

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE : NOVEMBER 24, 1976

Price : Rs. 2/-

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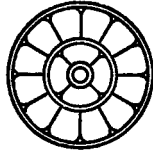
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All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002, India.

Editor's Phone: 782.

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

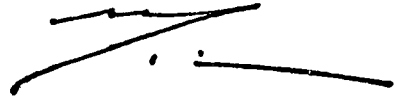


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXVIII

No. 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY-605002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-605002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

REMEMBRANCE—17th NOVEMBER

THREE POEMS

I

You have not gone—
Only from Your Golden Pedestal stepped down
To fill each aching longing heart—
Gifted to each a flower of Grace from your crown!

Your Presence, liberated, is like a flame,
In wakefulness or sleep a pure White Light!
In any corner of this world, just your name,
And a Power of Help descends from the height!

You are the constant companion of our hearts,
With a watchful and tender heed—
Eternal Care are You if You but once
Have looked into our eyes and gauged our need!

2

Sweep me up into Your Silence
So that huddled in its sweet safety I'll sit
Unhurt—Your name a bead of prayer,
The sense of Your face a candle lit!

Let no word cross my lips,
Calmness in waves filling my mind.
Let my stored-up love be revealed by silence—
Tranquil detachment—life's storms left behind!

3

Eternally my heart seeks You everywhere,
Across the seas, the hills, the skies;
When my soul is pledged to You forever,
Does it matter where my body lies?

Yet I feel my home is Your sweet earth, O Mother!
Where Your soft shadow blessed the ground
Nearing sunset, as the warm rays fade.
Let me rest under Your footprints' silent sound!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

You must be able, if you are ready to follow the Divine's order, to take up whatever work you are given, even a stupendous work, and leave it the next day with the same quietness with which you took it up and not feel that the responsibility is yours. There should be no attachment—to any object or any mode of life. You must be absolutely free. If you want to have the true yogic attitude, you must be able to accept everything that comes from the Divine and let it go as easily and without regret.

24-4-1929

*
**

From birth to death, life is a dangerous thing.
The brave pass through it without caring for the risks.
The prudent take their precautions.
The coward fear everything.
But ultimately there comes to each one only that which the Supreme Will decides.

19-6-1966

LIGHTS FROM PONDICHERRY

This article, dating back to 1951, when the Mother's books in French started being published, needs no excuse now to be reprinted, so full it is of observations that are perennially apt and illuminating.

To write a book in French and, further, to publish it in India is not a very happy proposition for any writer. Here, in the first place, the number of its readers are few, and fewer still the number of true appraisers. Secondly, in a glaring contrast with things of the West, publication-publicity in our country is indeed extremely feeble, still in its infancy or crawling stage. Only recently there has been in evidence some push and go in this field, but all still remains to be organised and set firmly upon a broader and intenser basis. However, that is another matter. Against this discouraging background there appeared in succession *Entretiens Avec La Mère, Prières et Méditations* (both in the thirties of the present century), *Paroles d'Autrefois* and *Belles Histoires*. The Mother, the writer of these beautiful books, has in addition a good number of translations to her credit: *La Mère, La Synthèse du Yoga, La Vie Divine* and *Essais sur la Gita* (all of them from the original in English by Sri Aurobindo). Of the translations we will speak later on. Not that they are unimportant or less important, but because we want to follow the chronological order of the works which incidentally may also help us to a better understanding of both the original works and the translations.

It is interesting to note that *Paroles d'Autrefois*, though printed as late as March, 1946, contains the earliest writings (1893) of the Mother. A young traveller going astray just for a little negligence and realising his mistake only too late when his misfortunes grow to immense proportions—this is the theme of the beautiful parable that opens the book (written as a school essay when the Mother was a girl of fifteen!) Every word is in its right place, and all invariably are the right words, and the *ensemble* gives vividly the concrete picture of a terrible conflict in the conscience of the young traveller. Written in prose, as I have already indicated, it overflows all the limiting rigidities that this mode of expression is subject to and often it rises to enchanting lyric heights. One hears the cry of the agonised soul, sees the prospect where a wrong path once chosen may lead to, and is finally relieved to know the secret to get over any such catastrophe. And how many secrets are there in the book about dream and thought and life and Supreme Knowledge, laid open before the eyes of the reader to know and profit by! *Les Vertus, Savoir Sourire* and *La Découverte Suprême* are all gems of the purest kind shining in their inherent worth.

Only one month after the publication of the book we have just now mentioned there appeared *Belles Histoires*. As is evident from the name itself, it is a book of short stories. Intended chiefly for children, *Belles Histoires* (based upon an English book) contains stories from various countries of the East and the West, stories that are arranged under eleven different chapters each one of which has its appropriate title, *viz.* 'Self-mastery', 'Courage', 'Cheerfulness', 'Self-help', 'Patience

and Perseverance', 'Plain Living', 'Prudence', 'Sincerity', 'To Judge Correctly', 'Order' and 'To Construct and to Destroy'. From a cursory glance at the table of contents it is quite possible for the superficial critic to boo at it as a book of morals. But a little journey into the book reveals that it is really a work of art, and the Mother is ever at her best when narrating a story, a dialogue or the various shades of a psychological state. Indeed if Art has any constructive value in life instead of being merely pleasant, if it is not just a toy to sport with in leisure hours but serves deeper purposes and needs of the being, it has to say something *useful*. The question then is both what is said and how it is said. Judged on these two counts *Belles Histoires* is a masterpiece. Here stories are not stories, that is to say fantastic fabrications, but actual facts that have occurred. These living examples point to higher things in man, and they all insist upon the nobler qualities that build up human character. Written with an infinite love for children, it is at once a call to them to take up the challenge of the triple demon-god of Ignorance, Inertia and Ugliness, and re-lay the pattern of human life. Especially in India, where so colossal a misery prevails and so much work remains for the future generation to accomplish, this inspiring book will be, to quote the Mother herself, "a new weapon" in their hands.

We now come to the two more serious books of the Mother: *Prières et Méditations* and *Entretiens*. I shall first take up *Prayers and Meditations*. It was, I suppose, in connection with this book that Maurice Magre who knew as much French as a Frenchman ought to know remarked that it was the highest perfection in style of which French was capable. A great compliment, no doubt. But what does it precisely connote? The French language in general and French prose in particular are marked out for their clarity and precision, their rational and scientific nature. Racine and Renan, Voltaire and France, Pascal and Michelet are a few among the immortal names that have contributed to this unique consummation. French, in the final analysis, means precision and precision means French. But such an instrument carries its own limitations as well. For, there are subtle shades in meaning, some extremely suggestive and subtle vibrations behind the words which you cannot catch with the help of this mechanism of intellectual language. English, with its substantial Celtic strain, is less rational but more full of suggestiveness, more pliant, more capable of growing. French artists knew of this fact and were consciously trying various means to make up for the defect of their medium. In the realm of poetry Mallarmé made a gallant effort and not without considerable success. Yet the insistence was all the while on the instrument, on the manner of composition: sometimes perhaps to loosen the rules of syntax and punctuation, sometimes in the Chinese manner of painting to give some significant strokes or hints in ideas and leave the rest to the readers to fill up in their own canvas of mind. Such a process, as we have already said, can lead only to a partial success. Here the degree of success will vary according as the mental equipment is sharpened and trained and made receptive. But in order to break new ground, to achieve new perfections, whether it be in the domain of poetry or prose, one has to breathe a new atmosphere or touch a different consciousness than the prevalent one. And the

higher the level of consciousness that is contacted, the greater is the value it assumes in its outward expression. Here, for example, is this magnificent piece from *Prayers and Meditations* which shines like the sun and needs no other light to be explained:

“A ces heures bénies la terre tout entière chante un hymne d’allégresse, l’herbe frissonne de plaisir, l’air vibre de lumière, les arbres dressent vers le ciel leur prière plus ardente, le chant des oiseaux devient un cantique, les vagues de la mer se gonflent d’amour, le sourire des enfants raconte l’infini, les âmes des hommes apparaissent dans leurs yeux.

“Dis-moi: m’accorderas-Tu le pouvoir merveilleux de faire naître cette aurore dans les cœurs attentifs, d’éveiller les consciences à Ta sublime Présence, dans ce monde si triste et si demantelé de susciter un peu de Ton vrai Paradis? Quels bonheurs, quelles richesses, quelles puissances terrestres peuvent égaler ce don souverain?...

“O Seigneur, jamais en vain je ne T’ai imploré, car c’est Toi-même en moi qui Te parles à Toi-même.”¹

As one reads through these prayers one unmistakably feels that here French has, besides being thoroughly poetical, assumed another quality and another dharma, the very character of *mantra*. That is to say, the words become here the Word and carry in them the Power of realisation. The Vedic mantras were, of course, the earliest and the most perfect articulation in human speech; so much so, that they were rightly thought to belong to no individual person but breathed out of the universal. In the full blaze of the twentieth century we saw another miracle done by Sri Aurobindo who introduced a new spirit into the English language, lifted it up and changed it into a marvellous vehicle to express even the Inexpressible, the profoundest thought that man in the modern world was groping in the darkness to seize and embody. The Mother has come in the same line after the Vedic Rishis and Sri Aurobindo. This, I think, was the implied meaning justifying Monsieur Magre’s tribute to the author of *Prières et Méditations*.

Prières et Méditations originally filled the pages of the Mother’s personal diary. They were written out of an irresistible urge or an irrepressible need of the being within to put down in black and white the torrents of realisation that were rushing in upon her, and to give them permanence also, as the occultists would say. They were

¹ “At these blessed hours all earth sings a hymn of gladness, the grasses shudder with pleasure, the air is vibrant with light, the trees lift towards heaven their most ardent prayer, the chant of the birds becomes a canticle, the waves of the sea billow with love, the smile of children tells of the infinite and the souls of men appear in their eyes.

“Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn in expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime Presence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true Paradise? What happiness, what riches, what terrestrial power can equal this wonderful gift?

“O Lord, never have I implored Thee in vain, for that which speaks to Thee is Thyself in me.”
(March 31, 1917)

not addressed to any human audience nor is there any sense of literary vanity in it. They are truly her prayers and meditations. In this respect they are singularly different from all other diaries of the world. The comparison is so futile that it would be better if we took to no such study. A magnificent book, but it would have remained perhaps in some unseen corner of the world had not Sri Aurobindo immediately seen its value and urged its publication. Printed as it is, it begins in France on November 2, 1912 and ends in India on October 23, 1937. A long journey indeed but the reader feels not the slightest drudgery in making it; on the contrary, one feels taken up by a pair of strong arms and placed in a world where it is all light and peace and purity and knowledge. I quote below another incomparable example:

“Sois cet amour en toute chose et partout, toujours plus largement, toujours plus intensément et le monde deviendra à la fois ton œuvre et ton bien, ton champ d’action et ta conquête. Lutte avec persistance pour faire tomber les dernières limites qui ne sont plus que de frêles barrières devant l’expansion de l’être, pour vaincre les dernières obscurités qu’éclaire déjà la Puissance Illuminatrice. Lutte pour conquérir et pour triompher; lutte pour surmonter tout ce qui fut jusqu’à ce jour; pour faire jaillir la Lumière nouvelle, l’Exemple nouveau dont le monde a besoin. Lutte avec opiniâtreté contre tous les obstacles extérieurs ou intérieurs. C’est la perle de grand prix qui est proposée à Ta Réalisation.”¹

Apparently these two quotations present a very small portion of the entire volume but they are sufficient, if read not with the flickering light of the mind but with the heart wide open, to allow us a clear glimpse of the fascinating vast panorama of creation which is very near to us and yet at the same time veiled from our human eyes and comprehension.

From *Prayers and Meditations* we enter into a new world in *Entretiens*. If in the former we saw the heights and profundities of occultism and mystical wisdom, in the latter we come to the practical discipline of Yoga, an infallible spiritual knowledge and an intellectual understanding of the mystic Path. Here the very first question takes us into the heart of the matter: “Would you say something to us about Yoga?” In fact the whole of *Entretiens* is a series of questions and answers. And they deal with the central problems of aspiration and destiny, e.g., “How is one to meet adverse forces—that are invisible and yet quite living and tangible?” or “Is our vital being to take part in the Divine Love? If it does, what is the right and correct form of the participation it should take?” or, again, “Have Yogis done greater dramas than Shakespeare?” Here discourses centre upon particular problems that are raised, sometimes by our foolish mind: the answers are marvellous in their

¹ “Be this love in everything and everywhere, ever more widely, ever more intensely, and the whole world will become at once thy work and thy estate, thy field of action and thy conquest. Strive with persistence to throw down the last limits which are but frail barriers before the expansion of the being, to conquer the last obscurities which the illumining Power is already lighting up. Fight that thou mayst conquer and triumph; struggle to surmount all that has been up to this day, to make the new Light emerge, this new example which the world needs. Fight stubbornly against all obstacles, outer or inner. This is the pearl without price which is proposed for thee to realise.” (December 25, 1916)

clarity, cogency and a certain revelatory quality which is not difficult for the human mind to understand. We have hardly any scope here for a long quotation, but we can take this splendid piece as a specimen—with regard to both the light and the beauty it emanates:

“Love is a supreme force which the Eternal Consciousness sent down from itself into an obscure and darkened world that it might bring back that world and its beings to the Divine. The material world in its darkness and ignorance had forgotten the Divine. Love came into the darkness; it awakened all that lay there asleep; it whispered, opening the ears that were sealed: ‘There is something that is worth waking to, worth living for, and it is love.’ And with the awakening to love there entered into the world the possibility of coming back to the Divine. The creation moves upward through love towards the Divine, and in answer there leans downward to meet the creation the Divine Love and Grace. Love cannot exist in its pure beauty, love cannot put on its native power and intense joy of fullness until there is this interchange, this fusion between the earth and the Supreme, this movement of Love from the Divine to the creation and from the creation to the Divine..”

Last, about the translations. We have already spoken about the Mother’s French, we need not repeat the same arguments over again. *La Mère, La Synthèse du Yoga, La Vie Divine* (the first few chapters) are a landmark in the history of French literature. Of course the world would have felt luckier to get a complete translation of *The Life Divine* from the Mother’s hands, and also of *The Ideal of Human Unity*. The world today is torn to pieces, due to a war of petty conflicting ideas and interests. A good part of the world still adores French and there these books will serve as a beacon light of hope and assurance. But for the moment it will be wiser perhaps to remain content with what we have got. One more thing we hope it is not impertinent to mention. Amidst the fairly large body of French we have spoken about let it not be forgotten that the Mother is equally at ease with English. The whole of *Entretiens* was first in English; the French version came subsequently.¹

One does not know what will happen, but I for one would like to see French given an equally honoured place side by side with English in future India so that masters of that sweet language may be appreciated in their original. In the meanwhile, the Mother’s message is accessible through English and in some cases through advanced Indian languages. Thus the temple is ready, the path made clear for pilgrims to reach the altar, and fill their bosoms with a priceless treasure.

SAMIR KANTA GUPTA

(Originally published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*)

¹ Editor’s Note : The conversations here spoken of are those of 1929, which were the only ones published at the time of the article. Subsequently, all talks except those of 1930-31 were given originally in French.

THE EARLIEST EXTANT WRITING OF THE MOTHER

A SCHOOL ESSAY AT THE AGE OF FIFTEEN

In the preceding article, Lights from Pondicherry, there is a special reference to this piece of writing from the book, Paroles d'Autrefois (Words of Long Ago). We are reproducing the English translation for the interest attached to its admirable composition at so early an age.

The Path of Later on

"The path of later on and the road of tomorrow can only lead to the castle of nothing at all."

ON the wayside, the many-coloured flowers delight the eye. The red berries on the little trees sparkle against the knotty wood of the branches, and in the distance a brilliant sun shines gold upon the ripe corn.

A young traveller swings along, breathing in the pure morning air with joy. He seems happy and without a care for the future. The way which he follows opens out on a cross-road, where innumerable paths branch off in all directions.

The young man sees everywhere footprints crossing one another in all directions. The sun shines bright as ever in the sky; the birds sing in the trees; the day promises to be most beautiful. Without considering, the traveller takes the path nearest him which, however, seems quite practicable; he reflects for a moment that he might have chosen another way, but there will always be time to retrace his steps if the path he has taken comes to nothing. A voice seems to say to him: "Turn back, turn back, you are not on the right road." But all that is around him charms and pleases him. What should he do? He does not know. He goes on still without coming to any decision; he enjoys the pleasures of the moment. "Yet a little," he replies to the voice, "yet a little, then I will think about it; I have plenty of time." The wild grasses around him whisper in his ear: "Later on." . . . Later on ... yes, later on ... Ah! how sweet to breathe the scented breeze, while the sun warms the air with its fiery rays. Later on, later on. And the traveller still goes on; the path widens. Voices are heard from afar: "Where are you going? Poor fool, you don't see that you are going to your ruin, you are so young; come, come towards us, towards the beautiful, the good and the true; don't be misled by the soft and the easy, don't go to sleep in the present; wake to the future."—"Later on, later on," replies the traveller to these unwelcome voices. The flowers smile at him and repeat "Later on". The path ever widens. The sun has reached its height in the heavens. The day is brilliant. The path changes into a road.

