sage and the Earth Spirit descend majestically together from the Sage's high seat. All look toward the pair except for the Man who half turns away and covers his face with his hands. He then slowly releases himself from the Son's grip and begins to sink to his knees in a gesture of despair.)

The Earth Spirit comes to him and places her hand on his head.)

EARTH SPIRIT: Dear and faithful companion, why this despair in our hour of ultimate triumph?

THE MAN: *(Shaking his head hopelessly)* No...no. Now I'm the one who must be left to a quiet oblivion, an unnoticed dying out. I'll be a burden in this new world of yours — a big blundering burden.... *(He gets maudlin and begins to weep.)*

EARTH SPIRIT: *(With much compassion)* Really, how you do go on.

SAGE: Come, child, rise. It's not for any cosmic graveyard that you were created.

THE MAN: If not for a graveyard, then for what?

SAGE: Poor, weary soul. Do you think all your labour has been for nothing? And that we have no need of your hard-earned experience now? Ask the boy and he will tell you.

THE SON: *(Full of enthusiasm)* Enough of this, Father. Don't you understand what the great one has said? How can you suddenly collapse when all your dreams are just about to come true?

THE MAN: *(Slowly, very thoughtfully)* Dreams? Come true? Those vague, forbidden splendours of my deepest being? But can it be possible.... *(Rises hesitantly and looks around at the gathered assemblage.)*

UNICORN: *(Stepping forward)* Everything is possible. My golden horn shall attest to it.

DRAGON: *(Also stepping forward and holding up a large crystal ball)* And my Jewel shall illumine the way.

SAGE: *(Addressing Dragon)* Ah, so you have found it again.

DRAGON: *(Triumphantly)* Indeed I have. The Jewel of Immortality! After having soared through all the heavens in search of it.

EARTH SPIRIT: Come then, dear ones, the Earth calls.

RECORDED INCANTATION: *(As the cast forms into a stately procession and exits)*
United in love, the celestial ones carry the old earth man home.

In Joy, they escort earth's young son to his new kingdom.

In Beauty descend immaculate Unicorn, servant of the Divine Will, and heaven's Dragon bearing the Jewel of Immortality to the abodes of men once shadowed by death.

In love and splendour approach Earth Spirit, custodian of a little green globe spinning around a golden sun, and her divine Lord and eternal lover.

(CURTAIN)

BINA BRAGG

AUROVILLE

BENEATH the blue canopy of the sky
Burn the parched sands of Auroville —
A foetus growing in the womb of time,
Fathered by the Love of a Divine Dream.
The hot waves mock at the sweat
On the red flushed brow of an American;
His grey-brown beard flows smooth and long,
His face burns with the fire — of determination.

Inside neat houses of thatched leaves
Lie books — books of a thousand designs,
Their pages filled with lines of hope,
Of toil, of aspiration, of the entire earth's soul.
Outside, children frolic,
Their hearts pumping the blood of an international race;
Their laughter echoes refrains of an everlasting truth,
Little rivulets of joy run through their minds of peace.

Silent dark nights of patient waiting
Beside the quiet pool of tranquil emotion —
Overhead the stars smile in anticipation,
Watching tired muscle and weary sinew
Resting; the reward for an unquestioning labour
Comes in sleep; the awaiting of heavenly promises
And the Dream, the gorgeous golden beams of the morrow.

MOHAN VISWANATHAN

TO SOME FRIENDS

*If I could speak the fierce deep truth
That burns within me at your sight,
It would be this, though all might say
My words were wild, and far from right —*

“You are the fire within my fire,
The flame that keeps my flame alight,
A glowing hymn within my heart,
That being pure and deep and quiet
Would sing a song unto my soul
Of something radiant, soft and bright,
That shall transform my wind-tossed life,
And make me worthy of your height.
And though my own poor tiny fire
Is nothing in this vast dim night,
Fed by your flames I fly to God
Like a soaring bird in swift, sure flight.”

