

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1977

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*Mother India* has again to call for financial help. Our last appeal brought a very good response and we are deeply thankful. Costs have been steadily rising in everything. Our immediate need is to stock paper for a year. So we badly require donations of any amount that can be spared by our well-wishers. The full amount to make paper-stocking possible is in the neighbourhood of Rs. 10,000.

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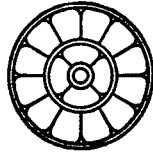
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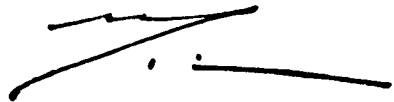


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIX

No. 10

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

### MISTAKES

WHEN you make a mistake because you don't know that it is a mistake, through ignorance, it is obvious that when you learn that it is a mistake, when the ignorance has gone and you have goodwill, you don't make the mistake any more, and so you come out of the condition in which you could make it. But if you know it is a mistake and make it, this means that there is something perverse in you which has deliberately chosen to be on the side of confusion or bad will or even the anti-divine forces.

And it is quite obvious that if one chooses to be on the side of the anti-divine forces or is so weak and inconsistent that one can't resist the temptation to be on their side, it is infinitely more serious from the psychological point of view. This means that somewhere something has been corrupted: either an adverse force is already established in you or you have an innate sympathy for these forces. And it is much more difficult to correct that than to correct an ignorance.

Correcting an ignorance is like eliminating darkness: you light a lamp, the darkness disappears. But to make a mistake once again when you know it is a mistake, is as if someone lighted a lamp and you deliberately put it out. . . . That corresponds exactly to bringing the darkness back deliberately. For the argument of weakness does not hold. The Divine Grace is *always* there to help those who have decided to correct themselves, and they cannot say, "I am too weak to correct myself." They can say that they still haven't taken the resolution to correct themselves, that somewhere in the being there is something that has *not decided* to do it, and that is what is serious.

The argument of weakness is an excuse. The Grace is there to give the supreme strength to whoever takes the resolution.

That means an insincerity, it does not mean a weakness. And insincerity is always an open door for the adversary. That means there is some secret sympathy with what is perverse. And that is what is serious.

In the case of ignorance which is to be enlightened, it is enough, as I said, to light the lamp. In the case of conscious relapse, what is necessary is cauterisation.

2 April 1958

\*

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So long as one repeats one's mistakes, nothing can be abolished, for one recreates them every minute. When someone makes a mistake, serious or not, this mistake has consequences in his life, a 'Karma' which must be exhausted, but the Divine Grace, if one turns to It, has the power of cutting off the consequences; but for this the fault must not be repeated. One shouldn't think one can continue to commit the same stupidities indefinitely and that indefinitely the Grace will cancel all the consequences, it does not happen like that! The past may be completely purified, cleansed, to the point of having no effect on the future, but on condition that one doesn't change it again into a perpetual present; you yourself must stop the bad vibration in yourself, you must not go on reproducing the same vibration indefinitely.

1961

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## JUDGING AND FORESEEING THE FUTURE

### AN INSIGHT OF THE MOTHER

It is always wrong to want to judge the future or even to try to foresee it according to the thought we have about it, for this thought is the present, it is, in the very measure of its impersonality, the translation of present interrelations which are necessarily not the future relations between all the elements of the terrestrial problem. Deducing future circumstances from present ones is a mental activity of the order of reasoning, even if the deduction takes place in the subconscious and is translated in the being into the form of intuition; but reasoning is a human, that is, an individual faculty; its inspirations do not come from the infinite, the unlimited, the Divine. It is only in the All-Knowledge, only when one is at the same time what knows, what is to be known, and the power of knowing that one can become conscious of all relations, past, present and future; but in this state there is no longer a past, present or future, *all is* eternally. The order of manifestation of all these relations does not solely depend on the supreme impetus, on the divine Law, it depends also on the resistance put up against this Law by the most external world; from the combination of both together there comes forth the manifestation, and so far as it is at present possible for me to know, this combination is in a way indeterminate. It is this that makes the play, the unexpectedness of the play.

*Prayers and Meditations, June 24, 1914*



## **PULLING THE FORCE**

### **FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER**

IN your desire for progress and your aspiration for realisation, take great care not to attempt to pull the forces towards you. Give yourself, open yourself with as much disinterestedness as you can attain through a constant self-forgetfulness, increase your receptivity to the utmost, but *never* try to *pull* the Force towards you, for wanting to pull is already a dangerous egoism. You may aspire, you may open yourself, you may give yourself, but never seek to take. When things go wrong, people blame the Force, but it is not the Force that is responsible: it is ambition, egoism, ignorance and the weakness of the vessel.

Give yourself generously and with a perfect disinterestedness and from the deeper point of view nothing bad will ever happen to you. Try to take and you will be on the brink of the abyss.

18 December 1957

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## **ONE'S ATTITUDE AND THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM**

### **FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER**

It is particularly noticeable that all the digestive functions are extremely sensitive to an attitude that is critical, bitter, full of ill-will, to a sour judgement. Nothing disturbs the functioning of the digestion more than that. And it is a vicious circle: the more the digestive function is disturbed, the more unkind you become, critical, dissatisfied with life and things and people. So you can't find any way out. And there is only one cure: to deliberately drop this attitude, to absolutely forbid yourself to have it and to impose upon yourself, by constant self-control, a deliberate attitude of all-comprehending kindness. Just try and you will see that you feel much better.

22 August 1958

# THE MIND AND THE PSYCHIC

## A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE chief obstacle in you is the mind. If you can quiet your mind and give the psychic being a chance, that will be your spiritual salvation. Your mind is inordinately active, too full of questionings, too shrewd, worldly and practical, too much given to doubt and self-defence. All that is very useful in worldly life, it helps to bring success, but it is not the way to succeed in Yoga. No doubt, in Yoga the critical rational mind (self-critical as well as critical of things outside you) is an element that has its value so long as the true inner discrimination does not come; but of itself it cannot carry you on the way, it will only make your progress slow and stumbling. There must be something in you that will open itself directly to the Truth and Light. The unregenerated vital being of man cannot do that because it demands of the higher Power that it shall satisfy the vital desires, demands, ambitions, vanity, pride etc., before it will accept the Truth. The unilluminated mind also cannot do it because it refuses to recognise the Truth unless the Truth first satisfies its own judgments, ideas, opinions, critical or conventional standards,—unless in a word the Truth consents to narrow itself into the moulds of the mind's own ignorance. It is the psychic being alone that turns to the Truth directly, feels it instinctively behind all appearances and in spite of all disguises, accepts it without any egoistic demand or condition, is ready to serve it without reserve or refusal. It is the psychic being also that can at once feel and reject all imitations of the Truth, all shows, all pretences.

# THE SECRET OF THE INCONSCIENT

## A PASSAGE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

THE body is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of itself and much of its hidden actions but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient and the perfection of the operations of inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.

*The Supramental Manifestation, Cent. Vol. 16, pp. 10-11*

# THE MOTHER'S CARE FOR THE ASHRAM ANIMALS

## ENTRIES IN KRISHNAYYA'S NOTEBOOKS

*Krishnayya used to be in charge of the cows, bullocks and carts belonging to the Ashram in the 1930's. He was instructed to consult the Mother whenever there was any problem. At times she herself took the initiative and asked the disciple for information bearing on the welfare of her animals. The manner in which she corresponded with him, either by writing in her own hand or by making Sri Aurobindo write, shows a side of her which is not often realised—the Universal Mother to whom the non-human part of the Creation is of no less importance than the human—the Compassionate Care-taker of all beings. However, the Mother never loses her dynamic practical sense and does not keep her animal-children for the sake of mere luxury, either hers or theirs: she has always her eye on fruitful utility in the midst of all her deep feeling for them.*

17.3.1932

THE MOTHER: Krishnayya,

I would like you to let me know, in writing, what is considered, in your place, to be the best way of looking after bullocks, especially concerning:

- (1) the different kinds of food,
- (2) the quantity given daily (per head),
- (3) the time and way of giving.

22.3.1932

KRISHNAYYA: Most Revered Mother,

I am told that you were pleased to give names to the bullocks. May I be permitted to know which bullock is called by what name?

SRI AUROBINDO: The younger and bigger one has been given the name *Tej*; the other is to be called *Ojas* (*Tej*=Light, Splendour; *Ojas*=Energy).

24.3.1932

KRISHNAYYA: Would the Mother permit to have the bullocks' noses bored and a nose-string tied on to them. These nose-strings are temporary.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Mother is quite against this boring of the nose of bullocks. Are they so wild that it is thought necessary to do this to tame them?

13.4.1932

SRI AUROBINDO: Krishnayya

As regards the food of the bullocks we have already said that the amount indicated in Rama Reddi's list should be given.

The nature of work and number of hours can be settled when the bullocks are here.

Are all the utensils and arrangements enumerated by you used by the owners of bullocks in the country? And are these all the requirements or are there others? There was never any intention of spending largely on this affair or making a white elephant out of it. There is absolutely no necessity for such things as brick and mortar pots for the fodder.

You mention about the way for passing bullocks—if this has reference to the vegetable grown there by Bala Narayan, remember that it has not to be touched on any excuse.

14-4-1932

SRI AUROBINDO: Krishnayya

It is surely a singular idea to entertain that the Mother would want to keep two bullocks expensively on ideal comfort for doing nothing at all! What you call ideal lines is precisely what I meant by the white elephant. The bullocks are brought for the mill-grinding work and they must do the work for which they are brought—otherwise why should they be there? They have to be properly fed and not over-worked; and they must be decently kept; but there was never any intention of going to heavy expenses for two bullocks. If we were keeping cattle on a large scale for a large work or a considerable advantage, it would be a different matter.

The shed cost Rs.250/- which is a great deal too much for so small a purpose.

The bullocks have to be washed and kept clean, but soap water seems hardly necessary. A brush may be given and a cloth. As for the other things, you say you can do with earthen vessels and cane baskets within 3 or 4 Rs.; in that case it might be better for you to submit a new list on that basis. We are quite ready to allow whatever is indispensable or very useful, but the whole thing must be managed on an economic basis.

As to the ground and the way and the vegetable plants the Mother will go and see one day when the bullocks have come and settled.

P. S.

I return your old list.

25-4-1932

SRI AUROBINDO: Krishnayya

You had promised that the bullocks would not be beaten, but we have been told by more than one eye-witness that they have been beaten by yourself and the servants, and badly beaten too. We strongly disapprove, we are entirely against this kind of maltreatment. It is not by beating, but by patience and a persistent will without getting into a nervous irritation that work can be taught to animals. They are far more intelligent than you believe.

6-5-1932

KRISHNAYYA: Sunday the 8th being election day, we cannot take the cart out. So may we take the bullocks somewhere and make them swim in a pond, as we did last Friday?

SRI AUROBINDO: What is meant by somewhere? If you can't take out the cart, how can you take out the bullocks?

8-5-1932

KRISHNAYYA: Special new ropes—prepared by the milkman—for the bullocks are with Amrita. May I take them?

As our bullocks are now accustomed to go and stop at various places, like Josvi House and Budi House, the Agricultural Farm, etc., at times they drag the cart when they pass by those roads. The other day, when returning from the Agricultural Farm by the beach road, they dragged the cart direct to Budi House. Some people were sitting there on the footpath and they were alarmed a bit. Nothing happened, I got down immediately and adjusted the cart. So, when the bullocks are working, it may be good and safer to use those ropes. As soon as the work is over, the ropes will be removed. Pray sanction. These ropes are not tight; they are loose, so it is no hardship to the bullocks.

THE MOTHER: I thought they have strongly refused to have the ropes put upon them. The ropes may not be tight, but most probably they will spoil the nose of the bullocks. There again it seems to me that it is a matter of training.

11-5-1932

KRISHNAYYA: Bullocks had a good swim. They were washed and cleaned well. We brought red sand too. As it was the first time and there was no proper measurement with us, we found exactly 400 Dem of sand when measured here. It may be a little more. From the next time, I will bring less. But I beg to submit some facts for your gracious consideration.

The weakest and smallest bullocks like those of Ramaswamy's cart-man are carrying more than 600 Dem of sand.

THE MOTHER: How can you speak of that! Do you know how the cart men here *kill* their bullocks in a few months or an even less time?

31-5-1932

SRI AUROBINDO: Mortar prepared in this untempered way by jerks, has no longer the same quality. It can be used, but it must be considered as partly spoiled. If the bullocks show so much unwillingness for mill-work we may have to give it up. Probably they are too young and [weak] for this kind of work and it may spoil them.

6-6-1932

SRI AUROBINDO: It was seen by others that Tej received not one but eight or

nine blows and there were the swelling and marks afterwards. You will tell the man that if this happens again he will be dismissed; Amrita has been given instructions.

I had said that if the bullocks showed unwillingness the chakki work has to be stopped. Please realise that I mean it.

2-7-1932

KRISHNAYYA: I feel, the present feeding is not sufficient for our bullocks and they appear to be somewhat reduced. May I increase the quantity of bran by 3 or 4 measures more?

THE MOTHER: I find also that they are reduced. You may increase the food. Try and find out what they eat willingly.

8-7-1932

THE MOTHER: The bullocks are somewhat thinner. Rama Reddi said to give them more Bengal gram. This can be tried.

13-7-1932

THE MOTHER: Tomorrow is a holiday. The day after, these repairs can be made to the cart.

As there will be a *big crowd* tomorrow in town, you will have to be *very careful* when taking or bringing back the bullocks from the agricultural garden.