The road is white and dusty, bordered by frail birches, the soft purling of a tiny stream is heard; but in vain he searches on all sides, he finds no end to this interminable road.

The young man feeling a secret uneasiness cries: "Where am I? Where am I going? What matters? Why think, why do anything? Let me drift along on this endless road, let me walk on, I shall think tomorrow."

The little trees have disappeared; the road is bordered by oaks; the commencement of a ravine makes a hollow on each side. The traveller feels no fatigue; he is dragged along as in a delirium.

The ravine becomes deeper; the oaks give place to firs, the sun begins to go down. The traveller looks on all sides in a daze, he sees human figures wallowing in the ravine, clinging to the fir trees, to the steep rocks, and to the roots which jut out of the soil: some of them make a great effort to climb back; but when they arrive near the edge, they turn their heads and let themselves fall back again. Dulled voices cry out to the traveller: "Escape from these regions, return to the cross-road; there is still time." The young man hesitates, then replies: "Tomorrow." He covers his face with his hands, so as not to see the bodies which wallow in the ravine, and runs along the road; he is impelled by an irresistible urge to go forward; he no longer troubles about finding an issue. With puckered brow, and clothes in disorder, he runs on in desperation. At last, believing himself to be far from the accursed place, he opens his eyes; the firs have gone; all around he sees only stones arid in the grey dust. The sun has disappeared behind the horizon, the night is coming on. The road is lost in an endless desert. The traveller, now desperate, exhausted by his long run, wants to stop; but he has to go on. All around him are ruins; he hears stifled cries; his feet stumble against skeletons. Far away, the thick mist takes terrifying shapes; black masses assume an outline; something deformed, enormous, can be dimly divined. The traveller flies rather than walks towards this goal which he feels in front but which seems always to escape; savage howlings guide his footsteps; he brushes against phantoms.

At last he sees in front of him a huge edifice, dark, desolate, lugubrious, one of those castles of which one says with anguish: "It is a castle haunted by ghosts." But the young man does not think of the sadness of the place; he is not impressed by these great black walls; this dusty ground and these formidable towers hardly raise in him a shudder; he thinks only that the goal has been reached, he forgets his weariness and his dejection. In approaching the castle, he brushes against a wall and the wall crumbles instantaneously, all collapses around him: towers, battlements and surrounding walls, all have disappeared sinking into the dust, and this dust piles up on that which already covers the ground.

Owls, crows and bats fly away in all directions with shrill cries and come circling round the head of the poor traveller who, stupefied, dejected and exhausted, remains glued to the spot without being able to make a movement; suddenly, to crown all this horror, he sees standing in front of him the terrible phantoms whose names are desolation, despair, disgust for life; and even in the midst of the ruins he has a glimpse of

suicide, pale and sombre, standing above a bottomless abyss. All these malignant spirits surround him and cling to him, pushing him towards the yawning precipice. The poor wretch tries to resist their irresistible force, he now wishes to recoil, to escape; he tries to tear himself away from these invisible arms that enfold him and hold him fast; but it is too late; he still moves on towards the fatal abyss; he feels drawn, hypnotised by it. He calls out, no voice responds to his cries; he clutches at the phantoms, but everything falls away beneath him; with haggard eyes he surveys the void, he calls, he implores; there only rings out in reply a gruesome and evil laughter.

The traveller is now on the edge of the abyss; all his attempts are vain; after a supreme struggle he falls...from his bed.

A young student who had a long theme to prepare for the next morning, a little tired by his day's work, said to himself on returning home: "I'll work later on." Soon afterwards he thought that if he went to bed early he could get up early the next morning, and that he would soon finish his work. "Let me go to bed," said he to himself, "I shall work better tomorrow; night is a good adviser." He did not expect that what he said would prove so true. His sleep was troubled by the horrible nightmare that we have related, and his fall awakened him with a start. On thinking over what he had dreamt, he exclaimed: "But it is all so simple: the path is called the path of 'later on', the road is the road of 'tomorrow', and the great building the castle of 'nothing at all'." Elated at his cleverness, he set to work, making a firm promise to himself never to leave until tomorrow what he could do today.

**A POEM BY NIRODBARAN
WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND
COMMENTS**

28-4-37

Calm like the mountain, and inviolable

this

Rises the star out of the morning-sea
Hewn from God's hushed creative will:

F

(The) first word breaking the womb of agony.

A voice it brings and opens the hidden door
Through a narrow fissure of encrusted earth:
A blazing eye of the invisible core
Comes down like an eagle into mortal birth.

Life's

voiceless

Life is dead, and from its dumb grave of snow

A

unborn

Million rays (night and day) reflect the sun;
Nothing that has lived alone in its white flow
Is ever dead, but a still silence won
Into the throb of hueless matted coils:

rock-stones

A jewel fashioned from stone-rocks of toils.

An extremely fine sonnet. The octet is powerful and perfect. Probably "this" might be better than the vaguer "the". The first two lines here of the sestet have to be changed as metrically they won't do.

29-4-37

Guru, in disgust the Inspiration left me this English poem last night. I am sure you gave me a heavy dose, for I dozed and dozed and, between the dozes, wrote this. So not responsible for consequences! I have simply hooked it on, but whereto, I don't know! I find it a surrealist business with here and there some realistic touches.

SRI AUROBINDO: Compliments! You have reached the summit with one bound!

MYSELF: Let us analyse the poem: (1) Can a star be immovable and rise at the same time? So "ineffable"?

SRI AUROBINDO: It can be defended, but perhaps to avoid possible censure, perhaps "inviolable" might be substituted. "Ineffable" has no force here.

MYSELF: (2) Don't know if a star rises out of a sea, morning or evening.

SRI AUROBINDO: In poetry it does.

MYSELF: (3) and "hushed" what? Don't get the adjective. Will "flame-coloured" or "hushed and passionless" do? But neither gives the power.

SRI AUROBINDO: "Creative" does quite well.

MYSELF: (4) "Narrow" fissure, or wide or dark?

SRI AUROBINDO: "Narrow" is more precise.

MYSELF: (5) "Like an eagle"—metre?

SRI AUROBINDO: Permissible if not too freely done.

MYSELF: (6) Do the rays reflect the sun?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't care if they don't—these do. Besides it's the unborn sun now.

MYSELF: (7) "Nothing that lives alone. ." flat?

SRI AUROBINDO: "Has lived alone" is the opposite of flat.

MYSELF: (8) Penultimate line means what?

SRI AUROBINDO: *Everything*.

MYSELF: "From the throb" will have any meaning?

SRI AUROBINDO: None!

MYSELF: Or "Into the throb of hueless poisoned coils" is better?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, no!

MYSELF: Putting somehow "spoils" will give any sense?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, no! don't intellectualise and spoil the whole thing. "Spoils" indeed!

MYSELF: (9) "Stone-rocks of toils"?

SRI AUROBINDO: "Stone-rocks" is tautologous, for all rocks are made of stone. Perhaps "rock-stones" might do, as all stone is not rock-stone.

MYSELF: So this is the effect of hooking, Sir. I haven't said a word about the meaning or rhythm.

SRI AUROBINDO: About meaning better not. It is perfect as it is.

MYSELF: The first quatrain is understandable, so is the second perhaps. But what follows, no. Life is dead?

SRI AUROBINDO: Life as we know it, of course. The star is the star of opening the way to the labouring agony of death. It makes a narrow passage in its hard solidity, opens the hidden door, brings the secret voice. It is a blazing eye of vision from the invisible core of things. Life is dead in the snow grave dug by its own tapasya but nothing is really dead that has been able to live alone in that white flow: it lives as a still silence on into the matted coils of the World-Spirit, Shiva and turns into a jewel of the new creation even from the rocks of the great Toil.

LIGHT ON TWO SYMBOLIC EXPRESSIONS IN *SAVITRI*

LETTERS BY HUTA AND NOLINI'S REPLY

Huta's Letter

Dear Nolinida,

Once again Amal and I wish to ask you a question about certain words in *Savitri*, Book Three Canto Four (1954 ed., p. 389):

I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.

First, why are the stairs of birth called "amber"? Secondly, what is the exact point of the "morning star"?

Nolini's Reply

The whole thing refers to the New Creation coming down from above—now down into the psycho-vital or physical-vital or even the subtle physical plane. This New Creation is the creation of the Divine Love—the Mother's Love.

Morning Star—Venus, Goddess of Love—embodying the New Creation.

Amber colour representing a particular plane of consciousness. Yellow + red + touch of brown—physico-vital or even subtle physical plane—the New Creation come down on that plane.

You have to see if Sri Aurobindo has explained this colour (amber) anywhere. My explanation I have given.

Huta's Letter

Dear Nolinida,

I have gone through some books of Sri Aurobindo. He writes:

"The star signifies a creation or formation or the promise or power of a creation or formation."

"The star is always a promise of the Light to come; the star changes into a sun when there is the descent of the Light."

(Centenary Volume 23, p. 958)

Sri Aurobindo writes about the colours:

“It is not clear yet. Golden red is the colour of the supramental physical light—so this yellow red may indicate some plane of the overmind in which there is a nearer special connection with that. The golden red light has a strong transforming power.”

“...The red Purusha may be the Power of the true physical—red being the colour of the physical.”

“Yellow is the thinking mind. The shades indicate different intensities of mental light.” (*Ibid*)

There is no mention of the amber colour in Sri Aurobindo’s writings.

A SWIFT AND SPECIAL SOUND

THERE is a swift and special sound
 that coming out of idle thought withdrawn
 will strike all knowledge into heart, though dry,
 as with a white hot branding iron
 and leave it blazing like a fire
 that spits you into life
 full swing
 and wide awake
 so that there is nothing
 touch of hand
 or gaze of eye
 or pulse of heart
 will not perceive as flawless
 and
 entirely right.

And though I talk or eat or sleep
 or sit in idle thought withdrawn
 somewhere within
 an ear new-shaped is ever-cocked
 for that swift sound.

MAGGI

A WONDERFUL DREAM OF CHAMPAKLAL

RECOUNTED BY HIMSELF

It is very difficult to write but still I will try, because it is very interesting.

Four little Ashram children came to me and said, "We are going to do something but we ourselves don't know what we are going to do. We have not informed anyone about this. We have come to take you with us. We have not asked any other person. We don't want them; they will spoil everything."

I wrote, "I don't speak."

One child came very near to me and said, "We know you don't speak, you just come there. We want you with us."

I wrote, "I also would like very much to be with you."

All the children said, "Yes, yes, we know; that is why we have come."

I wrote, "But where will you take me?"

The children said laughingly, "We also don't know."

All the children were laughing.

One little child came very close to me and gave a broad smile. I saw he had just learnt to walk. He caught hold of my hand and with the other hand made a sign of getting up and made another sign to walk with him. It was so nice to see his expression and all his movements. He did not speak a word. Only expressions and signs. He was walking in such a way as if he knew where he had to go. I was wondering to myself, "What is this?" The children said, "We don't know." "How is it possible?" I thought. Then I quietly walked with them, we reached a place where I saw only a very very wide open space. The ground and the sky were beautiful and luminous pink in colour. There in the middle of that place other children were waiting for us. They might be about forty to fifty in number. As soon as we reached them I saw they were very happy to see me with them.

They surrounded me—they received me only with smiles and silent expressions. No words; everyone was very quiet. The little child who had led me to this place came to me and holding my hand began to lead us further. We walked and walked, and came to another place. Everywhere I found new and very very wide open places. There I saw a huge tree of "Patience" covering a large area. It was as big as Kabirvad (Kabir's Banyan tree)*—even bigger and more beautiful in form. Some branches were touching the ground from many sides. The tree was full of light and its golden flowers were as big as the rose flower of "Surrender". Each flower was shining like the sun. The place where we were standing was extremely beautiful and had a pink colour. All around and above there was a bright light of blue colour. And there I saw, far from us, flashes of golden lightning all around and above continuously. I was standing in front of the tree and admiring this beautiful new world.

* In Gujerat there is a big Banyan tree called Kabirvad. It is so huge a tree you can't even find its main trunk.

Just then in front of me I saw the Mother and Sri Aurobindo sitting. But on what they were sitting and where they were resting their feet I could not see at all. I could only see their golden luminous figures charging the space all around with their golden light. It is very difficult to put in words what I saw about them. They were at my eye-level. I looked at them, they were smiling. There was such a quiet and peaceful atmosphere, at the same time so full of joy—one cannot imagine!

I stretched my hands in front of them and kept open my palms. I saw a big dish on one palm with a cover very dark and muddy, black in colour. I tried hard, again and again, to take off the black cover but could not. I looked at the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, both of them smiled beautifully with a great compassion and I felt very very close to them. After this I tried once more to take off the black cover. As soon as I touched it, it disappeared—I could not see where. After this I saw in its place a yellow cover, I tried to take off that also but the same thing happened in the same way. It also disappeared. The cover began to change from black to yellow then to pink and blue, white, silver and gold. Every time I had to do the same movement to remove the cover. When I touched the gold cover it disappeared and to my surprise I saw in the dish a luminous golden lotus fully blossomed. I took the lotus in my hand; the moment I took it there appeared to my surprise once again the same dish as I had seen with a muddy black cover upon it. Without looking back I passed the dish to one who was just behind me. Then I looked at the Mother and Sri Aurobindo; they were smiling. Something came from them and entered into me and I began to go up and up straight higher and higher. Suddenly I stopped, I could not go further. When I looked up I saw the Mother and Sri Aurobindo very very high up. I tried to see where I was standing but I could not make out—only I saw a pale-blue light, as if I was standing in it; it was very soothing and I saw some movements taking place in all my centres. I cannot describe them. Peace, Joy and Ananda were around me and within me.

After a while I saw a little child by my side, standing very happily with a golden luminous lotus in his hand. He was narrating all his happy moments. He was spontaneously acting exactly as I had done. I asked him whether he had seen what had happened when I had been with him below, whether he had seen what I had done. He said that when he had stood behind me he had not known what had happened to him. He was sure he had not been sleeping. He said, "Only when you passed the dish suddenly my hand went to you and took the dish. All movements were spontaneous. Oh, it was wonderful!" Exactly the same thing he described that I had experienced.

One after another all the children came up. They were extremely happy. Some were telling me, some were telling their friends. Everyone had had the same experience.

The little child who had guided me was completely changed. The other children were dancing and jumping beautifully with full-opened golden luminous lotuses in their hands. Suddenly the child, who had not spoken a single word, shouted at the top of his voice, "Look, look, look up." While saying this his face had bloomed.

We looked upwards and saw that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were glorious with a perfectly bright golden light around them, and there was nothing around except this golden light. Their bodies, too, were of an exactly similar light. They had the same bodies but still they looked different. From there, a torrent of that light was rushing towards us and we all were standing in that very light. That light was many times more bright than the sun but our eyes were not dazzled by its brightness, as it happens when we look towards the sun. It was such that we would like to go on looking at it. It was a very very wonderful and indescribable sight. I asked the children, "Now what have we to do?" The children all together said, "Is it not nice to remain here for ever?" I don't know what happened next; my eyes opened.

This was so real and vivid. Still I see everything as if I am living in it.

2.9.1976

SWEET CALM!

AN INSIGHT FOR NOVEMBER 25*

SWEET Calm! forgive the many times I hurled
 My hard undreamful glance upon Thy face:
 Forgive the irreparable nights and days
 I gloried in Thy farness from the world.
 Forgive the folly that pronounced Thee far—
 Thou whom all creatures breathe or else they die:
 Life of our life, yet hidden to our eye
 Because we have forgotten that each scar

Brim with Thy God-hue, just as every glow
 Of joy is but Thy blossoming in our heart!
 Even forgive sad hours when all too low
 And earth-born I have felt, deeming Thou wert
 Too heaven-high—as if time-changes could
 Mar my soul's birth from Thy eternal Motherhood!

AMAL KIRAN

* The poet's birthday

THE WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO

A SPEECH DELIVERED IN KANPUR ON NOVEMBER 24, 1975

THE whole world needs Sri Aurobindo today. He is the one single individual who has compressed in his being the entire development of the human species and seeks to go ahead towards fresh creation intended by the Most High. He, perhaps, is the only one who is still living and working for the final culmination of his Supramental Yoga. In the measure we surrender ourselves to him, he floods us with his Divine Consciousness for the activities that are calculated to usher in the Supramental Age. This is the one truth we must realise, especially those who, like us in this room today, are wholly sold to his philosophy and his Yoga. There is a tendency these days, even among his disciples, to doubt the efficacy of all that Sri Aurobindo stood for because he and his Shakti, the Mother, passed away without ushering in the Divine Body for which they had laboured all their lives; but we seem to forget the other connected truths that they invariably pointed out while talking about the advent of the Divine Body. They told us in no uncertain terms that the atmosphere has to undergo a vast change before any such Divine Body makes its appearance and we ourselves are responsible to create the surrounding atmosphere by giving ourselves wholly to the highest divine element in us. Another fallacy that seems to obstruct the development of the right atmosphere is the egoistic assertion of the mere outward form and husk of Supramental Yoga as if by merely repeating Supermind, Supermind, Supermind, we can achieve the Supramental Consciousness. Words are merely symbols of the real thing and if we cannot delve deep behind the sound and meaning of various words, we shall never grasp the reality, let alone manifest it.