*Oh yes, although my heart be wrong,
And my words foolish, young or trite,
Laid at Her feet, they chant a love
That grows through pain to rapturous Light.*

JEAN

THOR...

THOR strikes the sea a mighty blow.
Earth and sky fuse in the fiery arrow
of delight exploding red in the night.

The lightning flashes of the sacred blaze
mirrored in the silent watcher's gaze
dissolve bound memories' violet haze
of things known but long forgotten.

Mercurial messages sear through the veins
like molten rivers of Light
to pierce closed heart and open its doors
while mind sits unguarded in night.

Then from the hushed void of anonymous thought
the heart's gentle murmur is heard.
Along brilliant coloured pathways of mind it comes
silently whispering the unspoken word.

In the quietness Thor rages one last mighty thrust
tearing Heaven's black shroud asunder.
Baptismal rain floods down to engulf
the watcher's naked wonder.

GILL MCINERNEY

THE SECRET SOURCE OF THE GANGES

A QUEST IN A STRANGE LAND

(Continued from the issue of July 1975)

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

6

No sooner were we at the gateway than my friend lightly nudged me to draw my attention to a sound of music. At first I could not get any inkling of the presence of the tune; then I started to hear something, very thin and, as we were crossing the bridge and nearing the garden, the sound grew more and more clear. As we crossed the other end of the span we listened to a superb harmony of vocal music and *Veena*. I had been a music-lover right from my childhood and had practised *Dhrupad* from a tender age; therefore I was familiar with *Ragas* and *Raginis*. But the tunes that flowed into my ears in that garden and the reactions they emoted in me were experienced for the first time. So full of life was the tune that my whole body pulsed with its touch. This was not an *Alapa* of the *Ragas* and *Raginis* known to us; it was something truly sublime and hitherto unknown. Its rhythm and harmony were also unique. "A supernal melody" is all that can be said about it.

I thought that this music flowed out of the temple-like palace; but after crossing the bridge I marked that the palace was too far; from such a great distance such clear notes could not have reached our ears — and yet I could not see any other building or place from where the music could come. I had to turn to my friend who pointed to a big grove nearby. We were ourselves going there but, strange to say, the sound was becoming thinner and thinner. I wanted to run in a hurry, but he held my hand. He pronounced a word — I was made to understand that I should check myself. What I further discovered was that so long as I walked gently, unhurriedly, I could hear the melody; now after having crossed the bridge, because of my spurring the body with overeagerness, the music became almost inaudible. As I slowed down on my friend's advice, the music could be heard again quite clearly, and that delighted me.

When we came near the grove, he held my hand and walked Spanish. It was only when his restraint entered into me and spread all over me that we could walk together in rhythm with the tune. We saw before us a circular area surrounded by trees, plants and creepers. In the middle was a huge cylindrical platform, access to it being given by a flight of seven steps. On the platform also there were plants and shrubs, and four gateways on four sides covered with creepers and a variety of flowers. We crossed one of these gateways and immediately what had seemed to be a platform vanished, and I saw a spacious circular hall open to the sky. There were many people

there and of various types. There were also many strange musical instruments, among which was a *Mridanga*. This was all that I could see from above. My friend had been holding my hand all the time lest I go off the rhythm. Actually I was then full of calmness, so much so that I hardly had any sense of separateness.

We descended the stairs gingerly and sat down on the floor. Now he let go my hand. And then I became aware of a vital change in me. Of course for a short while only. That inexplicable stillness, which precedes the descent of a higher state of consciousness, suffused the hall. A loss of awareness ensued, I was entranced, just as it happens in *sushupti* (deep sleep). Then again everything became normal. Sitting there what I saw and listened to was a dream — albeit I was awake all the while. The spell of the melody, the blessedness that it rained in the hall are too great for words. Nothing then mattered except the tunes and the moments!