15-7-1932

KRISHNAYYA: The cooli did not come last night. He simply kept the feeding tubs before the bullocks and went away. He is not working satisfactorily. He does not keep things clean. As there is no better man I am trying to get on with him.

THE MOTHER: The bullocks seem to like this man and this is the most important point.

For cleanliness it is a matter of supervision.

25-7-1932

KRISHNAYYA: Tej is yet feeling pain in the hoof of the front left leg. After removing one nail, he appeared to be all right. When walking we could not see any limping. So we began to remove the debris on the first two trips; he walked well. But on the third trip he began to walk limpingly. I feel I have committed a mistake in giving him work this evening. There is no swelling, he eats grass and feeds as usual and is chewing the cud well. I think complete rest only for a day or two will make him all right. Dayashankar gave me the same advice. I am not able to suggest any treatment. Awaiting instructions.

THE MOTHER: If it is sure that no other nail is hurting him, one or two days' rest will surely cure him.

28-7-1932

SRI AUROBINDO: We are told Ojas has been rubbing off the hair and skin at one place and there is danger of a sore. If so, it would be better to apply something there.

9-8-1932

THE MOTHER: Flour ferments and spoils much quicker than gram; in fact flour has to be prepared daily to be good. This will present some other difficulty I suppose. Fermented flour can prove very harmful for the bullocks' digestion.

19-8-1932

KRISHNAYYA: About the bullocks' treatment, I wanted to know the experts' opinion. So I wrote to Venkata Ramsastri and got it from the Madras Veterinary Hospital. I submit to you their opinion with the remedies they have suggested. Unless you are pleased to decide and sanction, how can I dare to use the medicine and treat? But I may be permitted to say that they appear to be harmless medicines.

THE MOTHER: The medicines may be harmless, but I do not understand *alum* for the eyes. When the cats had some trouble with the eyes we were using *boric acid* always with success. For the skin medicine sulphur and lime may be good, but I would suggest to use *vaseline* instead of kerosene which is always dangerous. You could ask the necessary things from the dispensary.

3-9-1932

THE MOTHER: No wonder that Ojas gave some trouble. These bullocks are quite intelligent enough to feel the change of people. This new man is not an expert and moreover he has something of a brute around him. You will have to look carefully after him, for I do not like his way of dealing with the bullocks.

I object strongly to his way of twisting the tails of the beasts. If somebody twisted one of his limbs like that what would he say? And I am pretty sure that our bullocks are more sensitive than he is.

14-9-1932

THE MOTHER: I have watched the thing from the roof, and saw with the inner sight also. There is absolutely no doubt about what is happening and once more I shall try to make you understand it.

*The bullocks are not mischievous.* On the contrary, they are very good and peaceful creatures, but very sensitive—unusually sensitive perhaps—(of this I am not sure as I have not followed other bullocks so closely). The truth is that they dislike and distrust the present driver, and *not without reason*. When they were working under the previous one they were happy and cheerful and worked well. Since this one is driving them they are sad and dejected and work reluctantly. I see no solution but to change the man and to find a better one.

The proposal to frighten them in order to master them is unacceptable. Some

kind of submission can thus be obtained perhaps, but of the worst kind. The beasts lose more and more confidence and joy and peace and finally their strength and even their health goes.

What is the use of being a sadhak if, as soon as we act, we act like the ignorant ordinary man?

I can tell you this to finish with the subject, that from the roof I concentrated the power on the bullocks ordering them to yield and obey and I found them *quite receptive*. To use a *quiet, steady, unwavering conscious will*, that is the way, the only true way *really effective* and worthy of an aspirant for Divine Life.

I hope that this time I have made myself clear.

16-9-1932

THE MOTHER: Yes, this man seems good, we can try him. When dismissing the other one he can be paid his due plus Re. 1 (one) to give him time to find another job elsewhere.

22-9-1932

THE MOTHER: It seems to me that, at least for a time, it would be better not to try to turn out much work every day, as Ojas may truly need rest. I do not find the new man better than the previous one. He is far too nervous and restless. If he could be a little more quiet and peaceful in dealing with the bullocks they would surely work much more willingly.

17-10-1932

SRI AUROBINDO: Krishnayya

It appears that the bullocks left free in the Vigie House ground began eating the flower and fruit trees. This of course must not happen, especially as it is a rented house and the trees are valuable. If the bullocks are put to graze there, there must be someone to look.

7-11-1932

SRI AUROBINDO: You can get the mats.

You can go for the Kodangal. The weight must not be more than 3/4 ton. It is not for the sake of the axle that there is a restriction to 1/2 ton but for the legs of the bullocks—they are already getting spoilt.

Mother will write to Chandulal about the repairs.

2-12-1932

THE MOTHER: Is not all that a little too elaborate? In the country in France the people milk sitting on a dealwood stool and find it quite comfortable.



4-12-1932

THE MOTHER: In France, the calf is put to take the milk first and then the cow is milked thoroughly without leaving anything (the milking is done only twice a day).

10-12-1932

THE MOTHER: Amrita told me that Ra in Telegu means come and that you were calling thus the calf; I said that it was a good name for her. The A is pronounced as in the Indian languages and in French too.

In Japanese, the same sound Ra means *good*.

23-12-1932

THE MOTHER: What is written in the book seems all right; the washing with boric acid is certainly very good. I suppose you can use olive oil instead of vaseline.

*(To be concluded)*

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## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of September 1977)

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

JULY 17, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (starting the talk and smiling to P): Hitler's hope of a triumphal march into England is diminishing day by day.

P: Yes, there is yet no sign of any preparation of attack.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see only two ways possible—either landing troops in spite of the British Navy or an attack by air. No other way seems possible.

N: Could it not be a bluff, for an attack somewhere else?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is another matter.

N: If Gandhi's proposal to Britain to offer only passive resistance had been accepted, perhaps Hitler's hope would have been fulfilled. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. They appreciated his proposal but couldn't consider it.

P: Churchill has given a very fine speech

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he was inspired.

P: Exact, precise and summing up the situation very well.

N: But he takes good care not to say a word about India—all Europe, the continent, America come into it. Half of the speech was devoted to France.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has been always a lover of France.

S: To what a pass England has come to declare the battle with the French fleet a great naval success!

SRI AUROBINDO: Success? No, it was to prove the decisiveness of the British and their readiness to fight to the last. Otherwise it was no battle.

S: England has now found the leader. If she is defeated it will be due to her position and karma.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. If she had declared Dominion Status to India, then a large part of her karma would have been wiped off.

S: That was also what Gandhi's moral support meant.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, moral support is quite different.

P: The *Statesman*, whose editor is Moore, has again written for Dominion Status, and in the *Hindu* also some Briton wrote of it yesterday.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are only individuals. If the Army were strong and firm against the Simla attitude, then Gandhi could do something. Till now he hasn't said anything against the granting of Dominion Status.

P: How if English opinion also turned in our favour?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, English opinion won't do. It is the opinion of the House of Commons and that of the Conservatives that matter. Some of the Conservatives are in favour but it must be the majority and I think the majority don't want any drastic change. The majority are under Chamberlain. I am almost sure they are standing in the way; otherwise, with the Labour pressure and with the Liberals also joining, something would have been done. Of course they have some trouble over Jinnah. They don't want to create any trouble among the Muslims just now.

P: He has been put up by the Government.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think so. Wherever it suits him, he goes against the Viceroy. I think he has put up himself.

S: He has taken up an impossible attitude. There is no chance of any agreement.

SRI AUROBINDO: Unless on such terms as the Khilafat and whatever other demands they make.

N: Or Pakistan, India's karma is also standing in the way. So many years' slavery hasn't wiped off the karma.

SRI AUROBINDO: Slavery doesn't wipe off the karma.

S: Slavery associated with suffering.

SRI AUROBINDO: Provided you learn from suffering. (*Laughter*)

S: That is a different matter.

P: Jinnah is a sort of dictator. He wants to be obeyed in everything and he would discard no means for his aim.

SRI AUROBINDO: In that case it would be bad for Hoque and Sikandar. (*After a while*) If the Hindus consent to accept Jinnah as their Badshah,<sup>1</sup> then he may agree. He will say, "Oh the cause of the Hindus is so dear to my heart!" (*Laughter*)

S: And Jinnah is demanding 50-50 representation.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, soon he will say that the pressure exerted by the Hindu 50 is too much for Muslims and will claim another 25 out of the 50.

S: How?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not?... I think Sir Akbar's son is also standing in the way. He has some influence with the Viceroy.

N: Which son? The one who came here?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. This one won't come here any more than he would think of going to hell. (*Laughter*)

<sup>1</sup> Emperor.

(EVENING)

S: America is going to follow an independent policy in the East.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. She has no claim to make in China.

P: It seems according to N.S.N. that on 27th May the Japanese army was routed by the Chinese.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who writes that?

P: Some Military Correspondent.

SRI AUROBINDO: With the Chinese?

P: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't be believed! The Japanese claim that only 80,000 Japanese have been killed so far, while the Chinese make it out to be half a million. Evidently neither number is true. Even if the Chinese estimate is true, it doesn't seem to make any difference to the war, and the Chinese are nowhere near driving away the Japanese. War is still going on. The Chinese are braggarts and the Japanese follow a silent policy till the whole thing is done.

P: After the resignation of the Japanese Cabinet, it is probable that Prince Ko-noye will be the Premier. He doesn't know what will be the policy, Fascist or otherwise. If Fascist, the Japanese may line up with the Axis.

SRI AUROBINDO: If they do that, they will be bound to the Axis and later on Italy and Germany may want to enter in the East, which the Japanese won't like and which is against their policy, Japan's aim is to turn all the Europeans out of Asia. So if she joins the Axis it will be only to suit her present position and purpose. (*After a while*) I don't want the Japanese to go down in the fight (against the Chinese) because they may be needed as a counterbalance against Germany or Russia when, in case England goes down, they try to come to Asia. That is the only chance for India. While they fight each other, India can prepare herself provided people like Jinnah and Bose are not there.

N: But, if England goes down, Japan may herself grab India.

SRI AUROBINDO: She may. But out of the three evils, she may be the best and I don't think she will annex India. She may start some Government as in Manchuria. The Chinese can't be relied on to fight against Russia or Germany. Everyone knows that Italy has her eye on Asia Minor and Germany wants to get into Baghdad. Japan won't like that. She won't like the "Barbarians" to take possession of Asia.

N: Roosevelt is standing for election after all.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, of course he was all the time manoeuvring.

NIRODBARAN

## A MAIDEN'S SONG

I SIT beneath green dancing leaves,  
Who whisper to me a tender urge;  
My heart as if in a twinkle-touch  
Wanders to her mysteries' verge.

As if a young shy maiden  
Taking flowers to a king,  
My mind romps in a deep green forest,  
With cream-yellow roses  
My question to bring:

“You who hold the ages  
In a tender glowing eye,  
Whose arms are stretched around the waters,  
Reflecting a silver-moon-dove's cry—

“Why do you bewilder me so?  
I've searched for you since long ago,  
And why do you entice me  
With your garment of the moon?  
And capture me along my stroll  
With a sun-drenched daisy's swoon?

“My heart as if a hope-shaded cavern  
Brightens to your seldom-heard flute,  
My lips, as if bees to a flower,  
Await your kiss like a heavenly fruit.

“Here I watch the ducklings bathe,  
With sparkling streaks as garment waves,  
And ponder over the waters,  
Deep with a secret green hue;  
My soul rejoices at every sight  
With the thought to meet with you.”

RAJESHWARI

## THE SECRET OF THE SKIES

WHISPER in my ear  
The secret of the skies.  
Speak to me of roses  
That bloom in Paradise.  
Earthly things I crave not,  
No more they beckon me.  
All my hopes are centred  
In the wondrous Self of Thee.

Whisper in my ear  
The secret of the skies.  
Tell me of the Golden Path  
That somewhere hidden lies.  
My soul's deep aspiration  
Soaring ever cries  
To Thee, O Lord, to manifest  
Thy splendoured immensities.

Whisper in my ear  
The secret of the skies.  
Speak to me of Love divine  
That never fades or dies;  
Of the Lights that know no shadow  
And far above abide.  
Oh reveal to me the Truth  
No cloud can hope to hide.

Whisper in my ear  
The secret of the skies,  
The sweetness of Thy smile,  
The marvel of Thine eyes.  
I am filled with endless longing,  
Above this self to climb.  
Unveil to me Thy Presence,  
Flood with Thy bliss all Time.

LALITA

## BLAKE'S "TIGER"

*(This is the tape-recorded text, revised and rearranged here and there, of the talk given by K. D. Sethna on September 10, 1974, to the students, teachers and some other members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The sequel of questions and answers has been filled out a little to express what the time at the speaker's disposal had partly cut short.)*

AT my request you have been spared the usual time-wasting introduction to the speaker. I have to introduce to you a more venerable and impressive figure, one that is a hundred and eighty years old. For all its advanced age it still goes strong and, for all its familiarity with the world, it carries a strange look which needs some explanation. Let us meet at once the full challenge of the Tiger that William Blake brought into English poetry in 1794:

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
And watered heaven with their tears,  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,

What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

This poem has been repeatedly taught in every school as if every schoolboy and schoolgirl could get the hang of it and every school-teacher catch the head and tail of Blake's carnivorous animal. But do you know what Blake, who was a painter as well as a poet, has written about his own painting? Surely his words about his other art would be quite appropriate here. He says in a letter to Dr. J. Trusler in 1799: "That which can be made explicit to the idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the ancients considered what is not too explicit as the fittest for instruction, because it rouses the faculties to act." So we must guard against too simple an explanation of *The Tiger*. The usual way of dealing with the poem is to ask school-children to go to the city Zoo and look at the striped beast of prey loping behind iron bars. But Blake would regard such a method as an insult to his intelligence and his imagination. Not that the tiger is in itself an unimpressive figure. Just the contrary. It should also be evident that Blake would not have chosen the name "Tiger" unless there was something in the physical beast to correspond to what he had in mind. And how very impressive the actual tiger can be is shown by an unforgettable line from Sri Aurobindo:

Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of grandeur and murder.