We can, therefore, bask in the sunshine of the Indian spiritual atmosphere and yet at the same time lose sight of the Total Vision that Sri Aurobindo has given us. A certain humility is absolutely necessary for any kind of spiritual development, for we must plainly understand that there is the Infinite and, no matter how high our realisations may be, there is a great way to go and the march has not ended. Petty minds and petty spirits get puffed up with just a little realisation but are we these petty minds and petty spirits? No, we gaze into the far distance, and the ever-shining goal we have put before ourselves fortunately includes all the past spiritual experiences and realisations. Aurobindonians must be people of vast minds and huge vision and it behoves us to have a tolerant and understanding mind always. Real love means this, for real love means complete oneness and identity.

If we give up useless pride and genuinely dedicate ourselves to realise the atmosphere about which Sri Aurobindo talks in his books, we can here and now bring forth the Supramental Being with a luminous, light, plastic and invulnerable body. We are self-conscious human individuals and therefore our voluntary effort is needed before Mother Nature changes. Of course, as Sri Aurobindo has assured us, the destiny of manifested creation will bring about ultimately the Supramental Being, but with

voluntary collaboration the work can be expedited. Therefore, today we can re-dedicate ourselves to this great endeavour and manifest the Hidden Divine in an ever-increasing measure.

Petty realisations and small visions do not attract us but these realisations may well be the steps of the entire ladder that we need to climb to the summit. And so no criticism, my dear friends, of anyone or any pursuit of various individuals. We must always have an understanding smile and an affirmative nod.

We shall enlarge our vision, our minds all the time and pigeonhole everything in its right place without any criticism at all, for all criticism means a lack of understanding and we, following the steps of Sri Aurobindo, claim to understand everyone and everything.

Such is the content I put before you today which is the Siddhi Day—November 24.

JAGANNATH KHANNA

ALL OF ME IS A CRY

ALL of me is a cry to be owned by Thee,
 No peace for me save in slavery of Thy feet!
 At day's end begs my heart prostratingly,
 "Now pull me under Thy pure feet's shelter, O Sweet!"

Day on day goes on cruelly coaxing me,
 "Another axe-stroke falls on your life today,
 Ruptured from cloudy coverings thoroughly
 Your self made nude make Hers now every way!"

Against Nature's will my self-giving must prevail,
 Pitting against it my spirit's power-blast!
 "O Mother, I know Thy Grace shall never fail,
 Nothing but Thou shall abide by us till the last!

"Dashing dark dogging designs of adversity,
 Yoke us to Thy living love everlastingly!"

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

WORKS AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE VEDA

THE VIEWS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND RADHAKRISHNAN ON THE TWO SECTIONS

(Concluded from the issue of October 1976)

V. Rejection of Radhakrishnan's Criticisms

It will be helpful if we restate the objections of Radhakrishnan against Sri Aurobindo. Mainly they are: (1) Sri Aurobindo's view is not in conformity with the modern views of European scholars; (2) his view does not agree with the system of Purva Mimamsa, the authority on Vedic interpretation. By the modern view Radhakrishnan means "the modern historical method",¹⁸ which proceeds on the assumption that "the later religions and philosophies arose out of the crude suggestions and elementary moral ideas and spiritual aspirations of the early mind".¹⁹ He also means "the scientific theory of early human culture".²⁰ In the same way, by the system of Purva Mimamsa he means the system of interpretation associated with Jaimini as well as with Sayana whose commentary on the Rig Veda is largely due to the inspiration from the Purva Mimamsa.

Let us now consider the first objection. According to modern historical methods of analysis, the human race in its earliest periods was intellectually immature and passed through a state of infancy. So it is impossible to associate with such a race ideas which are profound and highly mature. Such ideas emerge only when the race arrives at a higher level of development and maturity. Since the authors of the Vedic hymns belong to a period when the human race was in its crude beginnings, it would be inappropriate to attribute to them such metaphysical ideas as Sri Aurobindo does—this in brief is the first objection against Sri Aurobindo's thesis. Sri Aurobindo does not dispute "the idea of an evolving knowledge in humanity"²¹ but what he disputes is the idea that the Vedic Indians fall within the group of early men just struggling to get out of the hold of savage life. Radhakrishnan's argument would hold good only if the Vedic Indians belong to the above group. But Sri Aurobindo argues that they belong to a highly evolved society and organised culture, and it would be quite appropriate to attribute to the authors of the hymns such profound ideas as he prefers to. What then is the evidence upon which he bases his argument? We cannot establish the culture of the Vedic Indians from the thought-content of the hymns, for to do so is to commit the fallacy of begging the question. Therefore Sri Aurobindo turns his attention to the structure of the hymns, and this furnishes him with conclusive evidence for his view:

The hymns possess indeed a finished metrical form, a constant subtlety and skill in their technique, great variations of style and poetical personality; they are not the work of rude, barbarous and primitive craftsmen but the living breath of

a supreme and conscious Art forming its creations in the puissant but well-governed movement of a self-observing inspiration.²²

Therefore Radhakrishnan's belief that the Vedic hymns are the products of unevolved or immature minds is wholly mistaken.

In this connection Radhakrishnan tries to say another thing also. If, according to Sri Aurobindo, the Vedic hymns represent "the highest spiritual truths"²³ then the whole progress of Indian thought "becomes a steady falling away"²⁴ from that position. This conclusion about the progress of Indian thought does not necessarily follow from the premise. It is quite possible that the successive periods of Indian thought are a series of attempts to progressively rediscover the truths of the Vedic hymns in other succeeding contexts. In fact this is what we witness in, and also what Sri Aurobindo says about, the history of Indian thought.²⁵

Now we shall come to the other aspect of the first objection—that Sri Aurobindo's view does not agree with "the scientific theory of early human culture". Radhakrishnan does not say anything about the scientific theory he is referring to. We do not know what he has in his mind. The scientific theory may refer to the theory or theories put forward by sciences like Comparative Mythology and Comparative Philology regarding the interpretation of ancient works like the Vedic hymns. But there is hardly anything scientific about these sciences, for they are still in the formative stages struggling to rise to the level of a science. Therefore, in an interpretation of the Vedic hymns, there is no reason why we should conform to their conclusions. Sri Aurobindo finds that Comparative Mythology is based upon "poetic imagination rather than a patient scientific research". He says:

Comparative Mythology has...founded its interpretation on a theory which saw nothing between the early savage and Plato or the Upanishads. It has supposed the early religions to have been founded on the wonder of barbarians waking up suddenly to the astonishing fact that such strange things as Dawn and Night and the Sun existed and attempting in a crude, barbaric, imaginative way to explain their existence. And from this childlike wonder we stride at one step to the profound theories of the Greek philosophers and the Vedantic sages. Comparative Mythology is the creation of Hellenists interpreting un-Hellenic data from a standpoint which is itself founded on a misunderstanding of the Greek mind. Its method has been an ingenious play of the poetic imagination rather than a patient scientific research.²⁶

Like Comparative Mythology, Comparative Philology also can hardly claim the status of a science. Sri Aurobindo observes:

Modern Philology is an immense advance on anything we have had before the nineteenth century. It has introduced a spirit of order and method in place of mere phantasy; it has given us more correct ideas of the morphology of language and of what is or is not possible in etymology.... Here, however, its achievements cease. The high hopes which attended its birth, have not been fulfilled by its maturity. It has failed to create a Science of Language and we are still compelled

to apply to it the apologetic description given by a great philologist after some decades of earnest labour when he was obliged to speak of his favourite pursuits as "our petty conjectural sciences". But a conjectural science is no science at all.²⁷ When "the scientific theory of early human culture" is thus far from being scientific, it is pointless to say that Sri Aurobindo's theory fails to accord with it.

Let us now come to the second objection. In answer to the criticism that Sri Aurobindo's theory is opposed to "the system of Purva Mimamsa, the authority on Vedic interpretation", Kapali Sastry very rightly points out that this criticism is due to a gross confusion about the relation of Purva Mimamsa to the Veda. Sri Aurobindo's theory is primarily about the Mantra portion of the Veda. But the Purva Mimamsa is concerned only with the Brahmanas. To say that Sri Aurobindo's view is opposed to the view of Purva Mimamsa is to commit a double error: (1) the error of imagining that Purva Mimamsa is also an authority on the Mantras; (2) and the error of insisting that a work on the Mantras should conform to an authority on the Brahmanas. Therefore it is clear that it is the confusion about the real scope of the authority of Purva Mimamsa that is chiefly responsible for raising the objection against Sri Aurobindo. So we have to dismiss this objection as 'puerile',²⁸ to borrow the word from Kapali Sastry.

If we do not want to convict Radhakrishnan of such a gross confusion, we may take that Purva Mimamsa is the authority on Vedic interpretation not in the literal but in the general sense. Broadly, we may say that though the Purva Mimamsa view is specially applicable to the Brahmanas, it is theoretically possible to extend its application to the whole of the Veda. Perhaps Sayana is experimenting with this theoretical possibility in his commentary on the Veda. Sayana himself admits it:

Because of its usefulness in commenting upon the Mantras we have first commented upon the Brahmana along with the Aranyaka section; so that the Samhita consisting of the Mantras can be explained then and there with citations from the Brahmanas.²⁹

So in this sense we may say that Purva Mimamsa is the authority on the study of the Veda including the Mantras.³⁰ And now let us consider how far the objection that Sri Aurobindo's view is opposed to the view of Purva Mimamsa is valid. It is true that Purva Mimamsa is the authority on the study of the Veda. But that does not mean that its authority cannot be called into question or set aside, when there is a valid reason to do so. And, what is more, Sri Aurobindo is not the first to set aside its authority. For a different reason the traditional commentators on the Upanishads or on the knowledge-section have already done so.

According to Purva Mimamsa, the Upanishadic texts have no purport of their own and hence should be treated as eulogies (arthavada). For example, "the Upanishadic texts about the self or Brahman should be regarded as eulogies of the eligible person for a sacrifice."³¹ Rejecting this view, the Vedantic commentators point out:

The Vedanta texts have their own fruit—and that the highest, *viz.*, release.... So, the Upanishadic texts cannot be regarded as eulogistic statements.³²

Therefore, not conforming to the view of Purva Mimamsa cannot be a reason for raising an objection against Sri Aurobindo, as Radhakrishnan does.

VI. Defence of Sri Aurobindo's View

In support of Sri Aurobindo's thesis that the hymns of the Rig Veda are full of symbols of the secret knowledge of the ancient mystics, we may adduce three arguments.

First, *the argument from internal evidence*. That there is a secret knowledge behind the Riks is referred to by the Riks themselves. Sri Aurobindo calls attention to the hymns of the Rishis Vamadeva and Dirghatamas and shows what the Vedic Rishis themselves held about the Mantras :

The Vedic Rishis believed that their Mantras were inspired from higher hidden planes of consciousness and contained .secret knowledge. The words of the Veda could only be known in their true meaning by one who was himself a seer or mystic; from others the verses withheld their hidden knowledge. In one of Vamadeva's hymns in the fourth Mandala (4-3-16) the Rishi describes himself as one illumined expressing through his thought and speech words of guidance; "secret words"—"*niṣyā vacāmsi*"—"seer-wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the seer"—"*kāvyaṇi kavaye nirvacanā*". The Rishi Dirghatamas speaks of the Riks, the Mantras of the Veda, as existing "in a supreme ether, imperishable and immutable in which all the gods are seated", and he adds "one who knows not That what shall he do with the Rik?" (1-164-39).³³

Second, *the argument from external evidence*. Sri Aurobindo quotes the view of Yaska, the author of Nirukta, about "the tradition of a secret meaning and a mystic wisdom couched in the Riks of the ancient Veda" and shows that his own view of the Veda conforms to the view of no less a person than Yaska.

Yaska himself declares that there is a triple knowledge and therefore a triple meaning of the Vedic hymns, a sacrificial or ritualistic knowledge, a knowledge of the gods and finally a spiritual knowledge; but the last is the true sense and when one gets it the others drop or are cut away. It is this spiritual sense that saves and the rest is outward and subordinate. He says further that "the Rishis saw the truth, the true law of things, directly by an inner vision"; afterwards the knowledge and the inner sense of the Veda were almost lost and the Rishis who still knew had to save it by handing it down through initiation to disciples and at a last stage outward and mental means had to be used for finding the sense such as Nirukta and other Vedangas. But even then, he says, "the true sense of the Veda can be recovered directly by meditation and tapasya", those who can use these means need no outward aids for this knowledge.³⁴

Apart from this, the Upanishads also speak of the secret sense of the Veda. They repeatedly claim that they are setting forth the hidden meaning of the Veda. The Taittiriya Upanishad declares, "this is the teaching, this is the secret doctrine of the

Veda, *eṣa upadeśaḥ eṣa vedopaniṣat.*"³⁵ Again, the Shvetashvatara Upanishad says, "the Upanishad is the secret of the Veda, *vedaguhyopaniṣat.*"³⁶

Third, *the argument from internal consistency.* Once we admit the mystic sense of the Veda the whole body of hymns exhibits an admirable order and consistency otherwise very difficult to find in them. Given the key words or symbols that stand for the secret sense of the Mantras, they illuminate what seemed obscure, create intelligible and clear coherence where there seemed to be only confusion; the hymns as a whole give us a clear and connected sense.

(a) Once the clue is found, we discover that [the Mantras] are perfect wholes as admirable in the structure of their thought as in their language and their rhythms.³⁷

(b) [The Veda is] not confused in thought or primitive in its substance, not a medley of heterogeneous or barbarous elements, but one, complete and self-conscious in its purpose and in its purport.³⁸

(c) The Rig Veda is one in all its parts³⁹

Unless the mystic sense is an inherent element of the Rig Veda, its discovery could not have produced such a wonderful result, *i.e.*, it could not have brought about such a grand internal consistency between the hymns and their parts as is witnessed in Sri Aurobindo's interpretations.

(Concluded)

N. JAYASANMUKHAM

NOTES

18, 19, 20. S Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1929, (hereafter IP) P 70

21. Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, Centenary Edition, p 545 (hereafter SV.)

22. *Ibid*, p. 9.

23, 24 IP, p. 70

25 SV., p 546

26. *Ibid*, pp. 25-26

27. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

28. T. V. Kapali Sastry, *Rig Veda Samhita*, Vol. I, Pondicherry 1952, p. 26.

29 *Ibid*, p 26

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 51 and 63.

31. *Saibandhavortika* Dr T M. P. Mahadevan University of Madras, 1958, p. xiv.

32 *Ibid*, p. XV

33 Sri Aurobindo, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Pondicherry, 1952, p vii

34. *Ibid*, pp. viii-ix

35. 1-11-6.

36. 5 6.

37. SV, p 16

38. *Ibid*, p. 44.

39 *Ibid*, p 54

A FEMININE IMAGE OF GOD

(Concluded from the issue of October 1976)

ALAIN Danielou, in his *Hindu Polytheism*,⁷ has enumerated the ten most important forms of the Goddess as the ten objects of transcendental knowledge. He says that these are the ten aspects of the cycle of time, the epitome of the entire creation, the summary of all the stages of existence, the energies of which the universe is the pulsation and the outer expression. They are represented as "powers" and as "nights". Some of these figures are beneficent, representing the creating and sustaining power, others are terrible in aspect, representing the dissolving power. Her forms depicting the destructive power are incredibly ferocious, but no matter how terrible, they always include some sign of benevolence, usually the mudras (hand gestures) for granting boons and dispelling fear.

Of the ten forms enumerated by Danielou, I will mention only three. Kali is the Power of Time and the Night of Eternity. Relative time, represented by the daylight hours, is Maya, the appearance of multiple things. But Kali is also absolute time, the night, meaning pure consciousness, non-existence. As such, She is beyond all fear Herself and is the remover of fear for Her devotees. She is the giver of bliss which is permanent. Her action of destroying our attachments to particular things seems terrifying to us, but it is the way by which She leads us into supreme joy. Bhuvaneshvari, the Lady of the Spheres, is the Power of Knowledge and the Night of Realization. As Knowledge, the Lady of the Spheres is the Ruler of the universe, the creation of which is a powerful flow, a constant evolving. When the universe is withdrawn, She is the Queen of that Night in which Pure Being is realized. In both aspects She is Eternal Wisdom, of which the Vedas are but fragments. Chinnamasta, "the Beheaded," is the Power of Sacrifice and the Night of Courage. The cosmic Sacrifice is the source of multiple existence. Every particular being lives by the sacrifice of some other being. The world continues to exist only by devouring itself. But in the end the head is restored to the body, symbolizing resurrection, or the reality of life in the essence of all beings.