As the dancers — male and female — drew invisible artistic patterns in the air with their limbs, I studied them. Both the male and female dancers wore tinklers round their ankles, the soothing sound they emitted was similar to the combined sounds of all the strings of the *Sitar* when only one of them is really plucked. I am at a loss to describe the divine movements and expressions of these dancers. No leaping or jumping about, each and every action and movement of the limbs exhibited extraordinary control. What bewitching hands they had! And the *mudras* showed the weird flexibility of their fingers. The concord of the rhythm and the tune, the harmonious and spontaneous response of the limbs to the music were something of a magic. I felt that none of the audience fell short of going into ecstatic trance. I conjectured that the programme had been arranged for some festive occasion.

This roofless circular venue was big enough for more than a thousand people. The same type of staircases were all round the hall which was occupied by people of — judging by their clothes — the labouring class. Nowhere was there any speck of dust. Each seat was separate. That day it was a capacity audience. The women were probably more in number than men, for wherever I looked I saw mostly women. There were folks of all ages, even beautiful flashing boys and girls. There were some hoary-headed people whose faces resembled ripe golden mangoes. As for the troupe, it consisted of about ten musicians — the singers, dancers and drummers (that is, players of Indian drums) were all together about twenty-five.

We had come here in the afternoon when the dance was going on in accompaniment to ten instruments. Some of the audience sang to the music; none had any objection to that because it was harmonious and in tune. I recognized two *Veenas* among the instruments. A strange instrument that attracted me much had the form of a large-size betel leaf. In the place of the stem was a three-foot-long wood-piece. There was another instrument which looked like a *Shehmai*, but its sound was not so sharp nor jarring, it was soft and round. There was a long side-flute of bamboo which was wrought with beautiful designs. The sounds of a pair of cymbals added special charm to the general harmony.

My friend got up in the evening. Talking and laughing with some of his pals he

came out with me and, to my utter surprise, left me exactly in front of my hostess's house. He communicated through gestures that I must not miss the programme of dance and music in the temple that night.

After dinner when my host and hostess went to the temple they took me also along. There almost the whole night I passed as if lost in a sweet dream. But ironically this happiness could not last long. After some time I came to realize that I had not the least bit of space left in me to let in the all-permeating nectarous joy of this Beulah Land.

Early the next morning I found Devi sitting near me, and I *felt* rather than *saw* that she was regarding me curiously, intently. Fixing on me a mysterious gaze she as if inquired — “Why do you pull a long face, what is the matter with you?”

The problem which I worried out was this: shall I be able to explain to her my inner condition through my language and expansive gestures? How should I word it? All that I had experienced since the previous day, especially the *rasa* of the two recitals of dance and music which I had keenly enjoyed, and then as an anticlimax, my state of depression today...? I sensed that I could sojourn there no more... And yet what does not fall to the lot of most men had been given to me, that rare and lofty company of *devas* and *devis*, the unforgettable sceneries, the enjoyment of the highest possible culture — all of which otherwise might never have come my way — I had seen and enjoyed them in one day and one night. But then what had happened to me now? At any rate, I intuited that explaining all this to her and understanding her reply would not be a problem to me.

(*To be continued*)

ANNOUNCEMENT

A camp of teachers, students and parents will be held from October 12 to October 20, under the auspices of Sri Aurobindo's Action and Navajyoti Karyalaya. The participants will be helped to acquaint themselves with the philosophy and practice of the integral discipline of self-perfection as followed in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Those who wish to participate may kindly get into touch with the offices of ACTION or NAVAJYOTI before September 30. The delegates are to meet their own expenses.

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1975)

7

SOON after leaving the beautiful Tyrolean city of Innsbrück we were once again on the plains, and the Alps were receding behind us into the distance. The Alps with their wonderful scenery would meet us once again as we returned from Paris by way of Switzerland, and the Swiss Alps were to provide another feast for the eyes. But of that later; for we were still in Austria, the birth-place of Hitler, and heading fast towards Munich, our first city in Germany, out of a long list. Yodelling would now be a distant cry.