This line is not explicit enough for any idiot. Although it is comparatively straightforward it has a subtlety in it, a play of point and counterpoint. "Gleaming" which would reveal the tiger's presence is set over against "soundless" which would conceal it. "Mighty" is posed against "soft", and "grandeur" pitted against "murder". So there is some fine criss-cross even here.

Blake, however, goes one better and he has created a piece which is pretty complex. He has let loose on us a series of questions which beat upon our nerves like a roll of wild drums reaching us at once from near and from far. The sense of the nearness gives us what we may call the poem's intensity; the sense of the farness gives us what we may term the poem's mystery.

Before we seriously launch on our hunt for its meaning, I shall lightly touch on the spelling Blake originally used of the word "Tiger". In that spelling you don't have an 'i', you have a 'y'. That 'y' seems to me very suggestive because it looks like a long threatening tongue hanging out of the tiger's mouth. And if Blake had been perhaps a little more sensitive and perhaps a little more mischievous, he would have changed the spelling of the name at the very end also. Instead of one 'r' he might have put three 'r's followed by an 'h' so that we could have not only what comes out of the tiger's mouth and can be seen but also what comes out of it and is heard, because the name would then give us a growl: "Tygerrrh!"

Now to our search for significance. There are two ways of dealing with it. We



might go step by step, take every line in proper order and analyse the terms employed and by a cumulative process build up the central secret. Or we could plunge into what would strike us as holding the heart of the intensity and mystery. I'll choose the latter mode and pick out the two most significant questions from the several that Blake has asked. These two direct us to a philosophical issue, a metaphysical point. The questions are:

Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Evidently we have a stark contrast of natures. On the one side is the Lamb, an embodiment of mildness and peacefulness; on the other we have an embodiment of ferocity and violence. The enigma arises: Could the same being have made two creatures of such antithetical characters? This question appears to suggest that two separate makers were responsible for these two opposite kinds of animals. A doubt is expressed there. But the line preceding the one that voices the doubt would lose all pertinence if we thought in terms of two makers—a God creating the Lamb, a Devil creating the Tiger. For, that line asks whether the creator smiled to see his work. Now, if a Devil had created the Tiger as an antithesis to God's good creation and meant it to play havoc with the Lamb, he surely would have smiled and smiled and smiled. There would be for us no question whether he did smile or not. If it is not the Devil but God himself who made both the creatures, then the perplexity would arise in the mind of Blake. Could God express satisfaction with himself on putting forth a work of such savagery and such destructiveness? Blake, confronting this poser, is really on tenterhooks, he is bewildered in his head, he has an ache in his heart. And behind his subjective reaction of keenly moved perplexity, there is a philosophical problem.

What exactly is this problem? Is it that of good and evil in the world? Does the Tiger represent malignant annihilating forces *versus* forces that make for harmony and peace? It is difficult to look at the matter in such simple terms. As you may remember from Sri Aurobindo's line, the physical tiger itself stands not only for murder but also for grandeur. And surely Blake's animal has a number of qualities which cannot but evoke admiration. Blake says of his Tiger: "burning bright." The critic D W Harding has pointed out the profound bearing of this locution. "Burning" may show anger, passion, even ardour; but what about "bright"? "Bright" shows incandescence, white heat, a sheerness of light, something glorious and godlike. So the devilish and the godlike seem to stand together and get combined in the same creature. Then there is the phrase: "fearful symmetry." Symmetry means proportionate structure—it implies art and what is art after all? It is a particularised expression of the creative delight deriving from some illumined inwardness and driven by a sense of perfection. The result is always beauty—not beauty in the conventional sense, a goody-goody kind of beauty, but beauty of any kind, beauty that can be twisted and fearful even. There are actually the lines:

And what shoulder and what art  
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

They are about the Tiger's creator and conjure up before us a power, a massively knit power—"shoulder"—and this power is set to a perfect imaginative execution, an activity of "art". The art-power is exercised to produce a grandiose complication, a twisting of mighty muscles to form the heart of the Tiger—something frightful which yet evokes admiration, a sense of exaltation by its faultless strength. The result is what W.B. Yeats has touched off in another context: "A terrible beauty is born." We might also use a phrase of Francis Thompson's and say that though the Tiger is a horror and a terror it is also a magnificence, "a many-splendoured thing". The paradox perplexing Blake is not only that the same God should have created the Tiger and the Lamb: it is also that the Tiger itself is a devilish creature which yet goes to its horrible and terrible action in a manner which is so divine! A divine devilishness is at play. An extreme devilry out-evils all evil and still it is as if a supreme deity proceeded to his infallible and incontrovertible work. The divine nature of the Tiger's devilishness is what serves as the basis of Blake's conviction that the same God has made the Lamb and the Tiger even though the latter stands like a contradiction of the former.

Having brought the philosophical problem into focus and thrown into relief Blake's trembling acceptance of the Tiger's undeniably godlike presence, we must study in their proper setting the two questions we have quoted. Then we shall understand the circumstances in which Blake's problem arises, the stage on which his Tiger enacts its role and, by understanding this, we shall be in a position to know what that carnivore represents to the poet.

We might think that here is a problem which faces the earth and the world of men. Such is the usual interpretation of the poem. But Blake has set his queries in a particular enigmatic context. The line,

Did he smile his work to see?

is the principal clause of a sentence whose subordinate clause is the couplet:

When the stars threw down their spears,  
 And watered heaven with their tears...

Some sort of starry affair is connected with Blake's perplexity and situates his Tiger's rampage. The usual interpretation takes the stars to be Blake's imaginative picture of heavenly powers reacting to a rampaging Tiger upon earth, a menace to gentle creatures, especially a threat to God's masterpiece: man. We are told that those heavenly powers, poetically suggested by the physical stars, were appalled that such a monstrous force should be let loose on the terrestrial scene, the human world. The

stars' hands, it appears, got nervous and dropped their weapons, and their hearts were filled with pity for earthly beings, and their eyes shed a flood of tears.

Such a view of the starry affair is rather touching, but it is too sentimental, too vague. No doubt, we can conceive of stars having a steely glitter and thereby making us imagine spears. We can also conceive of stars looking like glimmering tear-drops. But, while admitting the analogies to be not irrelevant, the plight in which Blake puts his stars is pretty pointless if it is related to an earthly Tiger. Of course, when we take the stars as symbols of heavenly powers high above we may take the Tiger also as a symbol, but it has to be, according to the ordinary view, the symbol of fascinating ferocious forces running amok upon our globe here below. And it is just this division of above and below that irrevocably wrecks the common interpretation. Let me tell you how.

First of all, could such high-poised and remote entities like the stars—entities that are also armed warriors—lose their nerve on seeing a beast of prey far down on the earth? Pertinently, too, we may ask: "If the stars were themselves carrying weapons of war and were therefore ready to kill, why were they so upset at the Tiger having been equipped with kulling power?" Thirdly, when they in their millions had their spears, why did they not finish off the Tiger instead of indulging in helpless pity from their height, like a crowd of benevolent old ladies luxuriating in a uselessly excessive activity of their tear-glands? There was no need to merely water heaven with their weeping. Perhaps you will say that their throwing their spears down implies that they did send their weapons flying towards the Tiger. But then what was the upshot of what we may call their down-shot? Obviously the Tiger still went on prowling and growling and swishing its tail and nosing out potential victims. Those stars with their innumerable spears were the poorest marksmen imaginable. All of them hurling their spears together missed the single brightly burning target! Who could have appointed them sentinels of the sky, guardians of the cosmic order? And it would seem that, on myriadly missing from every side one little object all the time inviting their aim by its shining, they started deluging heaven with their tears. These would be tears of frustration and not pity. If pity there was, it could only be self-pity, as if exclaiming: "Oh, we have failed to hit that awful beast! What shame for us! Our reputation will be gone, our name will be mud!"

Don't you find quite absurd all attempts to see the stars doing one thing or another in connection with an earth-roaming man-threatening Tiger? Even if they were not so ridiculous, how are they at all relevant when there is not the slightest hint that the starry affair has anything to do with earth and human beings? The only location mentioned is "heaven" which is watered by the tears of the stars and the only beings mentioned are the stars themselves—stars that, before weeping profusely, throw down the spears they were carrying. Logically, we can think of their casting away these weapons nowhere except in heaven where their tears also fall. And actually to throw down the spears means nothing else than letting them drop from the hands wherever the spearmen themselves may be standing. So heaven alone is implicated in Blake's

picture. And then we have to think of the Tiger too as connected with the stars by standing or moving or leaping in heaven and not on earth. The entire situation is in an unearthly dimension of reality.

Our next step should be to interpret the collapse of the stars as the result of what the Tiger has done to them. The Tiger which is the work of the very God who has made the Lamb has attacked the spear-bearing stars in the fields of heaven and so terrorised them that they have let go their weapons in utter defeat and burst into uncontrollable despair. God's Tiger has come forth to punish the armed stars who are God's enemies. Blake's carnivore is thus a supernatural phenomenon and so too is his Lamb. In an occult realm a conflict has occurred. There is a band of stars that have rebelled against God: they stand embattled, hoping to dethrone Him. They have witnessed God in the form of mercy and peace and innocence, God expressing Himself in the form of a Lamb. But now God expresses Himself in the form of the Lamb's sheer antithesis. He becomes anger and violence and sets these destructive powers functioning as a divine Tiger. So overwhelming is He in this aspect that He appears to outdo whatever harm the rebel stars are capable of. A super-Satanic force, so to speak, of the supreme divinity is in action—not only breaking down the stars to an utter howling impotence but also shaking the whole nervous being of the poet who visions it.

He is shaken to such an extent that—as we have noted before—his outer consciousness even doubts whether this absolute of ferocity could be God's. However, this absolute of ferocity goes with an absolute of beauty, and while Blake's heart quivers in confusion and his mind boggles at the impossible-seeming blend of the deific and the demoniac, his soul accepts everything. The soul's acceptance comes out in what the Blake-expert Kathleen Raine has called the powerful exaltation of the metre and the fiery grandeur of the imagery. The emotive force of these two poetic elements conveys nothing save affirmation and admiration of the energy, the skill, the intelligence of the Tiger's maker. A beatifying wonder of God is revealed, no matter what dismay it initially causes.

Blake's revelation and the drama within which it burns and brightens sends our minds to a well-known legend of Christianity. The legend has it that Satan, who was God's chief angel, was filled with the ambition to take God's place. He seduced some lesser angels to his side, gathered an army and prepared a war to usurp the throne of the All-Highest. The legend goes on to tell us that to defeat the rebels led by Satan God missions His Son, Christ. Christ sallies forth as an embodiment of terrible divine anger and reduces God's armed enemies to utter helplessness and hopelessness before hurling them out of heaven. Christ who is known in Christianity as the Lamb of God is now a glorious power of annihilation, a power of grandeur and murder which can accurately be called the Tiger of God.

All this fits in so well with our reading of Blake's poem that I for one cannot look for any other interpretation. It is a surprise to me that no commentator on Blake has so far struck upon it. On first impression there may seem to be some difficulties in its

way in spite of its general fitness. But I believe all difficulties can be cleared.

First you will ask: "Why has Blake considered the rebel angels in terms of stars? Stars are always symbols of something pure and divine" Blake has seen them differently because to him they are elements of light that have chosen to make night their home, darkness their habitat. There is logic in visioning in this manner God's angels that have turned away from God. By their defection from Him they have created an obscurity around their original luminosity. And their being denizens of gloom is driven home to us by Blake's repeating, with just one word altered, immediately after the star-stanza the stanza with which he opens his poem. The lines not only reintroduce by name the Tiger whose attack has brought disaster to the stars but also the word "night" to give the stars their proper setting and disclose by it the darkness in which their old light now lives:

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Your next objection is likely to be: "What about the word 'forests'? How can it go with 'stars'? Does it not join up rather with the 'Tiger'? Are not forests the Tiger's own dwelling-place?" Here again Blake's view is different but also logical once more. To begin with, these are not ordinary woods. They are no jungles of Bengal or Assam where tigers abound. Blake calls them "forests of the night", forests belonging to an undefined darkness. And this darkness's dense and devious character, its thick entanglement of ignorance and error are pictured as an abundant growth of trees. Within this massive and crowded obscurity the Tiger is put as a presence "burning bright". And please note that these two words refer to the whole Tiger: all its being and body are said to be shiningly ablaze. The Tiger and the forests stand at opposite poles in their natures: they are arrayed against each other. Contrary to the common earthly situation in which the Tiger itself would be a part of forests, it is here their enemy. It is in their midst because it has come to destroy their night-consciousness, the area of ignorance and error that has been formed in heaven by the rebel stars. We may even discern an image of the stars' spears in the "forests": the spears—upright before being thrown down—can be compared to tall close-set trees.