The province of the Divine Mother is thus all-comprehending. As the *Mahamravana Tantra* says, everything in the world owes its existence to Her. She is the original, undifferentiated, all-generating divine Substance, an inexhaustible, eternal well of being. She is both the supreme Power that generates the world, and the world so generated, both cause and effect. She is both the energy of execution and the intelligence of planning, the deliberating, reasoning energy of creation, the one who measures out and plans the world as an architect would plan a building. And having produced the universe, She pervades it. She is all in all.

She is both gentle and terrible. She is both divine creative energy and divine destruction, because both principles are at work in the universe and are, in fact, only two sides of the same principle. Because She is thus ambiguous, not representing only

one side of experience or some preference of human taste, Devi is able to symbolize the Absolute. She is even more comprehensive than some other images of the Ultimate One, for She unites the binding power of *Avidyā* (Ignorance) with the liberating power of *Vidyā* (Knowledge). Her breath is the eternal rhythm of expiration from spirit to matter and inspiration from matter to spirit. As Maya She evolves the world. As Mahamaya She recalls it to Herself. Both movements are divine. The Shakti worshippers point out that Vishnu and Shiva give only *mukti* (liberation from the world). Devi gives both *bhukti* (enjoyment of the world) and *mukti*.

Furthermore, She is not only present in the world, but She is present in each individual. The microcosm and the macrocosm are, in their metaphysical structure, exact images of each other. As Devi illuminates the universe, so She "shines in the minds of the sages. She is extremely subtle; the awakener of pure knowledge; the embodiment of all bliss, whose true nature is pure Consciousness," says the *Satchakranrupa*. The consciousness-power (Chit-Shakti) that is in us goes out, so to speak, into our environment and contacts objects of experience. Thus it expands and changes, grows and organizes. Our individual consciousness becomes a large world, full of a variety of interesting and attractive things. This is the microcosmic image of the creation of the universe, an emanation from the soul of the Divine Mother, growing like an embryo within the womb of Her divine consciousness. But because our microcosmic experience is an exact replica of Her macrocosmic experience—and in fact it is She who moves in our microcosmic being even as She does in the macrocosmic being—we are able to identify ourselves with Her, to trace the phenomenal world of our consciousness back to the center of our selfhood and find there our unity with the Absolute Mother.

Conceived as the Shakti-worshippers do conceive Her, She is indeed the Absolute. It would be a great mistake to think that every conception of the Divine Mother is reducible to some kind of fertility goddess who simply presides over the repetitious round of the seasons. Shakti, considered as the Supreme Deity, *i.e.*, not as complementary to Shiva, has no husband. She is unconditionally the Virgin-Mother. All forms are from Her, including the gods. She is the Cosmic Source who sustains every kind of differentiated being. She is the Original Energy which in the manifestation is the substance of all. The *Devi Bhagavata* calls Her the One Supreme Life and says that while all gods and all life and being are worshipful, they are so only as Her manifestations. Supporter of all, She is Herself without support "Origin of the world Thou art," sings a hymn from the *Tantrasara*, "yet hast Thou Thyself no origin." The *Devi Upamshad* says that She is the One "beyond whom there is none."

The Divine Energy is governed by its own nature of knowledge, desire and action. It is original spontaneity and transcendent power. The highest worship of Shakti is as Pure Intelligence, as the Self, the Witness of the universe which She creates. She is the Enjoyer, the Contemplative, absorbing now Shiva's role as well as Her own active nature. She is Absolute Transcendence which contains the manifest within it. Therefore worship of Shakti is not worship of the limited forms of Her energy which consti-

tute the phenomenal world, but worship of their transcendent Source, the Divine Will, Wisdom, and Act.

The theological propositions about the Divine Mother thus cover a wide range of assertions. Shakti, as the Absolute, is simply Herself, without any reference to the world; She contains the world within Herself; She *is* the whole universe, but is not exhausted by it; and She exists within every part of the universe. Without parts Herself, She exists in Her fullness everywhere. Despite Her production of the multiple world (motherhood), Her absolute Unity (virginity) remains unimpaired. The *Devi Bhagavata* speaks of "the Mother of all the worlds, who creates this universe,... protects [it] by Her own energy..., and withdraws it at the close of every aeon, and remains disporting Herself in Her oneness."

Finally, the Mother's worshippers call Her "Sat-chit-ananda," the least inadequate name that may be applied to the divine nature. As Sat, She is pure Existence, which, when manifest, is expressed in the power of multiplicity, of action, and of coordination. As Chit, She is pure Consciousness, which expresses as the power of knowledge, of understanding, and of volition. As Ananda, She is pure Bliss, from which emanate the power of delight, the power of dissolution, and the power of realization.

But Sat-chit-ananda is the appellation usually reserved for the impersonal Brahman, which is neither male nor female, the supreme neutral principle beyond all imagery and all conception. Yet the Shakti-Worshippers unhesitatingly identify the Divine Mother with this Infinite Being. She is both the qualified (*saguna*) Brahman and the unconditioned (*nirguna*) Brahman. In Her unmanifest state She is beyond all form, yet She can appear in any form. She is the manifold of conscious forms and also pure, formless Consciousness itself. A Tantric hymn addresses Sarasvati as "Thou who art both form and formlessness,...embodiment of all gunas, yet devoid of attributes." The *Kali Upanishad* and the *Tārā Upanishad* advocate the worship of the Goddess as the symbol of the Unqualified Principle, Brahman. "To be freed from the world," advises the *Suta Samhitā*, "one should worship the Witness of All, the Transcendent Energy." The *Devi Bhagavata Purāna* recognizes two types of worship: "She is said by the learned to be of two kinds, unqualified and qualified. Those bound by attachment should worship Her qualified form, those without attachment Her unqualified form." For She is both the supreme unconditioned Brahman and the Mother of the universe. She is the great integral mystery. As a hymn to Bhuvaneshvari says, "Although men must meditate upon Thee, yet cannot their mind comprehend Thee."

Let us now check back to see whether this feminine image of God has successfully carried the more usual theological conceptions. The first of these, we may suppose, is supremacy and uniqueness. Certainly, in the documentation offered above, it is abundantly clear that Devi is conceived as the utterly supreme Being. When She is supreme—*i.e.*, not coordinated with the Shiva image—She is also unique. There is none like Her, none beside Her, none prior to Her or beyond Her. She is further affirmed

to be eternal, impassible, blissful, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and to reign providentially over all with wisdom and benevolence. Through Her will the world is created, sustained, and dissolved, and through Her personal action human souls are saved and find their fulfillment in their union with Her.

Absoluteness, transcendence, and infinitude may be considered as the next required attributes. These, also, as we have seen, are asserted by the Shakti theology. But is not femininity a necessarily relative notion? How then could a feminine Deity *qua* feminine be absolute? (or, for that matter, a masculine one?) This question is an echo of the objection raised at the outset, namely, that a gynemorphic God is no improvement over an andromorphic one. However, it seems to me that in the Shakti tradition we have a good example of what was proposed in my second answer to this objection. Ideas and affections can be focused *through* the image-concept of the Divine Mother, as through a lens, onto that dimensionless point of the amorphic Transcendent, about which (or whom) nothing can be said. In the last paragraphs of the preceding section this is just what we have seen happening. From an active mothering principle—giving birth, nurturing, freeing in maturity but still coaxing and protecting, and finally liberating from phenomenal existence—the Shakti image shifts almost imperceptibly to an image of the goal of life and thereby to an image of the ever-free, the Witness, therefore the Transcendent, the Formless (Infinite), and the Absolute. She even has the advantage over some other images of the Transcendent in that She maintains Her immanence in the world, both cosmically in the world as a whole and individually in each person. Perhaps the mother image facilitates this theological formulation inasmuch as the mother-child relationship itself takes on at different stages so many different aspects.

If we become more specific and compare Shaktism with some of the theological conceptions of Christianity, we find a number of points of coincidence, or near coincidence. With respect to the Trinity, we can refer to Shakti-Brahman as Sat-chit-ananda, where the unconditioned Being of Sat may be likened to the generating but ungenerated First Hypostasis, Chit to the Logos, the Second Hypostasis, and Ananda to the comforting breath of love attributed to the Third Hypostasis.

The parallelism with the Logos conception seems particularly strong. The *Durga-saptashati* is typical of praise of Devi as Divine Wisdom: "O Goddess, Thou art Wisdom, the supreme Goddess worshipped by the seekers of liberation, by the sages, in whom all passions have subsided." Under the title of Bhairavi, the Divine Mother is hailed as the one "whose substance is existence and intelligence." She is the union of intelligence and commanding power in the Word, by which organized creation arises. (In human pursuits Sarasvati is patroness of eloquence, poetry, and music, all instances of ordered creation arising from pure spontaneity.) Devi is sometimes called the *śabda*, or sound, Brahman, within which are differentiated the energies of knowledge, will, and action, and She is represented in this aspect in the Sri Yantra as the innermost triangle, made up of all the letters of the alphabet, that is, of all the elements of intelligent self-expression. As speech She contains all worlds

within Herself, says the *Tantrasara*. We may compare this view with the Logos theology of Augustine and Bonaventure, for whom the Divine Word contains all knowable objects and all possible beings, both universal and singular.

As the Word, Devi may be regarded as the proximate Creator, the intermediary between the invisible (formless) God and the world, an intermediary which is nevertheless one with God. The whole world is Her incarnation. This brings to mind not only the prologue to John's Gospel but Paul's Letter to the Colossians, in which he writes of Christ as "the image of the invisible God...[in whom] all things were created. [and in whom] all things hold together" and the elaboration of this idea in the works of Teilhard de Chardin, who speaks of a cosmic Christ.

Because in Her role as Creator Devi is the intermediary between the Infinite Ultimate and the world, and also is incarnate as the world itself, She has a further aspect in which She presides over all transformations. Here we may pick up some resonance with certain Christian scriptures and certain interpretations of Christian sacraments. It is by Her word that the transformation takes place, and it is Her own substance that is transformed. Whom She will She withers and whom She will She saves; and all are but branches of Her single living reality. Death and rebirth are twin moments in Her continuous existence, expressing Her power to lay down life and Her power to take it up again. And beyond the descending and ascending movements of Her Energy, She rests eternally in the bosom of the Formless and the Transcendent with which She is one.

As Herself securely transcendent and as the controlling power of transformation, She is the Savior of souls caught in the ignorant identification of themselves as prisoners of the world and subjects of an inscrutable Lord. To them She makes a double revelation: that the Supreme God who is necessarily invisible and unknown has nevertheless become manifest in the world of their experience and indeed surrounds them on all sides. "Cleave the wood and you will find Me; lift the stone and I am there" would be fitting words for Her. And secondly She reveals to the soul walking in darkness that he himself is the offspring of the Supreme Being and the heir of eternal life, whose destiny it is to unite himself consciously with the Divine Mother in transforming the world and resting in the still center which transcends the world. According to the *Markandeya Purāna*, whenever demonic powers severely threaten the world, the Mother of the Universe descends to earth to save, protect, heal, and comfort. And as Tara She leads Her children out of bondage into freedom and power.

I would submit, then, that on the theological side the feminine image, as exemplified in the Divine Mother of the Hindus, shows no inability to sustain the more common theological conceptions.

On the devotional side, the cult of the Divine Mother seems to lead to a remarkable degree of integration of the various human aspirations. Devotees of Devi are fond of saying that while philosophers and ascetics may abandon the world, they themselves worship the Mother and unite themselves with Her in the constant activity of the world. There is no need for them to leave the world to find the Absolute. *Shakti is the*

Absolute. And She is not only the veil of the Ultimate Reality, but also its only revelation. Consequently, all the world is holy. As Ramprasad exclaimed in one of his hymns, "The Mother pervades everything; when you move about in the city, you are walking around the Mother." We need not go anywhere to find God. She surrounds us on all sides and in every being. The world is not a vale of tears; the world is full of God. The universe as a whole is the Mother; every being individually is the Mother. Therefore we should love, reverence, and serve all unselfishly. We are not to renounce the world but to worship Devi with the whole world, offering Her all our actions, even the most secular, the most menial, and the most trivial.

According to the Shakti theology, the world here is just as real as any world elsewhere or as the unconditioned Absolute. All is the one Shakti. It is the One itself which wills to become many. Devi is not inferior but glorified for Her manifestation in the world. The final goal of Her devotee, therefore, is not merely freedom from ignorant subjection to the limited forms and conditions of the world, but union with Her power, identification with Her creative work, Her blissful play among variety and individuality. The spiritual (the Mother in Herself) and the natural (the Mother of the universe) are thoroughly one. The devotee also must aim to know himself in all his natural functions as the one consciousness. He should contemplate his essential nature (*ātman*) as Devi, both in experience of the world and as transcending the world. He will rise to this realization by a righteous, joyous, and creative life *in* the world, and not by an artificial rejection of the world.

A great deal more could be said about devotion to the Divine Mother, citing feasts in Her honor, Her worship in the home, the wealth of poems and songs addressed to Her, expressing childlike trust, cosmic awe, and ecstatic love. We could describe the lives of saints devoted to Her and the characteristics of the mystical path leading to Her realization. However, what has been said here is perhaps sufficient to indicate that the figure of the Divine Mother is the center of a rich and vital tradition in which Her presence elicits an integral human response of devotion, moral sensitivity, and mystical aspiration.

To return, finally, to our opening thought, the relation of feminine theology to women's self-image and to the whole movement of women's liberation, we might conclude for the moment by reflecting on whether even a passing first acquaintance with this great figure of the Goddess does not have to some extent a refreshing, reassuring, and strengthening effect upon the soul. What, then, if women, meditating more earnestly upon the dearest values, the profoundest realities, and the highest aspirations of their own lives, were gradually to bring to full awareness a feminine image of Deity which dwells already in latent (forgotten?) form somewhere in the depths of their consciousness? It might be one of the truest and most liberating experiences we could have.

(Concluded)

BEATRICE BRUTEAU

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of September 1976)

10 *(Contd.)*

“COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS”, SRI AUROBINDO’S “SUPERMIND” AND HIS VISION OF THE
DIVINE LIFE, THE DEMANDS OF AN EVOLUTIONARY WORLD-VIEW, TEILHARD’S
“PLEROMA”, HIS LATE CONTACT WITH SRI AUROBINDO’S THOUGHT

(b)

WITH the advent of modern evolutionism the goal of an earthly perfection has taken an increasingly concrete body. Modern evolutionism, in its deepest drive, is the scientific reflex of the Supermind’s light that has been pressing upon the terrestrial consciousness and has formed its double Avatar, its joint announcer and realiser and organiser, in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Through modern evolutionism it has touched Teilhard: hence his scientific look forward to a collective evolution of man into a “super-consciousness” culminating in a divine manifold unity which he terms Omega Point. The element of in-born pantheism in his nature, feeling matter itself to be secretly a substance of divinity, tends him all the more to envisage a divine culmination within space and time. No doubt, the super-consciousness, born of what he designates the crossing of a new “critical threshold” which is not merely of “reflection” as when man appeared but of “co-reflection”, falls far below Sri Aurobindo’s detailed and extensive account of Supermind embodied in a collective divine life. Still, the Teilhardian move is in the Aurobindonian direction. What spoils it is the grip which, for all his novelty, for all his “new religion”, he allows traditional Christianity to have upon him.

He is right—and eminently Aurobindonian—in exceeding a pantheist evolutionism and holding that Omega is not just a cosmic potentiality in the future but a transcendent actuality here and now which will meet its own evolutionary form, the Soul of the World, when humanity will attain its maturity. If everything evolves the Divine, the Divine must be already there for ever to serve as the Magnet drawing upward and onward. Teilhard’s concept of the “Prime Mover Ahead” completes pantheist evolutionism. But he falsifies the latter and distorts the completing concept by saying that the maturity attained by humanity will coincide with an end of history, a cessation of time and space, a de-materialisation of the cosmos into a Pleroma *à la* St. Paul giving everything a fulfilment in the Beyond alone. Teilhard argues as though for a fulfilling “ultra-human” within the cosmos, but proceeds to identify the “ultra-

human" with the "trans-human" in a non-cosmic eternity.