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Our passports had naturally been checked before, once on landing in Rome and again on the Austrian border of Italy. At the airport in Rome, the officials seemed to be engaged, not so much in examining the documents as in badinage among themselves; the atmosphere was one of play rather than of serious work. It seemed as if in Italy the day began with play. It was a Sunday in any case. On leaving Italy we found the Austrian officials at the check-post equally happy-go-lucky. The passports were carried by one of them in a bundle to a small booth. If any of these precious documents were to drop off his hands, it looked as if that would be nobody's business. They were duly stamped with the official seal and handed over to our escort to be distributed among us. There was not the slightest attempt to verify who was who. The German border was different.

Here everything was efficiency and order, and utility too had a part to play. As soon as our coach came to a halt we found a number of young men in well-pressed uniforms, with pistols dangling at the waist. They did not quite throw a cordon around, but they did appear to suggest that there would be serious work and no play. One of the young men boarded the coach and began to collect our papers one by one, methodically, as he passed down the aisle. There was nothing wrong in this, to be sure. But every time he took hold of a passport, he peered into the face, just to verify that the owner of the face was in fact the same person as the owner of the document. It was the James Bond look in his eyes that gave us the creeps. For supposing the man decided that the owners were different persons, then what? Luckily, nothing happened, and we heaved a sigh of relief when the man got down and we got our passports back, through our escort. He too looked rather grim this time, in spite of his conversation in German. To relieve the strain that he could easily see on our faces, he casually mentioned that just across the road (in German

territory) there was a bank where we could change our money into German marks. That was a most welcome facility, for there were small snacks to be paid for in way-side restaurants before we reached our destination that day, and they might not accept dollars.

So, now we were in Germany, the land of Beethoven and Goethe, of Heine, Wagner and Hitler. There was no sign of the poets and the musicians yet. But the first thing to greet us was the Autobahn of Hitler, perhaps his only lasting contribution to civilisation, as remarked before. The Autobahn was meant in the first place to give full-time employment to men who had been wanting work, hundreds and thousands of them all over the land. But its true purpose was to allow the motorised Reichswehr a mobility and facility in crossing the borders, which would have been unthinkable to Napoleon, or even to Marshal Foch in the First World War. Who knows if the very place where our credentials had just been checked was not the spot where Hitler committed his first successful trespass. But the Autobahn was superb, slightly wider perhaps and better kept than the Autostrades of Italy. There were no signs of the Reichswehr anywhere, but there were streams of private cars whizzing past. The Volkswagen, incredibly fast for its size, was everywhere; and every third car seemed to be a Mercedes Benz. The number of trucks hauling the maimed cars involved in accidents also seemed to be more than we had so far seen. But this might be just a fancy on our part; we did not ask for statistics.

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Munich had been the capital of Bavaria, the biggest of the independent states in Germany to have held out long against Bismarck's policy of Prussification in the name of German unity; it could not hold out till the end. Munich marked the beginning of Hitler's rise — and also the beginning of his end. It was here that he made his first successful speeches and organised the Storm Troop bands. It was again here in Munich that Chamberlain and Deladier bought of him the peace with dishonour that was destined to set Hitler's body aflame seven years later. We were shown the places associated with his rise and impending fall, including the imitation triumphal arch that wears a ghastly look.

The city was rased to the ground by Allied bombers. It has risen anew in all its splendour of glass and steel, an admirable evidence of German ingenuity and patience, aided by American money. Some of the war-time wounds still remain to be covered, including the American barracks. The new stadium built for the 1972 Olympiad with its artificial glass cover and the Television tower are there still. The Olympic Village looks gloomy. Our escort explained it did not attract half the crowds that had been expected, and the Hiltons seem to have suffered a big loss.

Munich, München to Germans, with its great publishing houses, stands on the river Isar, of the English poet Campbell's "Isar rolling rapidly" fame. One recalls the well-known story of the poet's interview with his publisher, on whom he had

called to show his new poem. As he came down the stairs, apparently full of glee and careless of the steps, he tripped and went down the wrong way. The publisher rushed out of his room to ask what the noise was about. "I, sir, rolling rapidly," was the joyous reply of the poet.