The Tiger is not a product of the forests. Blake makes it quite plain that the Tiger's origin is not in the forests but somewhere else:

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

And there is a creative smithy of the Unknown:

What the hammer? what the chain?  
 In what furnace was thy brain?  
 What the anvil?

Blake has unequivocally indicated that the Tiger draws its fieriness from some far region of luminosity and that it takes its shape in some mighty mysterious workshop. It enters the forests and appears to make them its home just to expunge their tenebrous spirit, the anti-divine mood entrenched in them.

However, there is a sense in which we may take, as on earth, the Tiger as aligned to the forests. The forests symbolise a fearful all-engulfing life-suppressive dynamism. The Tiger comes pitting against this dynamism a fury still more fearful, overpowering and destructive. It brings to its gloomy antithesis what surpasses that antithesis in the very terms of gloom, as it were. Imagine a gloom face to face with a blinding blighting light which plunges it and submerges it in a greater darkness than its own, a darkness where it is lost and blotted out. Simultaneously a supreme expression of the forests themselves and a power fighting them by its origin from their absolute contrary are suggested. In the language favoured by modern poetic criticism, here is a metaphysical tension basic to the poem and at the root of Blake's attitude of apparent doubt and inmost certainty. The tension is at the start of the piece as well as at its close. And it is what sparks off those electrifying questions culminating in the two with which we began our analysis. The same tension we may specify between the affirmative suggestions of the imagery and metre on the one hand and the ambiguous tones of the thought-structure on the other.

I shall proceed to some further details of expression. The very first is the double turn of speech: "distant deeps or skies." What is the meaning of "deeps" here? "Skies" we understand in the context but why is "deeps" put side by side with it? The connective "or" shows that again a doubt is voiced. "Deeps" primarily would connote something just the opposite of "skies"—an infernal region contraposed to a heavenly one. But the way we have seen the Tiger, an animal whose entire being and body and not merely his eyes are "burning bright", convinces us that he could not have been created from infernal depths. Some depths are certainly there, making him the divinely demonic paradox that he is, but they must be at the same level as the "skies". And this proposition is proved by the couplet that follows:

On what wings dare he aspire?  
 What the hand dare seize the fire?

We have wings, we have aspiring. Wings are usually understood as a means for going up. And to aspire does not connote only to desire earnestly: it also connotes to mount up, to soar. And when the wings are there, this is surely the principal connotation. Whoever be that "he", he has to go up to seize the fire for the Tiger's eyes. So we may conceive "deeps" as a fathomless secrecy of heavenly spaces in which the divine light

is searingly ablaze, while "skies" we may conceive as the same heavenly spaces transfiguringly radiant, showing a brightness as distinguished from a burningness and manifesting a divinity full of glory and beauty as distinguished from an omnipotence that blinds and blights.

Now, who is this "he"? Blake has used a personal pronoun without preceding it with a personal noun. So commentators have said that Blake is non-committal about the "he" 's identity. And they also stress the fact that Blake writes a small "h" here instead of a capital "H", thus indicating that the supreme Divine is not present but some minor spirit, perhaps even hostile to the former. I am afraid the memories of the commentators is very short. Don't we find just a little later the line: "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" Here evidently God is meant but here too "he" is with a small "h". In fact, in Blake's time there was never a use of the capital "H". Nor, for that matter, would you find a capital "He" in the whole of the King-James Bible. Hence the argument from the small "he" in line 7 falls to the ground. What about the argument from the fact that there is no personal noun preceding this personal pronoun?

There I think the commentators have been a little obtuse in understanding figurative poetic language. You must have heard of the figure of speech called "Synecdoche". In a synecdoche a part is used for the whole or the whole for a part. Blake has already used two terms which are parts of whoever is the Tiger's creator:

What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

Hand and eye are the two main parts involved in the creation of anything. The eye stands for conceptive imagination, the hand for formative execution. So the creator could well be represented in terms of just these two parts. Indeed, even either of them can serve. And when we say "What immortal hand or eye?", we can be taken to mean "What immortal's hand or eye?" But, of course, the expressive effect is not the same. Poetically the former mode of utterance is more powerful. Perhaps Blake thought he would be explicit to the idiot with the latter mode. Unfortunately his being not too explicit has failed to rouse the faculties of critics to act; for, they have completely missed the synecdochic manner "Hand or eye" covers the total function of the creator and therefore can do duty for the creator himself by force of synecdoche.

There is, however, a third point connected with Blake's "he". This maker has to go higher than himself, beyond his own status, to get the fire for the Tiger's eyes. Accordingly, some commentators have declared that a being other than God is "aspiring" and that the succeeding phrase about seizing the fire implies that Blake outlines someone like Prometheus or at least someone acting against the Supreme and taking fire by force from the highest empyrean. Actually the word "seize" by itself does not imply any kind of antagonism, any sort of God-compelling action. It only signifies to take hold of something energetically. But the energetic taking

hold, while not implying opposition, would yet imply a sort of native right. Although the being who has to soar up for the fire is obviously on a level below the highest empyrean, he has an authority equal to the Power in the highest empyrean to take hold of the fire. We may say he is the Supreme Divine in a certain role in which the Supreme Divine may be considered as subordinate in function though equal in essence to Himself in another role. And that is exactly the role played by God the Son *vis-à-vis* God the Father in Christian theology. Christ is equal to the Father and yet he is called the Son: he is eternally generated from the Father and looks up to the Father and whatever he has he receives from the Father. Even when he goes out against the rebel angels he comes to God the Father and asks for his power, his burning wrath. But all that he gets is as if it were his by right: the receiving is like taking. Similarly here he goes up to get from God the fire to make the Tiger's eyes. This amounts to the same thing as claiming it from God because he and God are ultimately equal though apparently inferior and superior.

Next we come to the making of the Tiger in a mighty smithy. The Tiger is a fiery creature and a smithy is a place where there is constantly a fire and the fire is used to make things and mould them and temper them to the requisite strength. So the furnace, the hammer, the anvil are all appropriate. But what about the chain? It seems puzzling at first. But we can think of it in three ways. There is a chain hanging from the bellows in a smithy. It is pulled to set the bellows working and making the fire more and more "burning bright". A chain is also something with which you bind or tie up an animal and be its master. Lastly, it is used as a leash or lead to allow freedom of movement to an animal or to restrain it at the right moment. Here all the three meanings can be taken together. Yes, even the last, for the Tiger is indeed let loose upon the rebel stars yet it is restrained at a critical juncture: the stars are not annihilated, they are just ruthlessly defeated and reduced to torrential tears. As we have already mentioned, in the Christian legend too Satan and his followers are not destroyed in heaven but flung out of it after their total overthrow.

Nothing now remains to mystify us. One point, however, we must reckon with before we close: "Does this whole episode concern only heavenly history? Has it nothing to do with earth?" I should say it has, in the sense that whenever the human consciousness participates in the mood of the supernatural darkness which activated Satan and his hosts, the divine Tiger comes forth to oppose it. The rebellious turning of man against his soul's true instinct, against the urge of God in him, creates for him a participation in the forests of the night and draws upon that replica of them the divine destructive energy. In Indian spiritual thought also we have God the destroyer. God can terrorise, God can consume, God can annihilate. And we have the Lion of Durga corresponding to the Tiger which Blake gives to his God. So the poem does have a reference to human beings but not a direct one: it has an oblique secondary reference. The direct reference is connected only with Blake's vision of a great event in heavenly history, an event which was



actually the origin of all the rebellious moods which followed in cosmic time. The revolt of the angels was the primal, the fundamental, the archetypal revolt. Hence Blake focuses himself on that. But we have in his poem a subordinate relevance also to things of the earth. And that is why, in one sense, the first stanza is repeated at the very close after the poet has finished with the starry affair. There was no need to repeat it—except, of course, to make the poem more impressive and tie up the two ends. Still, the fact that the lines which started to deal with the history of the adverse stars come again to wind up the poem when that history is over in heaven—this recurrence shows Blake intending a further application, a secondary one, of his awesome unforgettable Tiger-symbol.

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*How do you explain darkness in heaven?*

When the angels rebel while still in heaven, they create there an ignorance and error which may quite appropriately be figured as darkness. When they are cast out of heaven after their defeat, they carry this darkness, the forests of the night outside heaven. But as long as they have not been cast out, we have to accustom ourselves to thinking of a darkness even in the domain of the Divine as a result of a twist of consciousness.

*Can you give, according to Sri Aurobindo's vision, an interpretation of this first step towards darkness in the Divine's domain?*

No. But as soon as we have the Overmind as contrasted to the Supermind we have a potential darkness. The principle of division from which Ignorance stems has its start in the Overmind. The Overmind itself is not really divided, but its unity is not in the front: it serves as a background-basis. Hence the movement to let each aspect of reality go to its extreme and stand divided from other aspects may be said to begin there—and because of this movement division becomes effective at the Mind-level. We may call the Overmind the luminous seed of a possible darkness. However, we are not concerned to reconcile Blake with Sri Aurobindo. What we have in *The Tiger* is a Christian concept and, though ordinarily Christians themselves picture heaven as always a realm of light, they in the mythopoetic turn of their theology have to posit a darkness already in existence the moment Satan, the supreme Archangel, hatches his ambitious plan to dethrone God. But we must not forget that because this darkness took place in heaven God threw it out. This shows that heaven is not meant to harbour darkness: it is intrinsically a realm where we should never expect any area of gloom.

*How do you explain the change from "could frame" in the first stanza to "dare frame" in the last, while all the rest of the expression in the two stanzas is the same?*

Ultimately both the turns of speech embody questioning wonder and puzzle-

ment. If one asks, "How *could* you do such and such a thing?" and if one asks "How dare you do it?", the significance comes more or less to the same in certain contexts. Here the query is about the possible power, the possible audacity, to make the Tiger. Both "could" and "dare" can serve. I may add that the transition from the one to the other is amply prepared in the course of the poem. The close of the second stanza itself introduces two "dare"s.

*The poem accepts—doesn't it?—that the creator of the Lamb is also the creator of the Tiger.*

Not only is the creator in both cases the same being but he is himself the Tiger as well as the Lamb. What he sets out to create is something of his own mood and he puts it forth as a self-formulation and sets it working. Christ who has been the Lamb of God is recreated or recreates himself as a Tiger. We have to see both the Tiger and the Lamb in a double vision as the Divine's "work" which is the Divine's own projected being. We may aptly recall T. S. Eliot's phrase from another context: "In the juvenescence of the year came Christ the Tiger."

*From what level of inspiration does this poem come?*

I should say it comes from the plane which Sri Aurobindo designates the Inner Mind. The Inner Mind has vision and thought intimately working with a very natural, felicitous and convincing unison. But there are several modes of the unison: the inner mind intelligence, the intuitive inner mind, the mystic inner mind, the inner mind of dynamic vision. Blake's poem seems to have an affinity with all these four modes. It has indubitably a vision that is dynamic—an extremely packed vivid seeing of forces and entities beyond the mere appearance. The opening couplet—

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night—

strike me as the dynamic vision mixed with the mystic mind which sees subtleties of occult action in some marvellous supernature. A passage like

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

is the mystic mind merging with the intuitive by which sudden connections are conjured up and strange correspondences as well as unities-in-disparities are presented without any explanation. The lines—

What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry...

And what shoulder and what art  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?...

In what furnace was thy brain?—

have the intuitive mind keeping close company with the inner-mind intelligence which operates with penetrative and large-sweeping concepts reaching out to us through suggestive images. The same combination, but with the mystic mind colouring it and with the inner-mind intelligence more prominent, meets us in:

When the stars threw down their spears  
 And watered heaven with their tears,  
 Did he smile his work to see?  
 Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Leaving aside the different parts of the poem with their own characteristics, we may characterise the interrelations of these parts as an overall intuitive process—a gleaming leap from stanza to stanza and from section to section within the same stanza, keeping things half-expressed and rousing our faculties to get the full sense of the partial silence.

In general we may say: *The Tiger* is a symbolic poem unfolding its true form intuitively. It is a very good anticipation of what came much later to be known as symbolist poetry. In symbolist as differentiated from symbolic poetry, the links between things are completely cut and even the subject-matter is suppressed and only a picture is built up to represent mysteriously a feeling the poet has experienced in the depths of his being. The picture itself is not regular: it changes as it develops and has unexpected lights and shades and, though there are some persistent elements, they get diversely arranged as in a kaleidoscope. The unity is emotional, not structural. From a series of vision-shocks on the surface of the intelligence we have to catch the life-movement of an inner truth, sometimes a truth belonging to an occult or supernatural dimension of existence. *The Tiger* is not a typical prefiguration of symbolist poetry, for it lends itself to analysis and it carries some sort of general coherence even on its surface. But both its intensity and its mystery look forward to that poetry and, like that poetry, it has, for all its differences from it, a baffling beauty, a paradoxical profundity, which does not easily yield the import of its symbol and its story.

K. D. SETHNA

## UDAR REMEMBERS

### XV

CONTINUING from the reminiscence in the last issue : I tried everything that came my way for the treatment of my cataract. The Allopathic systems, the Homeopathic ones, Ayurveda and several other types. I even went to Eastbourne specially to take a Visible Ray Treatment. I must say that all those to whom I went said that there was no cure as such for a mature cataract but they gave me a treatment to try out.

Now, the cataract that was said to be incipient in my right eye and was given a Visible Ray Treatment has been dissolved, so I am informed, and my sight in that eye is very good. But the mature cataract in the left eye continues still to obscure the vision though, I feel, that there is some improvement in it also. And so it goes on. I will continue trying everything till the cataract disappears. The Mother has asked me to do so and I will. There is to be no miraculous healing this time, for, in that case, it would be for me alone whereas the Mother wanted me to discover a method, one that others could use for cure and this is what I will find.