Occasionally, the instinct of the evolutionist-cum-pantheist pulls him back from the identification and lends an earthly meaning to the next "critical threshold". Once more there is dissension within him and we have two voices speaking here as everywhere else. De Lubac¹ notices, though grudgingly, the discrepancy: "He may well on occasion have dreamed of 'another'—relatively other—humanity that would arise at the critical point and take over from our own in a universe that had not yet arrived at its temporal term; and he may have attributed to this 'other humanity' a 'universal love' that would spontaneously introduce on earth the sovereignty of charity. But this chimerical element seldom enters into his thought. The thought itself is completely independent of it—even though he did not always, maybe, warn the reader against a chimerical interpretation." A critical point or threshold commencing a mankind strikingly different from what it is now, the members of the species *homo sapiens* turned, as Teilhard² elsewhere says, into "supermen" by being made "into elements governed by some higher soul", is obviously a Pleroma within the cosmos. And there seems no reason why the meeting of the transcendent Omega with its own evolutionary form should carry away the earthly ultra-human immediately into the unearthly trans-human and put a *finis* to evolutionary existence in space-time rather than manifesting the transcendent in the spatio-temporal. If the point of maturity can coincide with the Pleroma, it is just as logical to consider the Pleroma manifesting in the spatio-temporal as to consider evolutionary space-time existence metamorphosed into the Pleroma. But Teilhard mostly acted as though blind to this logic, and could not steadily contemplate the truth, loyal to pantheist evolutionism's temper, of a cosmic millennium of the Spirit. De Lubac³ annotates the "dream" of that millennium with the dreamer's own words: "I have no personal illusions about the incredible element in my hypothesis..." And he adds: "Even in such rare passages, it could, moreover, be possible that Père Teilhard had in mind, without making it quite clear, the supernatural reality of the mystical body."

I am afraid de Lubac is indulging in wishful thinking so far as the supernatural reality he speaks of is regarded as history-ending. Teilhard nowhere drops as much as a hint that he is working along eschatological lines. De Lubac's earlier suggestion that Teilhard was writing of an event within the framework of a universe that would one day arrive at its "temporal term" is absolutely gratuitous. No "temporal term" figures in the essay from which he has quoted Teilhard's dream of "another humanity". The actual words,⁴ as given in the official translation, are: "*Another* mankind must inevitably emerge from this vision, one of which we have as yet no idea, but one which I believe I can already feel stirring through the old mankind..." And Teilhard goes on to relate the stirring he feels to his contact with any man, however "alien .by

¹ *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 218

² *Human Energy* (Collins, London, 1970), p. 63

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 358, n 67

⁴ *Activation of Energy* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 74

nationality, class, race or religion", who, like him, has opened his eyes and seen, through modern perspectives of the cosmos, the voyaging ahead of evolution. In such a brotherhood of vision the Christian idea of a "temporal term" would be entirely out of place.

De Lubac also creates a false impression by failing to quote the sentences¹ that follow what Teilhard says about his "hypothesis": "I find it indeed just as difficult as anyone to feel, or even to imagine, what sort of thing inter-human sympathy (between cosmic elements and other cosmic elements) could possibly turn out to be—even though the empirical laws of noogenesis oblige me to regard its appearance as probable, and even inevitable. With that reservation, however, I shall observe that the quasi-impossibility we still find in conceiving the establishment of a unanimity of man may well derive from our overlooking a certain factor which, if introduced into our calculations, is capable of producing entirely different results. By that factor I mean the quite recent sensitizing of our minds to the organic depth and convergent properties of time." The sense would seem to be: feeling and imagination going by common experience fumble in unbelief as if one were in the realm of the quasi-impossible, but insight into the evolutionary process and the impression it gives us of more and more complex and unified organisms appearing irreversibly with the passage of time, cosmic elements converging upon ever greater centres of consciousness in the natural course of the ages—such insight is bound to kindle the hope, nay, even the certainty, of a super-organism arising with its inter-connections established by love on a planetary scale. Teilhard's true position may be elucidated by another passage² from the same essay: "The very first time we meet it, the idea of a super-human organism seems fantastic. Nevertheless, if...we are willing to entertain it, and then begin to examine it more deeply, it is surprising what order and clarity is introduced into our outlook on the universe by a hypothesis that at first seemed crazy."

What renders the essay in question most definitive in its trend and not in the least pleromatic in the extra-cosmic connotation is a certain linguistic turn de Lubac ignores. Here Teilhard does not speak merely of "an ultra-human synthesis":³ he also refers to this "further degree of organization, and therefore of consciousness and therefore of freedom"⁴ as the actualisation of a "possibility" and a "potentiality" represented and contained by "the plurality of thinking molecules", and this possibility and potentiality he defines as that of "a further trans-human synthesis of organic matter."⁵ The "trans-human", like the "ultra-human", is now an earthly vision. It is a Pleroma in the intra-cosmic and not the extra-cosmic connotation.

Nor is this fusion of the two terms, without implying the latter connotation, a unique aberrancy characterising the present essay. Elsewhere too Teilhard⁶ has the phrase: "the problem of knowing whether, and up to what point, it is physically (planetary) possible for man to trans- or ultra-hominize himself." There is also another context⁷ where we read: "...it follows from what we have already said about

¹ *Ibid.*, pp 72-73

² *Ibid.*, p 68

³ *Ibid.*, p. 69

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁷ *Human Energy*, pp 137-8.

the birth of the cosmic sense that the prime mover of human activity can only have been a reality possessing *universal dimensions* .. A total and totalizing end: nothing less could set the springs of our liberty in motion and bend them to it... Not only for an elect minority but for the masses as well, it has become a commonly accepted 'article of faith' that if there is any way forward for the world and salvation for the individual, they await us in the direction of some higher form to be attained by humanity. But how exactly are we to picture the features of this super-humanity in which the world is to be epitomized?... The features of this whole subject of trans-humanity, which has been in continuous creation throughout the vicissitudes of the earth, perforce escape us..." Here we have the already existent Omega and the evolutionarily emerging Omega playing into each other: they are the same reality under two aspects, holding our future fulfilment as at once a super-humanity and a trans-humanity. And neither aspect leads to an extra-cosmic consummation. All that the context carries us on to is the following suggestion:¹

"At two critical points human energy has already assumed the form in which we know it today: first the appearance of life, whence emerged the biosphere; then emergence of thought which produced the noosphere.

"Cannot a further and final metamorphosis have been in progress since the birth of love in Christianity: the coming to consciousness of an 'Omega' in the heart of the noosphere—the circles' motion towards their common centre: the appearance of the 'Theosphere'?"

A sort of divine "change of state" upon our planet itself is pictured for humanity: it is not made dependent on an exit from the planet into a timeless and spaceless beyond.

Yes, the instinct of the evolutionist-*cum*-pantheist in Teilhard sets him occasionally on an Aurobindonian tack. But, by and large, as de Lubac is happy to mark, the trans-human is the extra-cosmic supernatural side of the ultra- or super-human, and Teilhard himself, if religiously catechised, would be disposed to find any other view incredible.

Incredibility, however, would be quite out of place once we could challenge the precise argument by which Teilhard concludes that the condition he is describing must coincide with the end of history. We may frame his dialectic, in effect, thus:

"There are two currents in cosmic history: entropy and complexity-consciousness. In science, entropy denotes the widely observed diminution, in all energy-exchanges, of the utilisable form of energy. By the Second Law of Thermodynamics, utilisable energy grows less and less with time until a dead level of non-utility will be reached in the universe, a state of totally dissipated heat and, in consequence, utter disorganisation. The Cosmos is bound to run down in the process of exchanging what I call 'tangential energy'.² This tangential energy pertains to the 'without' of things

¹ *Ibid*, p 160

² Cf. Zaehner, *Evolution in Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1974), pp 44-45, where he draws upon Claude Cuénot's explanations in *Teilhard de Chardin* (Burns and Oates, London, 1965)

But there is also what I term 'radial energy'. It pertains to the 'within' of things and brings about the complex arrangement of matter, the union of material factors to constitute a centre of action: the complexifying and centrifuging movement is radial or psychic energy. By means of radial energy 'critical points or thresholds' are effected in evolution—notably the appearance of life out of pre-life and mind out of animate matter. Here we have a current running counter to entropy. And every evolutionary leap is irreversible on the whole. Zigzags, even to-and-fros, occur on a minor scale, yet no definitive going back or reversal. This phenomenon I designate 'orthogenesis'. But for radial energy to counteract tangential energy's tendency towards entropy it must always be pushing forward. A stop anywhere will render its achievements a victim to entropy, to disorganisation. Now, if evolution attains its ultimate summit and there is nothing further to attain, we have a problematic situation. Entropy must begin to act since there is no further pushing forward in space-time; but what about the quality of irreversibility associated with every evolutionary leap? This quality cannot have force against the entropy-subjected state of evolutionary halt unless a push is made into a dimension other than space-time. Evolution must either break down by the law of entropy or else leave space-time for good and enter eternity."

Several issues are involved in Teilhard's argument. First of all, there is the issue of a *finis* to evolution. We may question the necessity to write a *finis*. And here we must ponder whether Teilhard can be justified in thinking of co-reflective unanimity as the *ne plus ultra* of evolution.

De Lubac is inclined to query the very notion of a critical threshold which would lead to a mysterious "super-organism" whose cells would be individual persons. We need not discuss this subject. What is useful to us is a certain Teilhardian posture framed by a remark of de Lubac's which claims to confound Teilhard out of his own mouth and thus disprove the legitimacy of talking in terms of a new critical crossover. De Lubac¹ writes: "We have his own statement that the 'threshold of reflection bears in itself something definitive';² he asks, too, 'what advance could there be upon thought?' " If Teilhard meant that on life's crossing the critical threshold of reflection, it has reached in general the final stage in the sense of having entered a phase of self-consciousness which will be the basis of all future achievement, he is on the right track. But he believes the rise of complexity-consciousness to have come to an end, so far as the human individual is concerned, with the advent of self-conscious mentality. The individual brain has attained its limit of organisation. Over the last 20,000 years, during which we have known it, it has shown no appreciable growth in complexity of structure or function.³ Individual evolution as such, except for negligible modulations in the brain-box, has come to a halt. Still, says Teilhard, evolution along the human axis has not terminated. It has become—to use Julian Huxley's expression—"psycho-social". A development is taking place not directly in the individual but by way of the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 209

² *The Phenomenon of Man* (Collins, London, 1960), p. 88

³ Cf. *Activation of Energy*, pp. 35-36.

coming together of individuals. Socialisation is the line followed by evolution. A grouping as of thinking cells is going on to form a collective Being, a sort of "super-organism". So, for Teilhard, the individual cannot go beyond the reflective stage that accompanies the present complexity of his cerebrum. The individual in isolation has no future higher than of thought.

And, to Teilhard, even in the collective evolution thought is not essentially over-passed. It grows totalised, magnified, "planetary", a huge "unanimity", but it is still thought. What Teilhard sometimes terms "super-consciousness" is yet nothing else than super-thought: that is why he describes the next "critical threshold" as that of "co-reflection".

Now, all this is a *non-sequitur* from the evolutionary premise. The human brain may not have shown any marked change in the last 20,000 years, but has not Teilhard¹ himself in his less dogmatic moments admitted: "there is nothing to prove absolutely that important evolutionary assets (a more developed arrangement of the nerve fibres) may not still be held in reserve in our brain substance"? And how can he assert that organic evolution has reached its ceiling in man, the animal group with the most expansive vitality, when he² has, in one place, proclaimed: "In common with many observers, I am convinced that the modification of zoological forms continues to take place (in exactly the same way as the folds and cracking of the earth's crust) and that only their slowness prevents our seeing them. I am convinced, for example, that everywhere around us races are being formed at the present day, in preparation for the coming of new species"? Moreover, the very proponents of a dead end for man speak—as even Teilhard³ has noted—of "some slight progress still to be expected in the direction of an increasing brachycephalism and a further flattening of the face"—two small yet not negligible clues to an organic process slowly continuing.

However, what is of primary consequence with man is not zoological modification—and Teilhard himself has never been backward in granting this. He holds that, with reflection, the evolution of consciousness acquires a greater "within", a deeper "interiority", a superior "centration", by which consciousness gains a marked freedom from physical determinism, an active independence of the complexity-counterpart. This being so, it is inconclusive to inquire for a development of the cerebrum in the last 20,000 years. What we have to ask is whether human beings have shown signs of a higher level of interiority than thought. And there the evidence is overwhelming. In the mystical phenomenon, thought often ceases and is rapt away in a luminous beatific realisation of the Super-human, the Divine. Or if thought remains it is the passive instrument of a Light and Bliss that are of the nature of the Eternal, the Infinite. Surely, a Meister Eckhart and a St. John of the Cross do not function in their mystical moments as mere thinkers, mere reflective centres? Even in the less abnormal phenomena of what we call "genius" we have intimations of a conscious state beyond

¹ *The Vision of the Past* (Collins, Fontana Library, London, 1966), p 252

² *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³ *Ibid.*, p 252

thought, above reflection, though thinking and reflecting are mostly mixed up with them. A Plato, a Phidias, a Leonardo, a Shakespeare, a Napoleon, an Einstein—to restrict ourselves to the Western hemisphere—have all a touch of the Superman. Supermanship comes in a distinctive form in giants of spirituality like—to list some in the Eastern hemisphere only—Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak, Mirabai, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharishi. Super-consciousness, in the true sense, confronts us throughout history: a “critical threshold” posterior in time to the one which introduced reflection into the evolutionary process is crossed by individual after individual, however partially and not yet in the rare integral sense explained and considerably exemplified by Sri Aurobindo. Teilhard is radically at fault in his outlook on individual evolution.

We may aver that in a broad sense complexity continues to develop even physically. Mystical states do have an influence on the body. Organic functions assume a supernormal aspect in many phenomena. Teilhard should know how the bodies of saints and mystics exhibit extraordinary properties under the stress of illumined or ecstatic experiences. And what Sri Aurobindo defines as Supermind, possessed of the divine original or “truth” of the physical organism no less than of the vital being and the mental self, is bound to have in the course of its precipitation and emergence a fundamental transfigurative effect on the whole somatic system. By the very logic of an evolution developing a finer physical medium along with a finer psychological instrumentality, such a transfiguration must be on the cards.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

MOTHER—THE OMNIPOTENT

YOUR touch can mould the stones into living beauty,
 A desert can boast of water by Your Grace.
 Poison transforms into immortalising nectar
 And the dead can open their eyes at Your will.

Age-long obscurities melt into a luminous dawn
 By a moment's look from Your smiling face.
 Your feet can make a new creation spring
 From a void that You please to pass through.

JOURNEY TO THE MATRIMANDIR

IN AUROVILLE, CITY OF DAWN RISING IN INDIA

Night-Watch Reflections of an Aurovilian, with Excerpts from a Diary kept at Peace, The Centre, Auroville

The image of this sacrifice is sometimes that of a journey. .; for it travels, it ascends; it has a goal—the vastness, the true existence, the Light, the felicity—and it is called upon to discover and keep to the good, the straight and the happy path to the goal, the arduous yet joyful road of the Truth...led by the flaming strength of the divine will.

— Sri Aurobindo, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*

WITH the approach of November 17th, the work on the *Matrimandir* becomes increasingly a gift of Grace and an opportunity to take inner bearings: where are we on our journey, the ascent? The gift is as exceptional as the construction and its purpose. For it is The Mother's *mandir*...where her support was given to its workers tangibly, concretely, while she was still on the physical plane; where each day since, in what an infinite variety of ways! her influence is marked, her presence and her leading felt.

One first recalls the days from November 11th, 1973 and the diary entries recording the storms of that rainy season when the monumental work of concreting the first level slab of the Sphere and completion of four Pillar summits lay ahead. How could it be accomplished during the height of monsoon-time—a work needing 72 consecutive hours of clear weather? In only one way, of course: by informing The Mother of the situation. Accordingly, a letter with precise details was sent to her through Champaklal. The diary notes:

(11.11.73): "At 2:30 p.m. Shyamsunder comes bringing from The Mother's quarters to Piero for the concreting the flowers Divine Presence, Divine Grace, Psychic Love. —A meditation of five minutes—and we begin." (14.11.): "Following the 'high' climax of the long arduous night that completed the slab for base of the Sphere, an in-drawing . . . trying to bring into constant play the unmatched experience of having been 'in union' with the smiling Consciousness, the Force felt in the others—no longer *others* from Ashram and Auroville—but parts of oneself, of the One Self... Its bowed back and cement-dust-marked forehead as at a Puja—All moved by Your Shakti in a moved rhythm of love and karmayoga—The labor of the Journey towards Transformation." (17.11.): "Began concreting North Pillar summit . at 11:10 a.m. and concreted .all of West Pillar summit by 7:07 p.m. for the vibration; after which the levelling and cleaning completed the work at 7:25 p.m."

From the *Matrimandir* Journal Progress Report: "The entire work was finished 17th November precisely between 7:07 and 7:25 p.m. When information came to the

Matrimandir that The Mother had left her body, it was seen that all Pillars of the Matrimandir had been completed by, and simultaneously with, the time of her physical withdrawal." *It dawned on us. Supporting our small but unified efforts with the four of her leading Powers and Personalities that stand in front 'in her guidance of this Universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play', she had held up the sky and achieved the impossible through whatever human instruments aspired to truth and, receptive, acted in harmony.*" ("The Golden Tower", MOTHER INDIA, Feb. 21, 1974)

The timing had been precise, the meaning unmistakable.