What made Hitler trip and fall? We had been musing over this question when a *bon mot* by a bright young Parsi boy in our company — at that time doing his Law degree and since passed out with flying colours, we hear — gave part of the answer: "What a fool to have thought of conquering the world!" Hitler was foolish indeed to have entertained such ideas. But he had no inkling as to Who he was up against, and he did come within an ace of success. But he does not appear like a fool on the pages of his *Mein Kampf*—a liar certainly and a knave, but no fool. When he wrote that book, he seemed to have a clear enough perception of what he meant to do, and how; and he set forth his ideas and plans with sufficient lucidity. The men whom history will judge to have been the real fools are the wise statesmen of Europe (with some notable exceptions like Winston Churchill). They did not read Hitler carefully enough and failed to take him at all seriously. Hitler's foolishness lay in overshooting his mark. Perhaps he was never an altogether balanced mind. Too much ambition and easy and continued success made him lose whatever clarity he had and turned him into a maniac.

Some of the ideas he propounded in *Mein Kampf* provide a clue to subsequent history. Two of its main themes are these. First, the German race needed a place in the sun; and since there was no longer any decent place left outside Europe for colonisation, Germany must find a place for her rapidly increasing population and for her markets in Europe itself, in countries like Austria, Czecho-Slovakia and Poland where many Germans had already found a home. And, second, this must be secured by armed force wherever necessary. The German army, he insisted, was invincible; it had not been defeated in war, it had been let down by the inept propaganda of the Kaiser's government and the machination of the Jews. That must never again be allowed.

Hitler played cleverly on emotional attitudes without caring overmuch about facts. Germans in the neighbouring countries had been maltreated, he claimed; these countries must therefore be Germanised. The honour of the German army must be vindicated and the armed forces of Germany must become invincible again. The national honour of Germany had been besmirched by the Versailles Treaty; it must therefore be scrapped and the wrong-doers punished. The monetary collapse of Germany after the war as well as the Weimar Republic which kept Germany in chains were, he suggested, the work of the Jews. They were, so he declared, opposed to the national interest, as were, according to him, the Communists of Germany; both must be liquidated. This in substance was his programme, and he carried out the programme with sufficient thoroughness.

Whatever the dangerous mixture of half-truths and lies he asked the German people to believe, and however abominable his methods — a recrudescence of primi-

tive savagery which civilised man had thought to have left far behind — it must be conceded that Hitler completed in great measure the work of political unification begun by Bismarck, but his work was undone by his folly in attacking Russia. Hitler, like his predecessors the Kaiser and the “Iron Chancellor”, gave his people (minus the Jews of course) a deep sense of purpose; he gave the working-men full-time work and wages; he kept the industrialists happy with their profits; he enlisted the youth in his army and air force and less reputable bands; and, the strangest thing of all, he could hypnotise the intellectuals to sleep with his oratory — or was it with the cudgels of his henchmen? But he under-estimated the power of free thought in countries not yet dominated by the cudgel, and he over-estimated the strength of his “invincible” armed forces to match the combined land and air and sea power of England and the United States; perhaps he relied too much on his Far Eastern Ally to cripple the United States and dominate India. And his invasion of Russia was a more than Napoleonic blunder. A collapse was inevitable and the punishment dire.

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But the scars of war are now hardly visible, so magnificent has been the reconstruction. The drive from Munich to Nuremburg which was going to be our next step was through a lovely undulating plain studded with beautiful state-preserved woodland, once the favourite hunting ground of the aristocracy. The countryside was perfectly neat and clean, like a picture on a Christmas card minus the snow. We had seen nothing like it in our travels so far, and would have to wait until we crossed the Channel and met the celebrated Downs of Essex and Kent.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA AND SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Riddle of the Future, A Modern Study of Precognition by *Andrew MacKenzie* (Arthur Barker, 1974), 172 pp. £2.65

IN his preface to *Riddle of the Future* R. H. Thouless writes: "The first question to be answered about paranormal cognition is whether it occurs. If it occurs, it must be accepted as a fact whether or not we can explain how it could happen.... That we find something inconceivable may only indicate an unfortunate limitation in our powers of conceiving." Andrew MacKenzie himself notes in his own introduction to this fascinating and uncomfortable book that he has set out "not to prove that there is such a thing as precognition, but to present some of the theories relating to it, and to give a large number of cases". All his cases belong to this century (most are quite modern), all have been investigated and the cumulative effect is impressive.