In the meantime I am having quite some fun with it and so I do not want anyone to feel sorry for me. I am quite sure that something will come out of all this that will be of benefit to many others. When the Mother wants it, what can stop it? I remember that when the doctor who had examined my eyes was told of what I proposed to do, he was very discouraging and warned me that if I did not get operated upon soon, I would lose the sight in my right eye, as there was already an incipient cataract in it. I replied to him that then I would be forced to find my "third eye" of occult vision and when I recounted the story to the Mother, She laughed heartily.

That is our Mother. It is truly wonderful when you can leave everything to Her. This brings back another memory.

Once I said to the Mother, in Her room on the second floor, that I knew very clearly that whenever She asked any of us to do something, She gave us the power and the means to do it. The Mother replied that it was exactly so. Then I said, "Mother, if you asked me to jump out of this window I would do it without a moment's hesitation as I know that if you asked me to do so, I will not fall but float in the air." The Mother replied that surely it would be so and then I said, "Please ask me to jump, Mother! I want to do it now!" She laughed and said, "Wait till the right time and I will ask you." So I am waiting.

# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

*(Continued from the issue of September 1977)*

## CHAPTER II (Contd.)

### THE BUILDING OF THE INNER TEMPLE

BEFORE I pass on to another phase some more details are called for to show how the Grace helped me to reach a "sorrowless life." The evil days did not come to an end with the experiences so far gained. Every now and then I was "besieged by unending clouds" which hampered spiritual emergence. People may not find anything interesting in all this dull and dry story of one's desert life but if there is a burning desire to make roses bloom in sandy soil one must go on watering it, unmindful of the outcome till they begin to sprout. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to a sadhak that unless one ploughs the land, manures it, and guards the plant from being eaten by animals one cannot hope to reap a big harvest.

Mention may be made here of two visions, one of which took place when the Mother was with us physically and the other three years after she had left her body.

One day I saw myself standing all alone in front of a vast burning desert. Of a sudden the Mother's car came into view with Pavitra seated as the driver. The very next moment I saw myself flying in her car. I did not know where I was going. After a long drive I foolishly asked, "Where are you taking me, Mother?" — and the car stopped. The only thing I remember of Pavitra is that his face shone with smiles and he said, "So the Mother has helped you to cross the desert."

The experience repeated itself in a different way after more than two decades. I saw myself again in a car which was as if moving like the wind, without a driver. Now the Mother was not there. I was the sole figure seated in a corner. The road appeared very smooth as if cement-plastered, it was shining like a polished floor on which the car was sliding fast automatically. Can we not infer from it that our feet are set on the road to the sunlit path and that we have simply to move on to our destined goal? (The symbolic meaning of a vehicle is progress.)

There is a long history between the two events. Let me confess there was something very "unpleasant"<sup>1</sup> in my nature, some unregenerate part that welcomed the devils into me. They easily get a hold on us because we are in the grip of the lower nature. If chance helped the gods to get the upper hand, the devils assail so vehemently that we are left almost trampled. They dance with joy when we cry. The Mother was quick to point out to a sadhika who was in a desperate state of mind:

"The hell from which physical death cannot deliver you, is the hell of being in

<sup>1</sup> "You must make this unpleasant incident an offering to the Divine." The Mother's Birth Centenary Vol. V, p. 53.

the grip of a devil who makes you his plaything and takes his greatest pleasure in torturing you.”

The devils ruthlessly directed their attack on me specially when I was before the Mother's picture in my room or before her physically in the Playground. Perhaps it will not be wrong to compare the attack with the hurling of lances on the goddess Durga by the legendary Mahishasura. No one is seen in the Ashram with trance-laden eyes, we live apparently as others live, so nobody can know how our sadhana is evolving—what is going on in our inner life. The sharpness of the attack was felt more acutely when the sadhana descended into the subconscious. Life then appeared like the churning of an ocean. Sri Aurobindo has written of being “at the top of the wave only to be thrown into the abyss the next moment”. This phrase exactly applied to my case at times. Details must wait till they fit the scheme of the story.

It is necessary to say a few more words before we go further.

Swinging between the two opposite poles still continues but in a quite different form. There is no sense of struggle. Something comes and goes like the flight of a bird in the sky. When I am at my best, life appears most sweet, every minute of it worth living; when there is resistance, as is the case with all of us, the mind becomes a “market-place” and all sorts of suggestions thrown from the universal forces get in. At that particular moment I am shaped by whatever suggestion takes hold of me, and I succumb to its evil designs. Once when in a state of dejection, a suggestion whispered into my ears: “Enough! enough of this life! better to leave the body!” I was struck dumb. “All that I have earned so far has evaporated in a split second!” I murmured to myself. By chance my eyes fell on the Mother's Centenary Vol. V. On opening the book at random (pp. 137-8) I found to my pleasant surprise that very subject dealt with. “Well, yes, I have had enough! and it is finished.” The Mother goes on: “...if nothing, absolutely nothing in you consents to die, you will not die...no part of you should want to die. That does not happen often. You have always a defeatist in you somewhere: something that is tired, something that is disgusted, something that is lazy, something that does not want to struggle and says: Well! Ah! Let it be finished, so much the better. That is sufficient, you are dead.” Just on reading this passage I was restored in a trice to my former state of consciousness.

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The evil suggestions that crept up from 1954, when my sadhana was predominantly in the vital, reached its climax in 1958 and would have ended in a tragedy but for a secret saving hand.

Worship is a heart's call, an appeal, an approach to the Divine. It was during the Pooja hours that a battery of suggestions, repellent thoughts, even foul names were hurled by hostile forces to spoil my sadhana. Often they ridiculed the Mother in various ways. Mostly I ignored them or sought the Mother's shelter and earnestly prayed for help to get rid of this nuisance. At times I felt horrified and ashamed to

think how insincere and hypocritical I was. But when I searched within there was no trace of such deformities in me. I did not feel any pinch in my conscience. These ungrateful sentiments were forcibly thrust into my being. The whole motive of the hostile forces was to poison me against the Mother. They acted in a hidden way, too hard to discover.

They made a surprise attack and rendered me helpless. Except nestling myself under the protective wings of the Mother there was no go for me. Whenever I resorted to prayer or contemplation they disappeared but appeared again and yet again either with a break or at times without it.

On my writing to the Mother in 1961 after long suffering they disappeared; to be precise, they went underground and returned with redoubled force after a year to regain their hold on me. I got a clue to the riddle from the Mother's talks:

*Question: "To have bad movements in front of you, it is very ugly!"*

MOTHER: "If you want to keep them, yes, it is very ugly; but if you want to get rid of them, it is perhaps an opportunity to get rid of them, because, in front of me, they appear exactly as they are; whereas away from me they are coloured with all kinds of brilliant and false lights which make you take them for what they are not. When the movement is vile and you see it in my atmosphere, it appears exactly as it is. Then it is the moment to get rid of them."<sup>1</sup>

It is worth thinking deeper of these words. The Mother has said that the best thing is to give and give and not to ask for anything. But what have we to give except obscurities, in which we are rich?

Once I read in *Bombay Circle* the Master counselling that the first necessity was to get rid of the obscurities and that was what people did not do. Elsewhere also he has said, "Aspire especially for the elimination of all obscurities and unconsciousness from the nature." But the being shrank and wavered: how to make an offering of these ugly things to the Mother?

The Mother waves away the hesitation:

"To give the best one has, is quite nice and is much appreciated; but to give the worst that one has is much more useful; and perhaps it is an offering that is appreciated more—on condition that you give it to get rid of it, not to take it back again afterwards."<sup>2</sup>

Who but the Mother can bend so low to lift us up?

When I referred my difficulty to her, Sri Aurobindo wrote back: "Offer it on the Darshan Day and it will go." But it took long to make an offering in the real sense.

In the April Darshan of 1964, no sooner did the Mother appear on the terrace than some part of me came out and, offering itself to her, prayed, "Save me from this nuisance for good." From that moment I got a definite release from the frequency of this demonic suggestion.

What I have written above does not tell all. Release from one evil does not give

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, April 1961, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

full release. There are hundreds of others. The alternative for tackling it is to offer it to the psychic flame.

Says the Master in *The Synthesis of Yoga*:<sup>1</sup>

“A psychic fire within must be lit into which all is thrown with the Divine Name upon it.”

But how is this fire to be lit?

The Mother answers the point:

“By aspiration, by the will to progress, by the urge towards perfection. Particularly it is the will to progress, to purify oneself that lights the fire. Those who have a strong will, if they turn it towards spiritual progress and purification, automatically kindle the fire within them.

“And each defect that you want to cure or each progress that you want to make, if you throw all that into the fire, it burns with a new intensity. This is not an image, it is a fact in the subtle physical. You can feel the heat of the flame, you can see in the subtle physical the light of the flame. And when there is something in the nature which prevents you from advancing and you throw it into the fire, it begins to burn and the flame becomes more intense.”<sup>2</sup>

These words offer “definite guidelines” and I mustered inner strength as best I could to translate it into life. But for long there was no change nor any hope of change.

From time to time these lines of Kapali Shastri came to my mind:

“When one goes on hammering some hard metal, it looks a foolish waste of time and energy. But each stroke counts and in the end the rigid matter gives way.”

No one can avoid hammering. Some insight may be had from these lines of *The Synthesis of Yoga*.<sup>3</sup>

“...everything is more or less distorted or imperfect.... We begin to understand what the Vedic Rishis meant when they spoke of the human forefathers fashioning the gods as a smith forges the crude material in his smithy.”

Whenever I repeated the line of *Durgastotra*—

আমাদের শরীরে যোগবলে প্রবেশ কর ।

*Amāder śarīre Yogbale prabeś karo*

O! enter into my body by Yoga force!—

the same hesitation crept in. How to call the Mother into the sink of obscurities that was my heart?

And one day in 1963 I actually saw in a vision my heart in the form of an open drain from which black-coloured mud was being thrown out. A portion of it got cleaned and looked empty.

Here I recall the question I put to Sri Aurobindo whether my seeing a blue light falling upon a drain and nearby thorns indicated a touch of the light in the most dirty and crude part of my being. The reply was “Yes”.

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, August 1962, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 39.



At another time in deep meditation I saw my heart as a coal mine, in the centre of which there ran a passage with a stream of fire flowing through it. But both its sides were still black.

The visions that followed thereafter roused new hopes:

The heart looked like an empty room, all dark with a black door at the end. Suddenly the door was flung open and there appeared before my eyes a view of the sea, greenish in colour as one sees it from a window in the morning before daybreak, although it was a pitch-dark night when I had this vision.

There is a bit of a story about the vision noted below:

I had a great attraction to Lord Krishna. In my childhood I fervently hoped that one day I would compel Him to appear before my eyes. When I made the Ashram my home a repentance lingered for long that not even once I had visited Brindavan. I could easily have gone there when I had been to Hardwar, but the heart shrank: where was the capacity to invoke His Presence? Could God be seen when the heart was not clean? Thus I denied myself the opportunity. On my writing all these thoughts to Sri Aurobindo he replied: "What does it matter if you did not go to the physical Brindavan. Realise Him in the inner Brindavan"<sup>1</sup>.

Once I had to pass the night looking at the sky. Of a sudden a curtain was removed from my eyes and there came into view a big forest, full of huge trees, with shooting branches and green leaves—an emblem of life—all full of lustre. It was dead of night and all was in the grip of deep darkness. The streets were deserted but my eyes were feasting on the scenic beauties of the forest which went stretching on and on. A shower of light seemed to fall, just as the sky showers rain on the parched plants in response to their silent prayers. This vision revived in my memory the episode connected with Brindavan. I had the joy of seeing this vision two or three times within a month.

Whenever the heart went into a great prayer, the response was immediate but occasions were there when I had strokes of sharp rebuke and it gave me a new kind of joy. Once a voice in the heart spoke: "Why do you do a thing which you know the Mother will not like?"

"Why do you do such a foolish thing"? it spoke at another time. The accent was the same that our ears were accustomed to hear when we sat at the Mother's feet.

"Don't fear, the Higher Force is at work". These words that once leaped from the inner sky of the heart made me feel blessed.

Thus passed year after year winning new ground inch by inch after a prolonged battle.

A few days before the above two visions the mind threw up a suggestion with great force that since "the period of personal effort" was over, mechanical sittings before the photographs of the Gurus were of no importance. I was just going to succumb to the suggestion when I had the revelation, "Don't discontinue", and all oppo-

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo speaks about the *eternal Brindavan* in *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. II, p. 88.

sition at once was silenced. Since then such suggestions have not occurred again, but physical inertia has had its play from time to time.

On several occasions while offering pranams I have seen different parts of my inner being—the mental being, the lower and higher vital, a portion of the physical—jumping from the gross material and laying themselves before the Mother. It is this that rooted my feet to the soil of spirituality.

(*To be continued*)

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## MY PETTY LOST THINGS

A Free Translation of Rabindranath Tagore's

*"Alpa laiyā thāki, tāi mor jāhā jāy tāhā jāy"*

I LIVE with a little, so what I lose I lose for ever.

Even if a particle I lose, my heart aches. Alas! Alas!

Like the river-bank I merely try—all so futile!—  
to withhold the currents,...

and the waves, one by one, hurt me grievously, and pass on for ever. . . .