Two years later with the Matrimandir risen to a structural rib-height of 21.45 metres and the beginning of a new phase of the work, that of constructing the Dodeca-walls at the four end bay-ribs for the 12-sided Inner Hall, or Sanctuary of Truth, we can look back to realise it anew. She was with us; and she continues to be with us, at work within us when we take *the straight and the happy path to the goal, the arduous yet joyful road of the Truth*. Things that seem impossible like the marathon concreting November 11th to 17th that needed clear weather and was accomplished perfectly during the monsoon season—or indeed like the *mandir* itself, a complex and monumental undertaking being built by unskilled volunteers who have become skilled under the inspired leadership of an architect who has become a skilled structural engineer as well as a designer in the process—all become possible *led by the flaming strength of the divine will*. The Force is there, the Presence felt intensely by the group during concretings. For some individuals the experience comes with particular intensity during their Night Watch at *Matrimandir*. Come with us for a 3rd Watch and you will understand how it can be

2:30 a.m. *Matrimandir Workers Camp*. The Aurovilian due for duty awakens to see through the bamboo and woven palm-leaf Camp room window facing East an ethereal sphere ablaze with lights. It is an unearthly sight. Lit for an earthy purpose. 2nd Watchman, preceding us, has turned on the "curing lights" in the *Matrimandir* to enable him—a young Aurovilian from Mysore—to climb the scaffolding to the hose-pipe valves near the top of the construction in order to water-cure the most recent concretings.

From Camp the material maze of tubular steel rods and wooden scaffolds supporting the work areas, and the completed concrete concentric rings of the slab-levels and ribs arching to form a great lotus-like bud dissolves into a web of spirit-light... *The flame-born...burning towards the eternal realms* .¹

Then all goes dark. 2nd Watchman has turned the switch and will soon tap on our door to hand over the torch for 3rd Watch.

2:55 a.m. *The Walk to Matrimandir*. We journey on foot, a three-minute walk to the construction site, past the Amphitheatre with the Inaugural Urn of Auroville containing earth brought from so many lands to mingle at the centre of the City of the Future as One Earth...Past the Banyan Tree at geographical centre, from which

¹ Savini

will radiate the Garden of Unity ..On towards the temple to house the *Mystic Flame that could rebuild the world with its tongues of sacrifice* ..¹ The intense stillness of the night brooding over the mysterious house-to-be gives promise that the Flame lit in it can rebuild the world. Its upward climb is not alone from slab-level to level of concrete, *from plateau to plateau as of a mountam*, but from plane to plane of our being. Arrived at the rim of the excavation and looking up at the massive skyward sweep of the structure we remember the years of collective journeying that have brought us this far together *led by the flaming strength*...and the promise. Sometimes the weekly Nightwatch walk culminates in a strong experience...

*There is often a sudden opening by which the veil of forms is itself turned into a revelation. A universal spiritual Presence, a universal Peace, a universal infinite Delight has manifested, immanent, embracing, all-penetrating. This Presence, by our love for it, our delight in it, our constant thought of it returns and grows upon us; it becomes the thing that we see and all else is only its habitation, form and symbol. Even all that is most outward, the body, the form, the sound, whatever our senses seize, are seen as this Presence; they cease to be physical and are changed into a substance of spirit.*²

3:00 a.m. *Matrimandir Construction Office*. Bending our heads we enter the low-roofed office, its thatching overhung with the flowering vine The Mother calls Harmony. Inside hang still the paper triangles and leafy branches left from the Durga Puja celebrated by our Tamil carpenters who have become Aurovilians—there is no longer any paid labour building *Matrimandir*. Pinned above the desk on which are two bound volumes of MOTHER INDIA, a text on BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND SUPERINTENDENCE, Satprem's book *La Genèse du Surhomme*, and a kettle of milk-tea, is a note of instructions: 3rd Watch is please to return kettle to *Unity* kitchen and turn off all lights on construction site. All Watches are to water the new concretings at North, East and West pillars.

"The new concretings." Yes! the Presence of Delight has manifested since the beginning of this month and new phase of work. For we have begun the Dodeca-walls of the 12-sided Inner Hall itself...centre of the soul of Auroville. a creation absolutely new on the planet It is this Inner Hall which The Mother saw in detail and confided to certain disciples. One, an engineer in the Ashram, she instructed to draw a plan of the interior based on her description. After the plan was drawn and she had seen and approved it, The Mother gave it to the chief architect of Auroville to be embodied in the *Matrimandir*. It is on this plan for the Inner Hall that construction work is now proceeding under constant supervision of the Italian-born architect Piero to whom the exacting execution of the entire history-making structure has been entrusted.

The spirit entering the new phase is experienced as an intense concentration and harmony, full of force yet peaceful, and filled with—Delight. An entry in the diary (9.10.75) records it:

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga* ² *Ibid*

Concreting at North end bay-ribs. Dodeca-wall section 90 c. high. A new closeness, harmony in the work, came today as we clustered over the concentration-demanding sheet-metal shuttering needed for the thin-walled sections and fine cement-pourings. Piero working like ten, here, there, with handfuls of cement in his large hands, X with a new humility, "Lord" Krishna with a gay devotion all in unison—and the new Tamil Aurovilians remaining with the old "Guard" at their posts after the regular working hours. The vibrators OM the harmony, the steel-rods hum with it. Even visitor-workers daring the heights to help with trowel and mumpsti are swept with the current of oneness, expressing it as "a feeling of the Force" or "a sense of elation."

One loves each concentrated cement-smear head so absorbed in the new creation, being re-created... Here in the chapter *Victory over Death* Satprem speaks of it as "the law of Truth, the flow always new of The Harmony..." And here in this construction, with this vision of The Mother, we have been given the Way to journey into that cosmic flow: Harmony of the Spheres containing us, contained in us. *It is like the Force, the central Force of Auroville, the Force of Auroville's cohesion*. The Mother has said this of the *Matrimandir* work to Aurovilians. What is the nature of the mystery, *Matrimandir*, to which we journey? Last year, in this office, the chief architect Roger told the assembled workers what he had understood from The Mother:

"The Matrimandir is a receptacle for spiritual energy, Force. It is the instrument of the evolving Supramental Consciousness...that the city may be guided by Truth in all its aspects ... An economy, social structure, education, arts, agriculture, industries, all developing according to Truth."

We could realise then The Mother's warning of urgency in its building. The sooner the soul of Auroville is there, the better for everybody, especially Aurovilians. She had addressed *Men, Countries, Continents!* with the imperative choice: *Truth or the abyss* (I.I.67). Again and again she pointed out: *It is only the Truth that can save us, Truth in words, Truth in action, Truth in will, Truth in feelings* (26.II.72). On the wall of this office, under her photograph smiling as she makes it a mother's admonition, are her steel-pointed words that cause us to reflect as we ascend to the increasingly dangerous heights of the work: *I can work with you only if you do not say a lie and are at the service of Truth*. Still people understood only the lesson of catastrophe. Would it have to come before we live in the Truth? She asked an effort of all *so that it has not to be.... It is a choice between serving the Truth or being destroyed* (26.II.72).

For humanity, to whom Auroville belongs according to its Charter, *Matrimandir* would be *a place in which to receive the Truth-Consciousness*.—We had listened intently while the chief architect continued relating to us what he understood from The Mother. Here the Supramental Consciousness-Force would manifest. *This is the starting point, at this Centre of the city that wants to be the living embodiment of an actual human unity*. Without its soul Auroville would be just another new city. With its guidance by the Truth-Consciousness...light for the collective journey into the New Age.

3:30 a.m. *Matrimandir Construction Site*. Making the patrol-tour of steel yard, electrical, wood storage and supplies rooms, we find the carpenters' shed still festive where the consecration of our tools took place. Diary entry 13.10.75 records: "Bunches of leaves are tied to posts. Piles of wooden shutters become a stair-cased altar. On it, side by side garlanded, are bright paintings of Ganesh and of the goddess of Perfection Saraswati seated on the lotus of immortality, and a photograph in colour of The Mother to whose forehead has been applied, like those of the others, the red seal of the Mother Durga's fire of Victory. Banners of her triumph over the dark forces hang alongside wreaths of wooden plate-washers on ropes. In Auroville there will be no separating religions; but the Matrimandir carpenters, Tamilian and newly Aurovilian, tell us Westerners that our tools must be cleaned and consecrated 'or they will turn on us and cut us.' They remind us that our consecration in our work should be renewed each day, each moment, freshly—like the leaves and flower-garlands—in our hearts And hasn't The Mother reminded us that the simplest Indian villager is closer to true spirituality than the most intellectual European? We feel it here at the dim-lit altar of concreting shutters:

*All works and all life become...a daily dynamic worship and service of the Divine... and the Force too that offers it is the Eternal Force, the omnipresent Mother.*¹

Time now to check the Machine Workshop with its power-tools contributed by an Aurovilian from California, and the work area where the sheet-metal shutterings have been welded. This is the first for metal moulds, needed for the thin gauge Dodeca-walls sealing the end bays of the parallel ribs at each of the four Pillars *Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati*. An English-born Aurovilian, head of the Workshop, has recently taken a short course in welding preparatory to the herculean construction task ahead. The spiral ramp to be mounted in the journey upward and inward to the Inner Hall or Sanctuary, is to be welded. It will require perfect craftsmanship. That skilled welder is awaited while the less demanding sheet-metal work goes on. Mysteriously the persons required for a particular phase of the work appear at the time they are needed. As in a flow they come from Paris...St. Louis, Missouri...Munich...New Jersey . Stuttgart . New Delhi Montreal ..Baroda...Barcelona...Quebec City...Ujiji .Calcutta...County Durham .Rome...leaving as mysteriously when their part in the harmony has been played, their contribution to the rising wonder made. Or remaining, if that is their destination and destiny, at the "Transformation Work-Place." We are all *journey-men* here, from the most accomplished professional in his or her "previous life" to the youngest inexperienced apprentice beginning the search. Whether a woman architect from Florence, former Franciscan priest and author from the Netherlands, physician from Bombay, playwright from New York, or revolutionary from the Ivory Coast of Africa, we are now tie-binding, oiling clamps, iron bar-bending, chipping concrete, tightening bolts on our journey together ..to our transformation.

¹ *Ibid.*

*Out of the wood and stone of our nature's stuff
A temple is shaped where the high gods could live.¹*

4:00 a.m. *The Hour of Brahman. Model Room.* Entering from the moonlit yard we look into the room in which the Matrimandir model, built to scale, is housed. Not yet completed in model form is the Inner Hall. We open the cross-section doors and try to visualise it from The Mother's descriptions as given in certain Conversations 1969 and early 1970. It is the Hour of Realisations!

We read:

That was the first idea: there was the Centre and the town was organised around it. Now they are doing the very opposite! They want to construct the town and put in the Centre afterwards.

And the 'thing' is ready to come! I have known it for a long time, it is there (gesture upward), it is waiting.

Contemplating the tower-like interior of the model with its 12 walls perpendicular to a height of 8.65 metres, then at an angle slanting to the roof of the Hall completing the height at its peak to 15.20 metres on the Plan, at which point there is an opening for an optical device to concentrate the sunlight, we turn back to the Conversations with The Mother. On 3.1.70 she explains that she saw the interior of the Matrimandir clearly, very very distinctly.

That means that it was like that and that it is still like that; it is there (gesture indicating an eternal plane)...the interior of this place...It will be a kind of hall which will be like the inside of a column.. a tower with twelve facets; each facet represents a month of the year...And then, inside, there will be twelve columns. The walls and then twelve columns. And right at the centre, on the ground there is my symbol, and above it four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols, joined, which form a square; and above that...a globe.

Asked if it should be of crystal, The Mother answers, *If it is possible, yes.* Of the light:

The sun ought to strike the globe; then according to the month, the moment, it will be from here, from there, from there (gesture indicating the movement of the sun)... you understand? There will always be an opening with a ray. Not a diffused light: a ray which strikes...

And then, there will be no windows or lights in it. It will always be in a kind of light shadow, day and night—by day with the sun, by night with artificial light... rather golden...The important thing is ..the play of the Sun on the centre. Because that becomes the symbol...of the future realisations.

The seating space:

On the ground, nothing, except a floor like this one (in Mother's room)...A carpet everywhere...except at the centre... And it must be able to hold from a hundred to two hundred people.

¹ Savitri

The Mother foresees as clearly its function:

It will be a place for concentration. Not everyone will be able to come; there will be a time in the week or a time in the day...when visitors will be allowed to come, but anyway no mixture. A fixed time or a fixed day for showing, and the rest of the time only for those who are...serious, serious, sincere, who want to learn to concentrate.

...I still see it when I speak of it—I see. As I see it, it is very beautiful, it is really very beautiful...very tranquil.

Throughout the Conversations a note of urgency is heard as from a vanguard far ahead calling back to us that it was necessary to make this Centre, straight-away. She had seen it; it must get started!

If it were well realised, that would already be something very interesting for people. That would be a materialisation of something... But let it not become a religion for heaven's sake!—This is what I have learned, the failure of the religions. It is because they were divided. They wanted one to be religious to the exclusion of the other religions; and all their knowledge has failed because they were exclusive; and man has failed because he has been exclusive. And what the New Consciousness wants (it is on this that It insists) is no more divisions. To be able to comprehend the spiritual extreme, the material extreme, and to find to find the point of union, there where...That becomes a real force.

...All, all together. That is what I want: to be able at last to create a place where all the opposites can unite.

Quietly we close the model's Inner Hall walls. The Mother has been speaking to us. And as we go towards the front office room to return to the filing cabinet the translation of her words we find a piece of paper on the floor. Someone—perhaps 2nd Watch?—practising English script has laboriously written in green-blue ink, not finished:

O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light and bring down God into the lives

The Mother smiles from her photograph over the cabinet.

5:00 a.m. *Up in the Structure.* Time for water-curing the new concrete. It was a laborious ascent last year—1975—made in darkness lit by only a few arc lamps, steel-rod level by level of the scaffolding traversed to the water-valve system and control switch before inching our way to the then newly concreted end bay-ribs at North, East and West—all in different locations at different levels. It had been terrifying, the first few weeks of having to climb on perilous bars poised now above a void on a bent dowel, now swinging in space where there was no plank for the next step—an arduous experience to cross the vast structure through pits of dark or misleading shadows. But we learned that the ascent beyond fear is part of the journey. This year's Night Watches of water-curing duty enable us to recognise the milestones reached and passed. They have been collective—significantly. 1976 has been the Year of Mahakali, pounding the crude ore of our lives into more or less fine metal, advancing us more swiftly or less on our way according to our faith and surrender to the Force

here “present as never before.” The summit Ring-beam of the Sanctuary itself, the Inner Hall, joining the four rib-curves of the Pillars, had become the “Ring of Union”. The Mother’s voice sounds in us as we look up to it from the wooden platform where we will begin tonight’s climb.

And what the New Consciousness wants (it is on this that It insists) is no more divisions. To be able to comprehend the spiritual extreme, the material extreme, and to find...the point of union, there where .. That becomes a real force.

The “Ring of Union”, summit beam of the Sanctuary roof, had been cast in the Spring, begun on the “Night of Savitri” as celebrated in parts of India May 28th, completed at pre-dawn May 29th in a concreting remarkable for the spirit of unity evinced by Aurovilians and Ashramites working together throughout the night in a harmony of “aspiration towards the Divine”. On the material plane the four-rib summits of the Pillars were joined in the “Ring of Union” as on a higher plane the four aspects and powers of The Mother leading the universe. On the human level workers from all four quarters of the globe had joined together for the casting in “a living embodiment of an actual human unity”. The concreting, accomplished at a great height dangerous enough even in daytime, was followed by a meditation on what Nirodbaran termed “the sacred ground” of Matrimandir. It seemed to us, present then, another recognition of the Matrimandir Savitri’s conquest over Yama, Lord of Death, on our common journey towards “Immortality our home.”

Tonight we are to water-cure the new concrete of the 3rd level slab and ring-beam which will provide foundation for the floor of the Inner Hall. This part of the Watch-journey begins by a descent of earth-stairs into the excavation 10¹/₂ metres deep and 50 metres wide at ground level. As we go down to turn on night work-lights in the dim brooding depths we remember how digging for the excavation was started on The Mother’s birthday in 1971 and the Foundation Stone laid, with Nolini reading her Message:

Let the Matrimandir be the living symbol of Auroville’s aspiration for the Divine.

After a meditation and music, Nolini had placed a sealed box in a crater dug 3 metres between this site and the Banyan Tree. A year later the heavy excavation work, all done by hand, was completed and the phase of concreting begun. At sunrise of February 21st, 1972, a symbolic ceremony had been held in the excavation marking commencement of the foundation and four Pillars during which the OM Stone bearing The Mother’s inscribed OM and signature was cemented into the base of the East Pillar. Nolini had read The Mother’s Message:

Let Auroville be the symbol of a progressive Unity.

And the best way to realise it is a unity of aspiration towards the Divine Perfection in work and feeling in a consecration of the entire life.