The oddest concern events of no particular interest to the precognizer, as when an American librarian early in February 1967 saw a new book by William Bullitt for merly a diplomatic adviser to Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt and remarked casually that he had just died in France. She repeated the remark to two other librarians on February 11th and, asked where she had heard the news, said it must have been on television. On February 15 Mr. Bullitt did indeed die in France. Another equally odd prediction on January 1, 1969, was that a big television mast was going to collapse; a 1,200 foot mast did indeed collapse under the weight of ice near Huddersfield some seven weeks later.

Curious too are the precognitions which, though personal, do not seem to be charged with any particular emotional significance, such as Lady Namier's recurrent childhood dream of sitting in what she took to be a train and "looking out of a window on my left down onto an unforgettable pattern of lights, red, green, yellow, white" — a dream unexpectedly fulfilled many years later during a flight into London after dark. Particularly vivid in this unemotional category are various experiences — recorded at the time of their occurrence — by Eva Hellstrom, some in dreams, some on the borders of sleep, and some in waking life, particularly during attacks of migraine.

Most of her impressions and most of the others collected here were visual. A few were auditory. In one a sensation of intense cold and fear presaged a car crash; and in another no one could tell what induced a family dog, after years of sitting during air raids under an indoor table shelter with its owners, to keep returning one day to a damp disused dugout in the garden. They finally "took its advice", so to speak, and spent the next night there; that night the house was demolished by a flying bomb.

It is somehow easier to come to grips with incidents like this, which look purposeful than with apparently gratuitous 'flash-forwards' in time. There are plenty of what used to be called 'warnings' on record here, from premonitions about the doomed Titanic (which though the fact is not mentioned was always thought unlucky by her ship-

wrights) to an Austrian lady's inexplicable foreknowledge — which twice saved her relations — of which parts of Hamburg were going to be bombed on certain nights in the Second World War; from a dream three weeks before it happened of the crash of an aircraft chartered to fly on a day trip to Switzerland to a dream of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia recognized by the dreamer when it was shown on television a fortnight later (she had been puzzled about the unknown city and the foreign cars).

It is intriguing that so many recorded premonitions seem to foreshadow not so much an event as a report of it by the media. This impression emerges very clearly from a chapter on the British Bureau of Premonitions although it may be due to the fact that the Bureau collects only premonition of public disasters; it does not have enough staff to study personal cases.

Mr. MacKenzie has assembled, checked and arranged with his usual thoroughgoing care a most striking collection of data. He discusses equally carefully various theories of precognition. Theories that time may 'flow backwards' (which demand a new definition of time), philosophical theories, mathematical theories, theories based on analogies from quantum physics, all are soberly and succinctly set out as far as they can be put into words at all. It remains very much easier, however, to accept the evidence than to understand the hypotheses put forward to explain it.

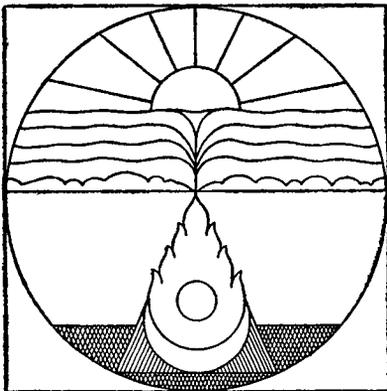
RENÉE HAYNES

(With acknowledgments to the Times Literary Supplement, Dec. 20, 1974, p. 1438)

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