What passes on and what remains—if all I offer at Thy feet,

Nothing is lost but everything lives on in the eternity of Thy divine glory.

Clusters of suns and moons are in Thee. . . .

Not even the tiniest electron is ever lost. . . .

And will my petty lost things be lost for ever and not find refuge at

Thy feet?

ROBI DAS

# MAN AND WOMAN

## WHAT WOMAN HAS TO DO

*(Continued from the issue of September 1977)*

MAN and woman are the obverse and reverse sides of the coin called human being. In Ancient India woman was given a very important place at home, in the society and even at the administrative level in the state. It was a well-known adage which says, "Property governed by woman means prosperous property." For ages, woman continued to play a decisive role in the management of household, property and administration. But with the advent of Mohammedan rule, women were forced to go behind the veil and their field of activity narrowed down to the four walls of the house. Man put on the mantle of bread-earner and master of the family and the society as well.

This situation continued for a long period up till the end of British Rule, when the women could no longer be kept inside the four walls of the house. They came out to fight for the country's freedom and men welcomed them to become their partners in this historic struggle for Independence.

In Europe and elsewhere also, the First World War brought many problems in its wake and women were obliged to leave their cosy places in the home and help their menfolk to fight the great battles by doing all sorts of odd jobs, for which till then women were considered unfit. "Many men were surprised to see how easily women could replace them in most of the posts they occupied before, and to their surprise was added something of regret not to have found sooner a real partner of their work and their struggles in her whom more often they had only considered as an object of pleasure and distraction, or at best as the guardian of their hearth and mother of their children. Certainly woman is that and to be it well requires exceptional qualities, but she is not only that, as the present circumstances have amply proved."

After the war was over, the movement for women's participation in public affairs continued and gained a new momentum. Many men and women started raising their voices for woman's equal participation in every sphere of life. All over the world a need was felt for giving better opportunities to women to show their capacities. For women had been until then neglected in all respects. They were not given the same facilities of education and training as their brothers, for it was thought useless and unnecessary for a woman to think of anything except getting married and looking after the family. Though much has been done for liberating women, at least on paper, and they have been given equal rights and equal opportunities of employment, still it is not sufficient to compensate for the neglect to which they have been subjected for centuries. The year 1975 was declared the "Women's International Year" and many conferences were held at different places and many new rules were

passed by governments everywhere to liberate woman from the drudgery of domestic life and open new vistas of life for her.

Much work has been done, but much still remains. The problem is not so easy as to be solved only by making laws and forming women's liberation associations. Before woman can truly stand as equal before man, she will have to overcome many prejudices and weaknesses to which society has subjected her. These prejudices and weaknesses have been ingrained in her and it will be a difficult job to undo them. Woman, though she is being proclaimed equal to man, is still considered as a feeble creature weak in mind, sentimental, carried away easily by emotions and passions. It is true that most women are physically weak at present, but only because they have never been given the opportunity to build their bodies through proper nutrition and physical training. The number of girls who go to school is miserably low, compared to that of boys, and the majority of them never get an opportunity to play games, do exercises and get sufficient nourishment. Boys still obtain preferences even at the dining table. Parents still do not allow their daughters to take full advantage of the extra-curricular activities or body-building programmes that are easily available in schools and colleges. No importance is attached to the proper and healthy growth of the girls. If for nothing else, at least for their so-called primary role of future motherhood, girls must be given all the facilities to grow into healthy and strong women.

Psychologically women in general are still more under-developed than men. For lack of proper training and due to constant pressure of elders and society, a girl comes to believe that she is not only something different but also inferior to her brother. Even now the birth of a boy child is celebrated with joy in many Indian homes, whereas the coming of a baby girl is still not welcomed. From early childhood a girl is told so many times and in so many ways to learn to submit to men's will, as if she did not have a personality of her own. "You must obey your father, listen to your brother and you have to submit to your husband's will." A girl imbibes submissiveness and fear along with her mother's milk. How can such a girl, when she grows up into a woman, suddenly act as equal to man, even if she has a legal right to consider herself as his equal. A woman, who is socially, economically, physically and psychologically dependent on a man; cannot become his equal, even though the law confers the same rights on her.

Special education, physical and psychological, is needed for girls from their very birth, if we really desire to make them worthy of being equal to man.

*(To be continued)*

PUSHPA A.

## A SHEAF OF SYMBOLS

*(Continued from the issue of September 1977)*

19

If you have keys and know appliance right,  
Locked safes can open within a minute or two;  
If you divine and release the hidden springs,  
Even deserts can bloom into Allah-Gardens fair;  
And if you are bound by Varuna's Triple Cords,  
You can undo them by Triple Labour on your part,  
Supplemented by Mitra's Grace Divine!  
So did the sages ever invoke the Twain  
And envisage them in a compounded word,<sup>1</sup>  
With its alchemic action of thermocautery!...

Yea, Law and Love are even phonetic kins,  
One hiding yet fulfilling the other, as two sides of coins!  
If Law imposes hard labour and discipline,  
Like Yama brandishing his rod of rectitude,  
'Tis for consolidating roots of Life  
And building up backbone-tissues of the trunk,  
Through which can flow the sunshine-sap of Love,  
Slowly to incarnate in rich-red foliage-fruit!  
And despite all vaunts and threats of Entropy-Law,  
The Ever-upholding Grace Divine is THERE.  
All indeed is Labour of Love—down here—and that Labour can never be lost!

20

What can be polar more than Water-Fire?  
Annihilating each other is their primal role;  
And yet, when polarised by magnetic Earth,  
How do they play most commendable roles  
Of tugging apace slow Evolution's cart  
Up the steep incline of wonder-unfolding years—  
Working in team—like Zodiacal Aquarius-Lion?

<sup>1</sup> मित्रोवरुणौ = Mitra-cum-Varuna

The vast Pacific with its fiery ring  
Of active volcanoes littering all its coasts  
And thousand evergreen isles of volcanic birth,  
Gives testimony superb of Earth's matrix-role;  
And lightnings playing hide-and-seek in clouds  
Of watery birth, find foothold sure and firm  
In mute-meek Earth, amidst thunderous chain-applause,  
Attesting once more to Her Fire-absorbing skill!

But for the intervention of endearing Earth,  
The Titans would have been at perpetual war,  
And there had been no point of space or time  
For you or me to be—or become at all!  
Isn't it She who does askesis-sadhana true—  
With Her aeonic constancy to Labour of Transfiguration Triple!

CHIMANBHAI

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# TO THWART DEATH

## SOME FIRST-AID MEASURES

A MAN has fainted. Breathing has stopped, the eye pupils are distended, the pulse is not detectable in the carotid artery—clinical death has set in. This can happen to one of your family at home, one of your colleagues at work or to a stranger sitting next to you in the bus. Naturally, you rush to call a doctor. In response to your summons an ambulance will start on its hundred-kilometres-an-hour dash across the town, clearing the way with its ominous siren and followed by the grave glances of passers-by: somebody's life is in danger. And the outcome may be fatal if nothing is done to help the patient while the doctor is on the way. Everybody should be able to give first aid to the sufferer.

What causes death in, say, myocardial infarction, commonly known as a heart attack? Spasms of the coronary vessels, cardiogenic shock, pulmonary edema, rupture of the heart, embolism. And a large part of such patients die of cardiac arrhythmia, while the general condition of the organism remains satisfactory. Not so long ago death was considered inevitable when the heart rhythm became so irregular as to stop the blood circulation. Today this condition is no longer considered fatal, and the patient can be resuscitated. In hospital conditions, with qualified help and all the necessary equipment and medicines immediately available, the patient has a fair chance, but if he has the attack at home, at work or in the street his survival often depends on whether the people around him will look on helplessly or give him immediate help.

The most important thing is to restore and maintain blood circulation by massaging the heart, and ensure artificial ventilation of the lungs by breathing "mouth to nose" or "mouth to mouth". These methods do not require any special apparatus and are very simple and within every man's powers.

Before starting the heart massage, place the patient on something hard—a table, the floor or the edge of the bed. Then begin the massage, pressing strongly and sharply with both hands on the lower third of the sternum so that it should cave in by some 5 or 6 cm. The rate of the pressures should be at least 60 or 70 a minute. When we press on the sternum, we compress the heart and push the blood from its cavities into the big arteries, and in releasing the sternum we restore the heart's initial volume and it is filled with blood from the big veins.

Simultaneously with the massage you must start artificial ventilation of the lungs. The once popular hand-methods of artificial respiration, such as Silvester's method and others, have now been discarded as ineffectual, and the oldest method of first aid "mouth to nose" or "mouth to mouth" resuscitation has come back.

Before starting respiration, bring forward the patient's lower jaw and put something under his shoulders, so that his head is thrown back. Otherwise the tongue and the lower jaw, which usually drop back when people lose consciousness, may block

the respiratory tract: it is a fact that most deaths in condition of unconsciousness are caused by asphyxia and not by the primary ailment. Take a deep breath, cover the patient's nose with your mouth and blow the air into his lungs (keeping his mouth closed). When you remove your mouth from the patient's nose, his lungs, being highly elastic, will perform the expiration of themselves. You must make some 15 inspiration movements in a minute and, correspondingly, some 60 pressing movements on the sternum. The sequence should be as follows: after every four pressures, the massage is discontinued and air is breathed in, then the massage is repeated another four times and so on.

If the heart starts beating on its own and the patient regains consciousness, you can congratulate yourself. But do not feel discouraged if the heart's independent function is not restored for a long time. It is quite enough that the first signs of returning life should appear: the eye pupils have contracted, the lips have got back some of their colour, the rib cage distends well when you blow in the air, and pulse beats can be detected in the carotid and femoral arteries in massage pressures. Continue with the massage until the doctor's arrival, never interrupting it for more than 10 or 12 seconds. Even these feeble signs of life indicate that the brain is alive and receives a sufficient blood supply. There have been cases when independent heart function was not restored until active resuscitation had been applied for 8 or even 15 hours, and yet the patients eventually got well and even went back to work.

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# THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

## CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

*(Continued from the issue of September 1977)*

### **The Character of Life in *Hamlet* (Contd.)**

MORAL repulsion from the act of revenge has frequently been cited as a cause of Hamlet's delay. It is not apparent that Hamlet ever thought or felt that revenge was wrong. But aside from repulsion, it can be said that Hamlet felt a disgust with the entire world in which he lived and with the actions of all those around him. That disgust, arising from his insight into human motives and his emotional sensitivity, is itself enough to make him withdraw from life and seek some escape rather than take up positive action.

Hamlet himself is genuinely puzzled by his lack of anger, enthusiasm and energy for revenge. After the first meeting with the players, he compares himself with the actor who can bring forth tears and passion for a mere drama while he is passionless and inert:

Yet I,  
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,  
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,  
Upon whose property and most dear life  
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward? (II.ii.593)

He fails to understand his own character and the impact of his mother's act on it. He excites himself to self-recrimination for not acting on his words and resolutions.

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!  
O, vengeance!  
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,  
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words. (II.ii.609)

In the events which follow, he does act at several crucial junctures but only when circumstances provoke him. Then it is not the mind that decides and implements but the vital being which leaps impulsively and overwhelms him. Each time this happens life forces support him and his cause advances. His finding Claudius at prayer, after he vows bloody revenge, the attack of the pirate ship after he rewrites the king's commission, the change of swords in the duel, are incidents which appear

as mere chance or accident or dramatic device. But seen from a wider perspective, they conform to a basic law of life.

Hamlet is capable of observation and understanding but not of an initiative based on that knowledge. His power of action remains that of the vital impulsive man. He shares the lower nature of Laertes and Fortinbras who act swiftly and directly from vital passion and heroism. Hamlet constantly attempts to act from the mind with a faculty he has not yet fully developed, so his action ends with thought or speech. He can only "unpack my heart with words". When he gives up the mental effort and allows the vital passions to express themselves, he is in his native faculty and in harmony with the life around him which is organised only at the vital level. That is why life "cooperates" with him at these moments and carries him forward.

It can be seen that so long as man lives at one level of consciousness, life at that level is a struggle and what the man seeks is always evasive. One man seeks fame, another wealth, still another affection. Even when he achieves them, somehow the experience is made sour. But as a man rises above the present level and renounces the methods or rewards of that level, life becomes cooperative at the lower plane. His most casual initiative becomes successful, the things he valued and never could possess come to him of themselves. Hamlet's character has begun to rise beyond the level of vital functioning towards mind, but it is not yet able to act as the true mental man. His own lower nature and the life around him now present him with occasions where he is called on to return to the old level and offered all the fruits of success at that level—victory over his opponent, revenge of his father's death, the crown of Denmark, etc. But the means he must resort to he has outgrown. No longer can he respond to the lure of ambition or the satisfaction of revenge. Were he to do so, it would be a regression into the past. Life challenges him to move forward and tempts him to move back. He is caught in the middle working out an evolutionary transition.

Though Hamlet's central concern is the queen, his conscious foe is Claudius. Claudius lacks the passion and strength of his brother. He is clever, deceitful, amoral and manages everything by diplomacy rather than force. He wins a kingdom by seducing a woman and poisoning a sleeping brother. The use of poison reveals craft of the vital mind rather than rash impulsive action. As king, he displays tact and diplomacy in handling the rebellion in Norway and the uprising of his own people in support of Laertes. Old Hamlet's murder is an outrage against the moral consciousness of the society and despite his capacities as a king he is unable to establish himself firmly.