We pass the cement mixer into which Nolini had put the first blue granite stone for the cementing-in of the OM Stone, a processional of those present in 1972 having formed after the sunrise meditation to offer, each in the unity of aspiration, a blue-metal for the mix. Mounting now the narrow vertical steel ladder up East Pillar we

feel the OM Stone in its base our secure foundation as the climb grows steep. The old fears have been surmounted; but Mother Kali has taught us sharply this her year that each step of the journey to realisation must be a concentration, a consecration, each breath an OM. As the Aurovilian from Morocco replied when asked if he were "building the Matrimandir": "No, the Matrimandir is building me." That was in 1970 when he was Zălit working with crowbar and shovel on the iron-hard earth for the excavation. Six years have passed and Zalit, Krishna now, vibrates cement mix to lay the foundation for the Inner Hall, the Sanctuary ..on a new level.

Reflecting on the changes that have taken place among and within us, workers on the journey to our collective soul, we see the sky too changing. The sun rises: torch of 3rd Watch has been taken up by the Hand above, Master of our Yoga. And we seem to hear again The Mother reading to us ONE DAY as she did a past Sunday evening at our meditation on the construction site ..

*One day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path, and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.*

*Hill after hill was climbed and now.
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.¹*

From the top of the scaffolding the Centre of Auroville appears to shimmer in light. We look about us, at the Space in which the manifestation of the Sanctuary of Truth is being prepared in plywood and steel. *The 'thing' is ready to come! I have known it for a long time, it is there, it is waiting,* she calls to us.

And each of us answers in his own way. Descending the ladder to turn out the construction site lights, we see a white-clad figure coming like a sentinel to the Tower. 6:00 a.m. *Watch's end.* The sentinel has come before us, turning out the lights before proceeding to his desk work at *Unité*. Time to take back the tea kettle and prepare for the day's work And post notice for next Sunday's meditation at Matrimandir:

*...Until the Highest is gained
In whom the world and self grow true and one
our journeying cannot cease.²*

SEYRIL,
Matrimandir Workers Camp,
Peace, Auroville.

¹ *Collected Poems*

² *Savitri*

DIALOGUES

(Continued from the issue of September 1976)

Synopsis:

The soul's life as Oshichi, the feudal Japanese serving woman, comes peacefully to an end, after she has lived out her last days as a hermit in the forest of the great Spirit whom she worships and who has sustained her.

The soul is then reborn as a young noblewoman in renaissance Italy. But despite the wealth that the Princess Isabella enjoys, her new existence is not without its dark side, for she is deeply oppressed by her over-possessive and demented father.

Chapter X

TODAY was one of those miraculous afternoons when Isabella found herself free. It was in any case the time when her father dealt with affairs of state, which he had always managed with a shrewdness that belied his spare-time madness, and as he had perforce to leave his daughter alone during those hours, it was the moment his hold rested upon her the most lightly. Even her waiting maids often slipped away, though the old man had instructed them never to leave their charge untended.

So now, as Isabella found no one about her, she felt herself filling with a rare and delicate bliss in which the world's colours heightened, her perception quickened, and everything seemed to take voice and speak. All the creatures that surrounded her—for there were many, they being the only objects apparently capable of interesting her—all emanated some form of communication. Her long-haired hounds came and placed their heads on her lap.

"We love you, beloved queen of our hearts," they said through their eyes. "Look into our faces and tell us that you love us too. See how soft we are—they brushed us well today...and see the wonderful plumes of our tails? They have removed all the burrs and mud—oh, we know we shouldn't have run away when you called us—but we just couldn't help ourselves. And now you see there was no harm. We are just as good as new."

Her Indian parrot came and flew onto her shoulder. "Isabella darling, are you sad again today? No, no, it won't do. If I rub my beak against your cheek, will you smile? Will you give me a nut? Last time you felt much better after you gave me a nut."

And then the tame squirrel on the great chest across the room:

"Princess, Princess, have you ever seen anyone who could do all the things that I can do? Run and leap and turn somersaults over chair backs, then dash up the curtains and over the tapestries? Race and jump and dodge everywhere, anywhere? And why? All because I want to show you. Because I want to show you that I too can

love—somewhere in this little heart of mine I can love as much as the great dogs and the parrot and all the other things...”

All the other things... They had been there from as early as she could remember. The tapestry with its regal statuesque figures:

“Isabella, beloved, do you know that all this that I am as I hang here was made for you? I am alive with the labour of a million stitches, of a million moments of human concentration, and the minute movements of all those human fingers and keenly focussed eyes which were all spent for you. But you are not well, my dearest, and I am dulled and darkened with sorrow for you.”

The far corner of the room with the large carved and polished chair in it:

“Your mother used to sit here. You never knew her because she died when you came. But you used to imagine her when you were little; dearest, do you remember what she was like and whether she was really as melancholically beautiful as her picture on my wall? She was, my love, she was, and even more so. You are like her, you know. Sorrow is in your face, but somewhere inside you, you are like a splendour of sunlight. It is for that sunlight that I live, love, and not the sunlight of nature. If it were not for that brightness this room would moulder and die. For things have happened here long since that it is best none should remember but the silent walls... things that would scream in the night, but that now merely moan for the bliss of your sunlight’s forgiveness.”

Then at last she answered: “You speak of sunlight in me as though it were mine, as though I had brought it and possessed it in myself. But do you know that I see the same sunlight in you, in all, in everything—everywhere? Soft and lovely and gentle, quiet and all-embracing. The world is made of it—have you not noticed, all voices speak through it, all beings move in it. And though they are many—voices, beings, existences—all move in the single unity of that sunlight. Have you never remarked it?”

They responded in a chorus, a quiet little chorus of objection from many sides at once: “But then why are you sad, beloved, why do they whisper about you behind your back? What is the use of this sunlight that cannot prevent you from being driven from your senses?”

“Ah, my dear ones, what terrible questions you ask. Questions I have never been able to answer. From whence come torment and possession, darkness and lunacy? It seems that they rise from some black cavern of existence, some inner subterranean hell where all is want and bitter stinging deprivation. Where life is terror and a clinging to tattered shreds of light that fly past in the dark. No, don’t look at me so, all of you—I have never been there. But I have been dragged to the very doors—”

It was the tapestry who answered her, for in the depths of its sombre tones it absorbed much that escaped the observation of the others:

“Look into your heart, Princess Isabella, and know the truth. You pass through those portals every day of your life. Every day you suffer unconsciousness, coma and death as you enter the terrible realms and leave your sunlight behind you on the

threshold—for it is that which never enters, but waits each time for your return.”

“And so they call me mad?”

“Indeed, so do they call you mad.”

Mad .. In this single moment of perception, still encased in the sunlight of her hour of solitude, she looked at the abyss into which she daily flung her existence, saw it clearly for once undimmed by coma, and absorbed the full magnitude of her peril. Torment . possession .. darkness...and lunacy. Ghosts that lingered from some trauma of existence now forgotten? Shadows of one who had possessed and killed and then abandoned himself to the forces of darkness? But had not this demon underworld had its fill of sacrificial victims from one life to another? Had they not been satisfied to destroy her happiness once without coming back a second time to complete their work and swallow her totally?

Yet she had other memories that welled now from their hiding places. Terror, trauma and death were not all she found within herself. There was something less urgent, less insistent but infinitely greater that she could remember too. It was the same sunlight that she stood in now, but inhabited by a vast being who had come to her rescue at that distant moment when she had so needed it, and to whom she had given herself like a child to an infinite mother, indeed to divinity itself. And once more at this instant, she reasoned on, why would the same divinity not come to her aid? For now she had arrived to another of those crucial turning-points when she must either be gathered up and saved or be abandoned irreparably in the flood that was rushing her headlong into the abyss.

Her heavy, voluminous skirts sighing about her, she sank to her knees in the centre of the room. Facing the high open window through which the sun streamed full upon her closed eyes, she filled her inner vision with its filtered brightness.

“Goddess of all time and all being,” she prayed. “Forgive me if I give you no name, for in my heart you are as nameless as the endless heavens—forgive me too if I attach you to nothing, either cross or rosary or statue or sacred book as others do, because for me you are the one thing free and unattached. Is it too late for me to place myself at your feet? Is it too late to escape the horror that confronts me? For this blessed, evanescent moment, I am free. I am myself, with my own vision, my own senses, my own mind and being. But this moment will soon pass, perhaps forever, unless you take me to yourself and hold me so tightly against your heart that I never again slip from your grasp...”

No further words came from her. In her desperation her very channels of expression had choked till, instead, her aspiration overflowed through her eyes in droplets of warm tears that made dark stains where they fell on her velvet dress. For minutes the silence endured, and then all at once in the depths of her own heart she heard an answer:

“I shall never desert you, child, but to be safe you too must always remember me. When you feel your mind slipping from you, call upon me and I shall be there. When you sense yourself dragged to the brink of the abyss, call upon me and I shall prevent

you from being drawn into it. When you need courage to resist your own fear, your own destruction, think of me and I shall be there to hold you strong and straight.

“Now beware, we must be vigilant, you and I, for like warriors we must fight for your right to live—”

“Dear God, what am I to do? Someone is coming.”

“Quiet and silence, child. Rise, turn away, and pay them no heed. Come, rather, to the mahogany stand on the desk and we shall look at your new Book of Hours. It is exquisite as all that has been given you is exquisite. For I would give you only the best. But why do you look so surprised? Do you truly believe that all you have comes from that poor tormented creature, your father, Jacopo? Seek not your reality in him. He is but a dying chimera. Look past him as though he were nothing and you shall not be deceived.”

The inner voice was cut short by the hard outer world forcing itself in with its own tones, its own invariable message:

“His Lordship awaits the Princess Isabella.”

And for once she was ready, alert, and poised with her answer:

“Kindly convey to my father that I am still enjoying his latest gift to me, these splendid ‘Hours’, the like of which I have never seen, and that I shall join him as soon as I have finished.”

Finally, after a stunned silence of half a minute:

“His Lordship shall be most displeased, my Lady.”

“Indeed, he shall not. If I am not to appreciate what he gives me, is that not the greatest disrespect of all? You may go.”

Dumbfounded by this new and unheard-of coherence on the part of their supposedly idiot princess, the two women withdrew jostling each other to back through the door. Once outside, they were ready to shout at the top of their lungs that Isabella had finally contracted the most virulent form of brain fever to add to her already numerous mental ills; that she had, to prove the extremity of her condition, openly defied her father, and that none could now know what further calamity may befall this God-forsaken state, abandoned by every form of order and sanity.

Old Prince Jacopo himself took the news without violence, much to the chagrin of the maids-in-waiting. Indeed, he took it almost with an air of absent-mindedness, a sort of distraction in which his mind, rather than having wandered to something else, seemed to have lost itself so that he could no longer distinguish clearly where he was or what he was doing or feeling.

By the time Isabella came to him half an hour later—serene and regal as she had always been even in her madness—he was already a sick man, pale, weak, and drained of force. Lying sprawled in his great chair, he wheezed:

“At last you have come, my dear. I am not well. A touch of cold wind, perhaps. I shall ask them to draw all the curtains from now on. What if you should be struck down as I have been? Come, sit beside me and give me your hands—I must feel your touch. It shall give me life—”

“No, don’t go near him, and above all don’t touch him.” The goddess’s command was peremptory.

“It is better that I should order you something hot to drink,” Isabella answered calmly. Meanwhile, within her, she responded simultaneously, “Beloved goddess, I thank you with all my heart. At this blessed moment I am able to see with your eyes, see that when he touches me and I lose sense and consciousness, his darkness enters into me and I am destroyed. But now, without me, he is a shell. Even the demon that possesses him has abandoned him and left him like a discarded husk. But was he never once a living soul like every other being?”

“Once, child, before the avarice of his heart drove it into exile, and supplanted it by demonic powers that found in him their perfect home, and in his servitors and his daughter their perfect food.”

She shuddered, and stepped back a few paces from the gasping figure of the old prince. He was exhausted now and could scarcely speak.

“Come to me, my dearest, see if I am feverish—here, my hand—”

“Do not strain yourself, Father, it is better you should be taken to your bed. I am having the physicians called.”

“No, dear, it is you that shall cure me, your hand—” But he was too weak to sit or rise, and offered no resistance to his attendants when they lifted him from his chair and carried him to the canopied bed in the adjoining room.

Isabella, meanwhile, kept her distance, although she felt the old man’s call to her to be all but magnetic, so great had his habitual hold upon her become. But she remained steadfast, even though at moments she thought she would faint from the pressure and the strain of her resistance, and kept her inner vision focussed on the luminous presence of the goddess.

From that day she never touched her father again, nor did he recover. Like a slowly sinking ship, he allowed the waters of oblivion to engulf him more deeply hour by hour. Still pleading weakly for his daughter’s touch he would submit tamely to all her excuses—that she had to prepare his potion, or that she would read to him instead, or that she must speak with the physician in charge to arrange for the next bleeding.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

PSYCHE

A PLAY IN VERSE

(Continued from the issue of September 1976)

ACT THREE

SCENE THREE

Zephyrus, Psyche.

ZEPHYRUS: This is the gate of hell.

PSYCHE: The lurid sun
Sinks down in the red furnace of the west
And over the black horizon one last ray
Shoots out and strikes the doors. The hinges groan.
The doors swing wide.

ZEPHYRUS: Quick, Psyche, before they close,
Across the threshold. Follow the path of light.
Remember the cakes and the gold, but most of all
Never forget what you carry in your heart.

PSYCHE: I am within. The great doors close behind
And all before is black infinity
Except one slender thread of silver light.
The way leads downward into the dark unknown.
[*She comes into a strange twilight expanse.*]

VOICES: Look, someone is coming from the other side.
A woman.

Alive.

A WRAITH: What god has given her power
To come from the world of light while she yet breathes?
Go back, unwanted visitor, and leave
Us who are dead to suffer here alone
The pangs of separation and prepare
To cross the stream; for we must wander here
Until the shock of unexpected death
Has passed and the constricting cords of life
That bind us still to those whom we once loved,
And those we hated, loosen and fall away.
You are not welcome here.

ANOTHER: O living soul,
Turn back, turn back, before it is too late.
Turn back to the world of happiness, where I

Just yesterday, it seems, could lift my eyes
 To see the sun that I shall see no more —
 No more; ah, only now I realize
 How beautiful and sweet were life. Turn back.
 There is still time.

PSYCHE: I have a work to do
 And must go on until that work is done.
 I seek the boat that plies the Stygian stream.
 Which of you knows the way?

[*A warden of the place, the Limbo of the Lately Dead, steps forward.*]

WARDEN: The Stream of Hate,

That winds its coils around the three domains
 Of Pluto's kingdom, flows not far from here
 And this same path will lead you to the place
 Where Charon ferries to the other shore
 Souls he will never ferry back again.
 But hark. I hear his scow. He comes to see
 If any of the wraiths that languish here
 Are ready for the crossing.

[*Charon is seen poling his scow. The dead rush up to him and the one who had spoken first to Psyche addresses him:*]

WRAITH: O boatman, please,
 Take me; my bonds are cut and those above
 Have ceased their lamentations. I am free
 To go to the Place of Peace.

CHARON: The Place of Peace?

I make no stops there

WRAITH: Oh, please, take me away

The drifting uncertainty is too much to bear.
 The everlasting fires of Tarturus
 Would be less painful. Take me away from here!

CHARON: Get back, your time is not yet come, nor yours;
 But you can get aboard. [*He notices Psyche.*] And what are you
 That come before your thread of life is shorn?
 What is your business here that you descend
 Still living to the kingdom of the dead?

PSYCHE: My business is Aphrodite's. I am sent
 By her as envoy to Persephone.

CHARON: Ah, Aphrodite's handmaid. I have heard
 About the disobedient bride of Love.
 And now his mother sends you here—to see
 The scenery of Hades and then return—

Or so at least you hope. Ha ha ha ha!
 Out of the boat, you'll have to wait your turn.
 I have a special passenger today.

[PSYCHE gets into the boat. Amid wails of protest and lamentation she and Charon set forth. Water sounds. Soon moving figures are seen.]

PSYCHE: Boatman, what place is this? What forms are these
 Moving like mute automatons or dead leaves
 Blown by the wind?

CHARON: The place is Erebus,
 Abode of those who lived mean, harmless lives
 Upon the earth, before they meanly died.
 Here they exhaust the force that still remains
 Of old impulsions, dead velleities
 And phantom goadings of extinct desires
 Like men that pace at night before they sleep.
 [Mime]

Look there, see Sisyphus, condemned to roll
 That boulder to the top of yonder hill.
 Long he must toil to inch up, step by step,
 The steep incline, but when he at last succeeds,
 Before he can enjoy his victory,
 The rock rolls down and he must begin again,
 As he has begun ten thousand times before,
 His fruitless labour from the plain below.
 [Mime continued]

PSYCHE: How long are they constrained to wander here?

CHARON: Until their time is finished they must stay.

PSYCHE: But this is not the last word, something more
 There is to death, for surely even in these
 There is a soul and a will whose power could break
 The spell of this inert somnambulance.
 There surely must be something they can do!

CHARON: I know not. I am the boatman. Nothing more.
 [Water sounds]

PSYCHE: Boatman, look to the left, a stream of fire
 And there beyond it move gigantic forms
 That fill the air with anguished cries of woe.
 Who are they? what the river? what that land?

CHARON: The stream is the volcanic Phlegethon,
 The red-hot boundary line of Tartarus,
 Where beings of brute violence are confined.
 The titan host that dared oppose the gods

Here dwell in chains, three-bodied Geryon
 And Tityus, whose liver vulturous beaks
 Forever tear and Ixion on his wheel
 And countless others, all whose human lives
 Were lived for taking and whose twisted minds
 Perversely let the animal lead the man.

PSYCHE: But why are they condemned to suffer here
 And not allowed to rest in peace?

CHARON: In peace!
 What right have they to peace that lived by strife?

PSYCHE: The law of the talion then? an eye for an eye?
 Is this God's justice?

CHARON: Ignorant mortal, hear:
 In tortures of their own unwilling device
 Cut to the pattern of their thoughts and deeds
 They work out swiftly what long centuries
 Of earthly excess could not satisfy;
 Until, freed from their own desire-forged chains,
 They pass from here into the Place of Peace
 Enjoying their untroubled psychic sleep
 Until the summons to new birth is heard.

PSYCHE: But how can they escape the wheel of birth
 To take joy in the soul's eternity?

CHARON: I know not. I am the boatman. Nothing more.
 [*Water sounds*]

PSYCHE: Oh, look yonder, a magnificent purple light
 Suffuses the wideness of a tranquil sky.
 And there, upon an ample argent plain
 Walk calm majestic figures robed in gold.
 O boatman, is it then true what we have heard?
 The fields of the unfading asphodel,
 Where those whose lives were calm and good and wise
 Remain forever in felicity,
 Are real? the Abode of the Blest? the Elysian Fields?

CHARON: This is the place, as real as such things are real.
 But not forever can these souls remain
 Enjoying the fruits of righteousness, they too,
 After unnumbered years of happiness,
 Compelled by their own natures, must return
 To take up once again the ancient work.

PSYCHE: But what could make them leave this paradise?
 What labour could remain with heaven gained?

- CHARON: I know not. I am the boatman. Nothing more.
[*Water sounds*]
- PSYCHE: O boatman, what gigantic looming mass
Of absolute black towers overhead
Like an unseen mountain on a moonless night
Whose ponderous oppressive heaviness
Smothers the soul and blots out all the stars?
And hear! What brutal sound reverberates
From its dark caves?
- CHARON: No time now. We have reached
Our destination, the capital of hell,
The palace of Pluto and Persephone.
- PSYCHE: My eyes become accustomed to the gloom
And can make out dull black bituminous walls
Shot through with veins of sombre mineral:
Glass-black obsidian and rich black jet
And bloodstone and obscure green serpentine;
And there, below, two ebony doors, inlaid
With arabesques of dark unburnished gold,
That silently swing open and from within
The baying becomes unbearable. Silence now.
Dead muffled silence.
- CHARON: [*Screaming*] End of the line! All out!
- PSYCHE: Now light of my soul be with me! [*She gets off the boat.*] Ferryman,
Your toll is here. Come, take it with your own hand.
- CHARON: You think your friends are clever. But not for long
Will their advice avail you, no, not for long.
And not with me will you come back again.
No, not with me.
[*He slowly poles his dinghy out of sight.*]
- PSYCHE: Here is the sentry dog.
But which of his maws to feed?
[*She gives him the homied sop.*]
Sleep, monster, sleep,
I mean no harm to you. But now which way?
In each direction is the same dense black;
No, now I can see shades of darkness, reds
That are not red, like roses seen at night
And sombre greens and purples.
[*A steward of the palace approaches.*]
- STEWARD: What do you seek,
Unknown intruder from the world of light?

- PSYCHE: An audience with Persephone.
- STEWARD: Indeed !
And who are you that seeks our sovereign queen?
What business have you with her?
- PSYCHE: I have been sent
By Aphrodite. Psyche is my name.
- STEWARD: Psyche. She is expecting you. Wait here.
In this forecourt itself will she receive
So mean a guest as you.
[*He goes out and returns with Persephone.*]
- PERSEPHONE: Psyche, my child,
Approach
- PSYCHE: Great goddess Kore.
- PERSEPHONE: Say no more.
What news from Aphrodite, my dearest aunt?
- PSYCHE: She sends you greetings.
- PERSEPHONE: Greetings? and is that all?
- PSYCHE: And wishes for your good health.
- PERSEPHONE: Ah, and no more?
- PSYCHE: And asks of you a favour.
- PERSEPHONE: Ah, indeed.
And what could that Olympian want of me?
- PSYCHE: A little of your beauty, so please you, O Queen.
- PERSEPHONE: My beauty? But this is most strange, my child.
Is she not Beauty herself? What need has she
To take from humble Kore's meagre store?
- PSYCHE: I know this not, O Queen, but only obey
The commandment of my mistress.
- PERSEPHONE: Yes, of course,
Of course, my child; but how will you take back
This beauty that she demands?
- PSYCHE: For that this box
Was given me.
- PERSEPHONE: Then let the box be filled!
[*The steward goes out with the box.*]
And you, my child; come here and sit by me
And take with me a meal, the finest fare
That Hades can provide.
- PSYCHE: Oh no, O Queen.
Rather allow me to sit on this low seat
And wait for your attendant to return.
It is not meet that I should sit with you,

Mere mortal that I am.

PERSEPHONE:

As you wish, my child.

And see, he comes now bringing the coffer filled
 With priceless treasure. Great store I have of gold
 And gemstones: rubies, pearls and diamonds,
 For all the riches of the earth are mine;
 But nothing I have worth more than what this box,
 This little box that you have brought, contains,
 For in this box lies beauty: the earth and the sky,
 The first glow of the dawn and the light of the moon
 And the gesture and colour and scent of jasmine and rose
 And the bodies of animals and of women and men;
 All nature's senseless beauty is here and more:
 The sculptor's discovery of the soul of stone
 And the painter's magic stroke making colour and line
 Reveal what nature holds in secrecy
 And the poet's rapturous weaving of rhythm and word
 And the sweetness and power that music compels from sound
 And all man's conscious labour to bring to birth
 Some portion of the unseen loveliness
 That upbears all existence and breathes into life
 The bliss that makes it last eternally;
 All this is here and more: the discordant notes,
 The unfound rhymes, the gestures of death and pain;
 The tragic mask that covers the same rapt face
 Of the Mystery-player, the priest of the bacchic rite,
 The soul of beatitude; all are present here
 In this small box that Aphrodite has sent
 With you, child. She must think most highly of you
 To have trusted you with such an important task.
 Come take the box. I must retire. Farewell. [*She goes out.*]

PSYCHE:

All beauty in a box. I must return.
 When I have placed it at Aphrodite's feet,
 Then she will let me see the one I love.—
 The one I love. But will he still love me?
 Or will he only smile and say, "Well done.
 Now you have learned obedience. Good. Now go
 And live out happily your life on earth."

VOICE:[*offstage*] Open the box. Psyche, open the box.

PSYCHE: What was that? It is too dark, too dark to see
 Where I am going. Where is the path of light?

VOICE: Open the box, Psyche, open the box.

- PSYCHE: I must go to the gate, give Cerberus
The honied sop. I must go to the gate.
- VOICE: Psyche, open the box, open the box.
[*Enter a chorus of demons who begin to dance round PSYCHE, chanting
sometimes together, sometimes in pairs, sometimes singly.*]
- PSYCHE: Oh no, demonic voices ring me round
And I have no defense.
- CHORUS: Open the box!
Open the box, Psyche, open the box.
All beauty can be yours, open the box.
Open the box, Psyche, open the box.
All beauty can be yours, open the box.
- PSYCHE: Where can I go? What can I do? No, no!
- CHORUS: Open the box; it is your due.
Open the box; it was made for you.
No one will know; no one will care;
No one will miss it. Hurry, hurry!
No one will ever be aware
What you have taken. Hurry, hurry!
- Take just a little. How can you say
You must not do, you must obey.
After the things that you have done,
What does it matter? Hurry, hurry!
Add to your sins another one:
One among hundreds. Hurry, hurry.
- Open the box, Psyche, open the box.
All beauty can be yours, open the box.
Open the box, Psyche, open the box.
All beauty can be yours, open the box.
- What does it matter what you do?
Nobody cares so much for you.
Nobody's watching night and day—
Nobody's watching. Hurry, hurry!
Waiting for you to go astray.
Nobody's watching. Hurry, hurry!
- Open it now, the time is short.
Soon you will be at Eros' court

Among his other paramours,
 Beautiful sirens. Hurry, hurry!
 Using their superhuman lures
 To make him forget you. Hurry, hurry!
 Open the box, Psyche, open the box.
 All beauty can be yours, open the box.
 Open the box, Psyche, open the box.
 All beauty can be yours, open the box.

PSYCHE: No, no, no, no, no. Where is the path of light?

CHORUS: Take just a little, take just what you need.
 Take what you need, you need, you need, you need.
 All beauty, Psyche, take just what you need.
 Take what you need, you need, you need, you need.

PSYCHE: All beauty—and it's true, I only need
 A very little, just enough to make
 Myself look nice. But Aphrodite said
 I must not open it. I must obey.

CHORUS: Open the box, Psyche. Open the box.
 Open it, Psyche. Open it. Open the box.
 Open it just a little, enough to see
 What is inside it, only enough to see.
 Open it just a little, enough to see
 What is inside. You have a right to see.

PSYCHE: Perhaps there is no harm in it.

CHORUS: No harm!

PSYCHE: One look and then these voices will go away
 And I can start my journey home again.
 Only to look could not be wrong.

CHORUS: Not wrong!

PSYCHE: No. No. I will not do it. I must obey.

CHORUS: Obey! obey! But truly you want to see,
 Truly you want to open the box and see.
 Already in your heart the deed is done;
 Only the hands delay. What is begun
 Ought to be finished. Only the hands delay.
 Why fear to do what is already done?

PSYCHE: It's true, I do want to open it.

CHORUS: Open the box!

PSYCHE: Why should I try to stop myself?

CHORUS: Why try!

PSYCHE: What does it matter; nobody cares for me.

No one has ever cared.

CHORUS: Nobody cares!

PSYCHE: I might as well just do it. Another time
I'll learn to do what I should.

CHORUS: Another time!

PSYCHE: I have to open it. What use is there
To try to stop myself ?

CHORUS: No use, no use !

PSYCHE: The box is in my left hand. What do I care
What is inside it? Nobody cares for me.
Open or closed it all will be the same.
I hardly know myself. I'm just a toy,
A puppet in someone's hands. What does it matter?
[*She opens the box.*]
The box is empty. Oh, I feel so tired.
[*She falls down as if dead.*]

CHORUS: Now she is ours. Go tell Persephone.

(*To be continued*)

PETER HEEHS

AN EVE...

AN eve of mercury harmony
as glimmering gems in brotherhood
reign, amidst a crowded tide
that laps at wounds and licks a past
from the aching feet of tomorrow's march.

Clouds billow in modest wealth
of deeds done in widowed stance
Interwoven spectrum's light
tumbles hues in mild applause
of battle's lonely burdens
in a silent heart.

Enhanced with warmth
sand sinks sadness
beneath gratitude
open-handed.

MICHÈLE

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Education for a New Life by *Narayan Prasad*. Published by *Mother India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2. Price: Rs. 12/.

Education for a New Life is a general study of the various issues related to education in our times. The author has extended the general consideration of the problems and elements of education to the frontiers of Yoga. It is in the light of Sri Aurobindo the poet, philosopher and yogi, who by direct experience and vision knew the forces operating behind the cataclysmic changes of our times, that he studies the subject. And that gives his treatment an organised growth and development.

It may appear that the author has taken the readers on lines that do not, properly speaking, belong to education. But the solution of the crisis that has overtaken civilisation today does not lie in beaten traces. The problems that beset education are nothing but a projection of the general crisis in this field. The author says: 'The real issue is: how to evolve a new system of education which opens new layers of consciousness leading to the birth of a new consciousness, a new civilisation, a new race as new as *mān* was new to the animals.'

The author, as is well expected of a *sadhak* of his stature living in a most distinguished world Centre of yoga, has sounded depths and revealed summits of possible achievements in education which will help and illumine even the experts. The goal is not a new technique of education, a newly organised education department of a government, but a New Life itself. And explaining this New Life the author says:

'What are we to understand by a New Life? Most of us live in our desires, in our needs and routines.... Modern education is science-oriented, yet however science may try, it cannot satisfy the hunger of the soul. The crux of the problem is how to make the soul force active in earthly life.'

The work carried out in Sri Aurobindo's International Centre of Education is precisely the tackling of this crux. There the atmosphere has been provided for the soul force to become active and the teachers and students form part of a vast organisation to systematise the indications of a pressing new consciousness and forge the key to the New Life. The New Education, therefore, is a developing world discipline of yoga, an experiment and activity of a hitherto unknown dimension. It is proper that the author has studied it in some detail.

That is why the book can safely be expected to make profitable reading even for those who are used to a very different concept of education. Ordinarily such an education will mean to them something amorphous, ineffective or even unreal. But the author convincingly proves that far from being a failure, it has achieved impressive results: the scholars going out from here into the rest of India as well as abroad into many foreign countries have given repeated evidence of its merits. As the subject of this book is of universal interest, the treatment too is warm and intimate, keeping to a level where the common reader not only feels at home but enjoys his labour. The book

undoubtedly heightens our understanding of education—its intricate problems and solutions.

Narayan Prasad, who is well-known for his book *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram* and his other writings in English and Hindi, in his usual simple but extremely concrete manner takes the reader into his confidence and moves with nimble steps through the byways and alleys of a topic which in the hands of experts becomes usually dull, obscure or heavily technical. It is common knowledge that books on Education do not attract general readers. In this regard the present book marks a singular success of the author who has breathed life into it, the warmth of which never flags. At the end the reader feels considerably enriched and his labour rewarded.

C. N. SHARMA

How the Mother's Grace Came to Us: (*Stories about the Mother*), Part Two, by Har Krishan Singh. Published by Har Krishan Singh, 16, Rue Saint Louis, Pondicherry-1. Price Rs. 2.80.

Har Krishan Singh is already well-known to the readers of *Mother India*. In this book, he has done a great service to the followers of the Divine Mother by collecting as many stories as possible from the disciples. Each of the disciples has a story to narrate. Most of the disciples have come to the Feet of the Mother not by reading big tomes like *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* but by coming into a living contact with Her. Singh has re-written most of the episodes and stories in simple language.

A casual glance at the pages of the book will at once convince the reader that the Mother has saved many a soul from the jaws of death. Her Grace being transcendental can work effectively without let or hindrance.

In view of the Birth Centenary of the Mother, we request the author to publish as many more stories as possible in subsequent Parts so that many of the aspirants may come to know the All-Merciful aspect of the Divine Mother.

V. MANMOHAN REDDY

Golden Dawn, Souvenir published by the Sri Aurobindo Society, Baroda Branch. 1976. Rs. 10.00.

The major portion of this Souvenir is in Gujarati and, in the third part or so which is in English, there are a number of good articles by various sadhaks as well as some excerpts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. At the end there is a very interesting appendix containing an elegantly drawn 'Divine Plan' which is a sort of two-dimensional map of the 'planes, parts and entities of the total conscious-

ness according to the works of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo'. It has been prepared under the guidance of Sri A.B. Purani and deserves a close look.

ANGAD

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1. Subject Index to *Mother India* (1949-1972), Rs. 6.00
 2. Subject Index to *The Advent* (1944-1972), Rs. 2.00
 3. Subject Index to *Sri Aurobindo Circle* (1945-1972), Rs. 1.50
 4. Subject Index to *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* (1942-1972), Rs. 1.25
 5. *Sri Aurobindo*—A Bibliography, Rs. 2.00

All the above publications have been compiled by Dr. V. Manmohan Reddy and have been published by the Institute of Human Study, Hyderabad.

Clearly Dr. Reddy is a man who is dedicated to his work. He has painstakingly compiled these indices. Their value to the researcher is unmistakable as the system of classification is simple, consistent and thorough.

ANGAD

A CONVICTION

A LETTER AND NOLINI'S COMMENT

Letter

It is my conviction that after the Mother has left her body:

(1) Her embodied aspect has universalised itself and provides an opportunity of constant Grace to those who depend on her.

(2) Every photo of hers has now become her body and one can have physical contact with the Mother through it (especially the photo in which her eyes are directly focused on us).

(3) In the meditation room where her couch is kept, one can receive from her a spiritual influence identical to that which we used to receive through her eyes and hands whenever we went to her for pranam.

Could you please assess the correctness of my conviction as mentioned above?

JAGAT KAPADIA

Nolini's Comment

It is all right.