At the consciousness level, Claudius is mind at the service of the vital, *i.e.* knowledge and reason employed for selfish gain rather than pursuit of ethics or ideals. The movement of forces he initiates with murder will not subside until his own death. Though political power and social support are in his favour, he is unable to remove the one remaining obstacle to his sovereignty. It is not Hamlet's persistence, but the opposition of life forces that he is powerless to overcome. No sooner does he take the throne than Fortinbras declares war. He sends for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who

in turn engage the players. The result is that Claudius's guilt is exposed during the play scene. He sets Polonius to spying and Polonius is killed. He schemes to send Hamlet to his death in England and his emissaries die instead. He employs poison in the duel and his entire court, including his queen and himself, die of poison. Though his planning is clever and careful at each stage, it fails because the forces of life are supporting a higher evolutionary movement. Claudius's is the vital mind thwarted by nascent but pure mentality and poisoned by its own capacity for evil.

In the Third Act Claudius and Polonius employ Ophelia as a stooge to make Hamlet reveal his purposes. Hamlet enters speaking his most famous soliloquy.

To be, or not to be: that is the question:  
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune  
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
 And by opposing end them? (III.i.56)

The entire soliloquy involves a contemplation of two distinctly separate questions which are intermixed and confused in Hamlet's mind. The first is the question of suicide. "To be, or not to be." Immediately he switches to the second. Here he expresses the major difficulty in his personality. Should he allow the mind's passivity to lead him or follow the vital impulse to action? As the two are separated by a wide gap in his character, he sees no way to reconcile them. Again he returns to suicide, "To die: to sleep," but the doubt arises as to what follows death, "there's the rub." He lacks knowledge. He fears that what follows may be worse than the present life. Already he has heard from the Ghost of its sufferings. There may also be the subtle sense that what life confronts him with cannot be escaped by death. It is a direct expression of what he is and he must accept the challenge and overcome it.

Now he comes back to the question of thought and action.

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
 And thus the native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought  
 And enterprises of great pith and moment  
 With this regard their currents turn awry,  
 And lose the name of action.— (III.i.84)

"Conscience" is both thought and religious fear. Hamlet confuses the question of suicide and the question of action. He refrains from suicide because he dreads the result: he acts the coward. But also the constant turning of thought, conscience, leads him to no action at all. Finally he concludes that it is the "pale cast of thought" which creates irresolution and prevents initiative.

The confusion expressed here is a natural outcome of Hamlet's position. He

feels he is a coward for not acting in life. He sees that his mind is incapable of acting decisively. He expresses the bewilderment of being caught in the middle unable to act positively or negatively. It is an expression of man in transition from a lower to a higher plane of functioning, having lost the effectivity of the lower level and not having yet achieved the greater power of the higher.

Shortly before the play scene, Hamlet praises Horatio in terms that reveal his own shortcoming.

... for thou hast been  
 As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,  
 A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those  
 Whose blood and judgment are so well commingl'd,  
 That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger  
 To sound what stop she please. Give me that man  
 That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
 In my heart's core, aye, in my heart of heart,  
 As I do thee. (III.ii 70)

Horatio possesses the integrality which Hamlet lacks, that commingling of "blood and judgment" But Horatio's is harmony at a lower level. Mind proper is unborn. His is the balance and stoical moderation that comes from a disciplined vitality and a practical physical intelligence unhampered by the emergence of true thought power and a mental vision of life. When he first hears about the Ghost from Marcellus, he maintains the skepticism of a modern student, "Tush, tush, 'twill not appear" (I.i.165). But once he has seen it, his mind at once opens to all the superstition and folklore of his countrymen, "So I have heard and do in part believe" (I. i. 165). Alongside a simple mind there is the beauty of a nature in harmony with the world. No sooner has the fearful presence of the Ghost left than he is moved to poetry by the coming dawn

But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
 Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill. (I.i.166)

He is Hamlet's one loyal friend and confidant. Horatio is the best of the old world, lending his support to the evolutionary movement but not himself a pioneer.

In the nunnery scene and the play scene Hamlet's initiative is only mental. He sees through Ophelia's pre-rehearsed gesture of returning his love letters and may be aware that Claudius and Polonius are listening. He gives the player last-minute instructions. He sets Horatio to watch the king's face during the play to see if he reveals his guilt. He talks in threatening riddles to the king, gets Polonius to speak of Caesar's assassination, and addresses Ophelia as if she were a prostitute. The play is a great success. Claudius jumps up in the middle as Lucius pours the poison

into the player king's ear. Horatio is convinced of the king's guilt. Hamlet is excited and jubilant. The play has satisfied his mind, but having that satisfaction he does not have the capacity to act on the knowledge. He can only revel in his achievement.

Immediately Rosencrantz and Guildenstern return to invite him to his mother's bedchamber where Polonius is to overhear their conversation from behind a curtain. Hamlet ruthlessly exposes his old friends:

... do you  
Think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? (III.ii.385)

and mocks Polonius with the shapes of clouds. What began as mental initiative has released passionate excitement and thirst for revenge.

'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood  
And do such bitter business as the day  
Would quake to look on. (III.ii.406)

It is not Claudius he thinks of in his rage but rather his mother.

O, heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever  
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:  
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.  
I will speak daggers to her, but use none; (III.ii.411)

Hamlet is carried away by vital excitement and anger. He is ready to act, based on his feelings towards his mother, not on his knowledge of Claudius's guilt.

Life immediately responds to his condition. He comes upon Claudius kneeling alone in prayer.

O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven;  
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,  
A brother's murder. (IV.iii.36)

Claudius is moved by his conscience to pray but he has no intention to renounce the reward of his sins:

My crown, mine own ambition and my queen. (III.iii.55)

His mind sees the nature of his crime but his vital does not repent.

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:  
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go. (III.iii.97)

Though he is unrepenting, the act is a sanction for the social forces to punish him. His strength is divided by conscience, he is "to double business bound." Subconsciously he consents to lose all he has gained by murder. In effect his prayers are heard and answered by life which takes from him what he could not bring himself to renounce. Had his repentance been more genuine, it would have weakened him sufficiently for Hamlet to act on the spot, and kill him.

Hamlet is presented with the ideal opportunity to avenge his father's death.

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying  
 And now I'll do't. (III.iii.73)

But now he is calmer and he responds to the situation not with impulse but with thought. Passion subsides and mind intervenes. He debates the merit of killing a man in prayer. Once thought begins, the urge and energy for action disappears. He is unable to utilize life's opportunity and goes off to meet his mother.

In fact of life, Hamlet is right. The first necessity is to go to the source of all the difficulty and correct it. Until that is done, there is no sanction for dealing with Claudius. The one thing his emotions respond to is his mother. With her he needs no prodding to action. He is forceful and direct. He must restrain the passion which wells up in him. But there is the Ghost's injunction that prevents him from harming her. The queen immediately senses his violent anger and is terrified.

What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?  
 Help, help, ho! (III.iv.21)

It is exactly what Hamlet would like to do, but is forbidden. Polonius is roused from behind the curtain by her cry. Hamlet, thinking it is Claudius, passes his sword through the curtain and kills Polonius. The passion that could not be directed at its object is deflected and strikes at that object's tool.

*(To be continued)*

GARRY JACOBS

# THE TORTOISE AND THE MOUSE

## A STORY

(Continued from the issue of September 1977)

ANGUS tried to hurry and Maurizio tried to go slowly and this tired both of them. They found only roots for their food which ordinarily would have disturbed Angus not at all, but now he was much concerned for his friend. That night Maurizio became delirious. He moaned and lamented in his sleep and recited Lady Macbeth's famous speech with the curious variation, "Out damned tooth!" Angus now realised that something beyond the physical hardships of their situation was troubling his friend, and determined to try to help him.

"You know you spoke in your sleep last night, Mousie...." The words were hardly out of his mouth when Maurizio who had been lying prone and weak on a pallet of dried leaves suddenly bounded up.

"What did I say?" He looked so fierce that Angus instinctively drew his head in. While he blinked in the dark shelter of his shell he thought *ha, what a puny, frightened animal I am. What a timid creature. Slough my shell indeed. To be afraid of my best friend when he's in trouble.* It all seemed so shameful that there and then in the dark shelter he made a resolution such as, in all probability, none of his kind had even dreamed of before. he resolved to practise not recoiling into his shell. He came out quickly.

"Nothing much, Mousie, nothing much. You were mostly reciting Shakespeare, I think." Maurizio lay down weak with relief.

"Thank God. Thank God," he mumbled.

"Is there something on your mind, Mousie?" asked Angus.

"Don't ask me that," the mouse's voice was hollow and then went up into such a squeak of protest at the end that Angus immediately realised it would be kinder to desist from any sort of enquiry. "You must, you really must respect my silence on this matter, old friend, whatever I may say in the night. It is the one thing I must insist on," gasped Maurizio in impatient squeaks. Seeing Maurizio in such torment and yet so determined to stay with him, Angus was deeply touched. He was more than ever ashamed of that moment when he had drawn back in fear from his friend, and his resolution came back to him. Was it possible that he could ever learn to do it? He very very much doubted it. He had never heard of, let alone seen a tortoise who lived with his head out all the time. Why, it was a reflex which even Clement and King Harold Hardshell were unable to avoid. And he was neither a Harold Hardshell nor a Clement in courage or confidence. He was, he might as well admit it, rather a timid and possibly a cowardly tortoise. Indeed, the whole idea was more than slightly ludicrous. Perhaps life in the wilderness was making his brain soft. It had already taken a heavy toll of Mousie. Perhaps they would

both go mad? Why not? Once you even fleetingly entertained the notion of living without your shell who knew where you would ever end up? It was suddenly clear to Angus that he and the mouse were all that stood between each other and madness and with this insight came a wave of great tenderness towards the rodent. So although Maurizio was lying very still with a wet leaf pack over his eyes and though Angus's instinct was to respect his friend's raw nerves and his need for silence, he tip-toed clumsily towards him and said softly

"Is there anything I can do for you, Morry?" The mouse put out a conciliatory paw.

"Nothing, old friend, nothing. You've done so much already. All those wet leaf packs. Sitting up with me last night. I'm sorry I snapped at you. Take no notice of me. One seems to get very strange out here in the wilderness."

"Yes, yes indeed. I was just thinking, my own thoughts are getting very very strange indeed, the most impossible notions have come into my mind." Maurizio removed his wet pack and blinking propped himself up on an elbow.

"Yes. Yes. Take no notice, Angus. One does get the wilderness willies. They say it happens to mountaineers and people in the desert." But something in Angus resisted this reassurance.

"All the same, Mousie," he said, "all sorts of animals do do impossible things, you know, things that quite exceed their nature as it were. I've always admired them and somewhat envied them being in such a different line myself. I mean like lions who learn not to eat people even if it's only for the sake of a circus or birds that speak and all sorts of things like that. I once knew a turtle who could balance things on the end of his nose. He said he'd picked it up watching the seals doing it. Well, as you know, the thing is to despise turtles, but I thought this was damned clever. I mean it must take a great deal of perseverance and will and energy. I never had the moral courage to ask him. But I'd like to ask you, Mousie," he said shyly popping his head in for an instant before he remembered that he mustn't and resolutely pushed it out again into the light. "You know your juggling act. Well, you know how tremendously I admire that. I'd like to ask you..." Maurizio sat bolt upright.

"You want me to teach you to juggle, old friend. You're not serious! But if it'll take your mind..."

"No. No. It's not like that," said Angus keeping his head resolutely out, "though I'd love to learn to juggle one day but I'm not quick, you know. Indeed, I'm very slow. No, it's not exactly that. What I want to know is *how*. How do you learn to do things that...don't come easily to you?"

"How d'you mean exactly, Angus?" asked Maurizio frowning and struggling to keep a thread of contact with what the tortoise was saying, through his throbbing headache.

"I mean the process, the theory that you used so as to be able to learn to juggle which after all doesn't come at all naturally."

You may already have perceived, no doubt, that Angus was rather a mental crea-



ture while Maurizio was not at all so. Consequently there was here a rather bad break in communication. Angus saw that the mouse was not inclined to respond. In fact, the word "theory" hit Maurizio like a brick bringing his headache on very badly. He lay back, about to ask Angus to dip his tail in the stream again, when something in Angus's contorted face made him realise that his friend was struggling with himself and that something very important was going on inside him. And indeed Angus was struggling heroically not to mumble "Never mind, Morry" and slip his head into the comforting darkness inside his shell. He took a deep breath and said,

"If you could just tell me how. There must be a way. I mean you don't just get up one day and find you can juggle. Perhaps if you could tell me step by step, Mousie, what you did on the day you began I might reconstruct the method for myself." At the word "method" Maurizio squinted.

"I mean, you didn't just get up one morning and say, 'Today I'll become a juggler.' How did it happen?"

"Oh," said Maurizio sighing with relief and sitting upright. "Yes, I can certainly tell you about that." But the effort of insisting and persisting and feeling foolish without once putting his head in had somewhat exhausted Angus's store of resistance. And now he had to, just had to, put his head in. It was like needing oxygen. Quickly he went in and breathed in the cool darkness. It restored him and he came out again smiling.

"Listening."

"Well, I got up one morning feeling absolutely down and out. The play in which I'd had the male lead had just packed up after ten days, due, I might add, mainly to certain poisonous critics. So I decided to blow the little money I had on one last glorious full meal before I faced my new and unpromising situation. I went to a very expensive restaurant with white starched table linen where the waiters bow and smile and call you M'sieu and where they have big baskets of fruit on the table. You can eat as much fruit as you like. They don't count. Even if you don't tip them they have orders to smile. Well, by the time I'd finished my last crumb of brioche and drunk my last drop of chocolate I had no room for even a grape, never mind an apple or orange. But here was all this lovely fruit. And that's where it all started, you see. There were all these lovely golden oranges. So I decided to take three oranges home with me, that was all I could carry. And then, the next day I saw them lying there and since I was still rather full, instead of eating them, I started juggling. As a young mouse I'd often thought of becoming a juggler."

"You just started juggling?"

"A manner of speaking of course. I dropped everything. All three oranges. All the time. Couldn't even use them for marmalade afterwards. But you just have to do it, do it and do it and then one day you don't drop them any more. Then you can do four and five oranges and so forth."

"Just do it, eh? Just do it!" Angus gathered all the information and chewed it up in his mind like a lettuce leaf. His mind spat out the fibre and did a few equations.

"Why, that must be the method," he said.

"What?"

"Just doing it."

"Well, of course it is."

"Then I suppose it's the same for me. Just do it. But I must transpose onto the minus side as it were, a negative mmmm, yes. I must *not* put my head in. Over and over again. Funny. That's what I thought of doing when the idea first came to me but I never realised that I'd stumbled on the right method." Angus was very pleased. "I got the right answer without even working it out, you see, Mousie, because I thought to myself I'll practise and that's the same as just doing, isn't it?"

"It is."

"Well, then let's start right now."

"All right, you start, Angus, and I'll watch you."

"Yes, but you see I want to start not drawing my head in."

"Yes, well, but it's your head," Maurizio reminded him.

"Of course. I forgot to explain. I have to start with you. That would be easiest."

"But you have to do it yourself. Nobody can help you."

"The first time it came to me was when I told you you'd been talking in your sleep. And you bounded up and, forgive me, Mousie, but you looked almost fierce enough to take a bite out of me and poor spineless creature that I am, before it knew what it was doing my stupid head had slid in. Then while I was waiting there in the dark I thought, this can't go on. Here I am in the wilderness with the best friend anyone could ever hope to have, a friend who has sacrificed everything to be with me and I am hiding from him just because he jumped up a little suddenly. So you see what I'm getting at?"

"No."

"Well, I want you to jump like that again and again as though you want to eat me until I can stand it and then gradually get fiercer and fiercer until I don't even blink when you bare your teeth a millimetre away from my nose." Maurizio pondered this in silence and gradually the full and awful implications of what his friend was asking dawned on him. He groaned and lay down. Carefully he replaced the pack over his eyes.

"Angus, could you just sprinkle a little water on this, please?"

"Yes, of course, Mousie. I'm sorry if all this talk has made your head worse."

"It's just," said the mouse, "that as you know I don't like methods and I must say the one you suggest seems particularly horrible but just let me think it over, Angus. I wish I had a nice cool shell to retire under but, *faute de mieux*, this eye shade will have to do. I'll give you my answer just as soon as I can. Though I must say as from now that I can't hold out much hope. It's my nerves."

"I know. I know. I wouldn't have asked if it hadn't become rather compelling or if I had anybody else. You see, it's because you're my only friend and so of course it's ridiculous to be afraid of you. With anyone else, even another tortoise I don't

think I could attempt it.”

“I am sensible of the honour,” said Maurizio in a low despairing voice.

“Of course I’m fully aware of how much you’ve done for me already. Now I shall let you get some rest,” and Angus turned away and went and sat at some distance, his head ostentatiously out as far as it would go. In the meantime Maurizio’s thoughts were churning. Rest indeed. Yes, the tortoise was quite right. He’d done enough for him already. Poor old innocent. He didn’t begin to know what he was asking; the words “It’s ridiculous to be afraid of you” echoed in his head. If Angus only knew. Oh! how shameful. Every day the rotten diet which he could hardly keep down was turning his thoughts more and more to the subtle flavour of Angus’s shell. It was the fear of waking up to find that he had half devoured his friend that kept him tossing and turning at night. If only he’d confessed immediately. He now saw the folly of having put off his explanation even for a moment. No, he could not possibly agree. Besides Angus obviously had no idea of what it was to be a rodent. Certain aggressive instincts went with belonging to the rodent family. Why, what if the mongoose in him suddenly came out and saw in Angus the old traditional enemy, the snake? Angus’s head was just like that of a snake. There were certain things, certain instincts that you just didn’t play with; what if he were to lose control and bite Angus’s nose off? Surely the ravaged shell was enough. Stop one milimetre away indeed. Serve him right. And he suddenly saw himself eating, not Angus’s shell but his head!!! And he could taste it!!! And he was so angry with Angus for provoking this fantasy in him that he nearly got up and charged at that stupid, snake-like protruding head.

“Angus,” he shouted, closing his eyes tight “I beg and command you to put your head in immediately. Whatever you decide to do with it in the future put it away now.” His voice sounded so high and shrill and loud and urgent all at the same time that Angus did just that. But while he was under his shell he wondered whether it wasn’t just Maurizio’s rather clever way of testing him Maurizio was such a good actor, and that sense of urgency was one of his best effects. He popped out his head, smiling, and said,

“You were just trying to see if you could frighten me, weren’t you, Morry. That was very cle...” Before he could finish the mouse had let out an anguished scream and, throwing away his eye shade, fled into the wilderness.

*(To be continued)*

MAGGI

# EUROPE: 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

*(Continued from the issue of September 1977)*

15

TODAY London is the greatest Metropolis of the world, and it has been so for the last two centuries. One of the most amazing things about this metropolis is that it is not at all noisy, considering its population and its dimensions. Londoners have learnt the art of living in a great city. Another thing that is most striking about London is that it is very clean. The air above the city is free from pollution. This is the result of the Clean Air Act. The City of London and many of the boroughs have been declared smokeless areas by this Act. And more and more boroughs are applying every year to be incorporated in the scheme. Only smokeless fuel, gas or electricity can be used in these areas. As the old-fashioned grates will not burn the new type of fuel, offers of grants have been extended to householders to help them buy modern equipment. But bonfires are allowed on Guy Fawke's day (5th November). This creates a real mess. Our hotel room had a very beautiful old-fashioned grate and mantle-piece. But in front of it sat squat an ugly modern electric heater. How to combine cleanliness with old-time charm is really a 20th-century problem. There was a time when the air above London was not so clean, specially in winter. During the winter months there came over the city what is known as the "London Pea-Soup" weather. The air laden with coal-dust got mixed up with the humid vapour from the river Thames to produce a smog. It used to be so thick that it was impossible to see things just a few yards away.

The Romans speak of it, and there are all sorts of ghost stories connected with the "Pea-Soup" Particularly near the Tower of London where so many people have been beheaded, people seem to have seen the ramparts disappear and ghosts stalk around. Near the Traitor's Gate they have imagined seeing fearful scenes. Those who do not believe in ghosts say that the ghosts that people see around there must be the Yeomen of the Guard keeping watch over the gate Shakespeare must have disliked the "Pea-Soup", for most of his witches appeared and ghosts walked about in the mist and fog.

Dickens eulogised it thus:

"Gone into mourning for the death of the sun."

And Eliot wrote:

"Yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window panes."

And Sherlock Holmes too would go out in the Pea-Soup. Today thanks to the Clean Air Act the Pea-Soup weather comes only three or four times in December or January. But in 1952 it became so dangerous that it acquired the name: the

Great Fog of 1952. Four thousand people died immediately and another eight thousand died later. Scientists battled with the Pea-Soup by bottling it, so that in future they could tell people how to protect themselves. It was found that the killer fog would cost the nation 700 million pounds sterling every year in cleaning bills alone. So there began the move to clean up the city. As a result, soot and grime that belched from boilers and chimneys of the industrial areas have been reduced by 80 per cent. They say that after the passing of the Clean Air Act the city has been having more sunlight, and even birds that had disappeared because of the polluted atmosphere have come back after centuries.

\*

The cleanness of the atmosphere during the summer months and the fact that London is full of beautiful parks and open spaces and woodlands make it a very pleasant place to live in. Our hotel was in North London, in a very respectable locality, on a promontory, the Musewell Hill. From there we could see a good part of London down below. There never was an ocean of houses more impressive. In the areas that were heavily bombed during the war huge blocks of business houses and skyscrapers have come up; they are really among the wonders of the world. It took London some fifteen years to remove the debris and rebuild. Today one can hardly guess that there was any devastation anywhere at all. The extent of the damage was truly prodigious. They say that on one December night alone (in 1940) twenty-five acres of land behind St. Paul's went up in flames. Today, no clatter of steel grinders or concrete mixers can be heard any longer. Modern buildings are there everywhere, as if vying with one another to be more modern and striking.

Among the buildings we liked best, the London Television Tower was the most interesting. It is a worthy memorial to John Baird (born 1888), a fine tribute to his inventive genius. We had been to so many great cities of Europe, but the Television Tower in London stands in a class apart. It combines in itself modern architecture with a bit of Arabian Nights. It is splendid and smart. Television in Britain, broadcast by the B.B.C., operates in two networks, one on the public service system, and the other on the advertising system. By separating the two, the cultural and the commercial, the programmes have become highly interesting and effective. The commercial network caters mainly to buyers and housewives. The cultural network has a more general appeal. But hear too great insight and hard work are necessary on the part of the Directors to keep up a high level. For, men generally ask for news and information, women like dramas and music and dance items, while children want their Peter Pans and Robin Hoods. To the Television Directors all these groups are equally important. It must be said that Television in Britain has kept up a very high level indeed.

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**SRI AUROBINDO: Archives and Research.** A biannual journal, published by the Sri Aurobindo Trust, Pondicherry. Volume 1. Number 1. April 1977.

RARELY does one associate a research journal with humour. There is in this excellent first venture of Ashram Archives an exquisite piece that brings out Sri Aurobindo at his humorous best. In a letter written to a favourite uncle, Sri Aurobindo in his thirtieth year—"How old we are all getting!"—indulges in boisterous fun that might be envied by a schoolboy. This was at a time when the prospect of having to "live on the munificent amount of nothing a month" stared him in the face, "famine willing".

One or two surprises are in store for the readers. Who could have thought for example that he would be writing to his wife in English? "I hope it will make you more anxious to learn English than you have been up to now..." And Sri Aurobindo preparing college "Notes" for his students—Notes that any aspiring boy or girl would commit to memory and secure a high First Class? Surely the researches have not gone in vain.

Other highlights of this issue are: a hymn to Goddess Dawn written in Bengali in the Vedic style and beautifully translated by Nolini into English; a long Commentary on the Isha Upanishad, seven English renderings of Vedic hymns to the God of Delight; seven new Aphorisms and a Speech delivered at Nasik retrieved from oblivion. The Passing Thoughts on Religion originally meant for the *Karmayogin*, and two unpublished poems add to the flavour; one of these poems is addressed to the Ganges, the holiest river of India.

India has always held a high place in Sri Aurobindo's thought. And it is befitting that no less than three prose pieces, apart from the specialised studies in the Veda and the Upanishads, have been included in this volume. Of the influence and importance of the Veda in world history, he says, "There is no part of the world's spirituality, of the world's religion, of the world's thought which would be what it is today if the Veda had not existed." And of Indian literature: "Out of so many magnificent civilisations,... only a select few have been able to develop a thoroughly original and self-revealing literature.... Of all these the Hindus have revealed themselves the most perfectly, continuously and on the most colossal scale, precisely because they have been the most indomitably original in the form and matter of their literature."

In the third piece, a long Prefatory Note on his translation of Bhartrihari's *Century of Life*, Sri Aurobindo brings out in a single sentence the main features of Classical Sanskrit literature to which a whole chapter has been given in the *Foundations*. "Classical Sanskrit literature, as a whole, is governed by an inner stress of spirit which urges it to a sort of lucid density of literary structure, in style a careful blending of curious richness with concentrated force and directness of expression,

in thought and matter a crowded vividness and pregnant lucidity." These qualities are illustrated in full measure in the extant poems of Bhartrihari, to whom Sri Aurobindo assigns a particular importance in the evolution of Indian culture.

This journal fully justifies its "archival" character by the way it deals with the history of *The Life Divine* text and the revised edition of *Thoughts and Aphorisms*. The Mother in the course of her Comments on this series wanted to be sure as to the time when it was composed (*vide, Commentaries*, Nos, 408-12). "Various evidence suggests that it should be assigned to the first months of the year 1915." That presumably is the date of the original manuscript as it has come down to us; the actual writings may have covered a longer period. But this finding settles a very important biographical point. For, as the Mother notes in her Comments on Aphorisms 79-80, "I have the impression that Sri Aurobindo was on his ascent, the intuitive mind was piercing a hole and entering into contact with the Supramental: then it came like that, pluff, like an explosion in the thought, and he wrote these things."

The other important biographical points that this journal settles for good are, first, the exact time of birth, and second, the exact location of the place. Devoted researchers have fixed the location at 8 Theatre Road in Calcutta. Nolini's files give the time of birth as 4.52. a. m., Indian Standard Time, this will be of immense interest to Astrology. Judging from his informal talks with disciples, Sri Aurobindo seems to have considered the fixing of the exact location of his birthplace a matter of some importance.

We congratulate the organisers of this journal for the careful manner in which they have undertaken this work, and the great devotion that is behind it. One feels sure that the matter collected in the present and subsequent issues will form a valuable Supplement to the Centenary Volume. The only matter of regret is that the learned editor has chosen to remain incognito. But nothing remains a secret here.

SANAT K. BANERJI

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