

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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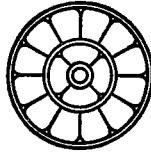
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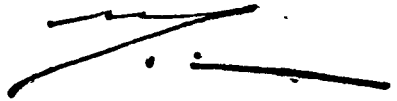


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIX

No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

TOWARDS HARMONY

To All

FOR each problem there is a solution that can give satisfaction to everybody, but for finding this ideal solution each one must want it instead of meeting the others with the will to enforce one's own preference.

Enlarge your consciousness and aspire for the satisfaction of all.

28-8-1971

You see only *your side* of the question but if you want to widen your consciousness it would be better to look from all sides impartially. Later you will discover that this attitude has great advantages.

17-9-1971

Harmony is my aim and all that leads to harmony makes me happy.

When we have to work collectively, it is always better to insist, in our thoughts, feelings and actions, on the points of agreement rather than on the points of divergence.

We must give importance to the things that unite, and ignore as much as possible those that separate.

Even when physically the lines of work differ, the union can remain intact and constant if we keep always in mind the essential points and principles which unite, and the Divine Goal, the Realisation which must be the one unchanging object of our aspiration and works.

To Aurovilians

To establish at Auroville the harmonious atmosphere which, by definition, ought to reign there, the first step is for each one to watch within himself whatever is the cause of friction and misunderstanding.

For these causes are *always* on both sides and each one's endeavour should be to efface them in himself first before demanding anything from others.

4-7-1969

TOWARDS THE “GLORIOUS BODY”

FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

IN the very, very old traditions—there was a tradition more ancient than the Vedic and the Chaldean which must have been the source of both—in that ancient tradition there is already mention of a “glorious body” which would be plastic enough to be transformed at every moment by the deeper consciousness: it would express that consciousness, it would have no fixity of form. [The tradition] mentioned luminosity: the constituent matter could become luminous at will. It mentioned a sort of possibility of weightlessness which would allow the body to move about in the air only by the action of will-power and by certain processes of control of the inner energy, and so on. Much has been said about these things.

I don't know if there ever were beings on earth who had partially realised this, but in a very small way there have been partial instances of one thing or another, examples which go to prove that it is possible. And following up this idea, one could go so far as to conceive of the replacement of material organs and their functioning as it now is, by centres of concentration of force and energy which would be receptive to the higher forces and which, by a kind of alchemy, would use them for the necessities of life and body. We already speak of the different “centres” in the body—this knowledge is very widespread among people who have practised yoga—but these centres could be perfected to the point where they replace the different organs by a direct action of the higher energy and vibrations on matter. Those who have practised occultism well enough, in its most integral form, it could be said, know the process of materialisation of subtle energies and can put them in contact with physical vibrations. Not only is it something that can be done, but it is something which *is* done. And all that is a science, a science which must itself be perfected, completed, and which will obviously be used for the creation and setting in action of new bodies which will be able to manifest the supramental life in the material world.

But, as Sri Aurobindo says, before this can be done, it is good to utilise all that we have in order to increase and make more exact the control of physical activities. It is very obvious that those who practise physical culture scientifically and with coordination acquire a control over their bodies that's unimaginable for ordinary people. When the Russian gymnasts came here, we saw with what ease they did exercises which for an ordinary man are impossible, and they did them as if it was the simplest thing in the world; there was not even the least sign of effort! Well, that mastery is already a great step towards the transformation of the body. And these people who, I could say, are materialists by profession, used no spiritual method in their education; it was solely by material means and an enlightened use of human will that they had achieved this result. If they had added to this spiritual knowledge and power, they could have achieved an almost miraculous result.... Because of the

false ideas prevalent in the world, we don't usually see the two things together, spiritual mastery and material mastery, and so one is always incomplete without the other; but this is exactly what we want to do and what Sri Aurobindo is going to explain: if the two are combined, the result can reach a perfection that's unthinkable for the ordinary human mind, and this is what we want to attempt.

As he goes on to say—we shall probably read it next time—first one has to fight against a formidable mass of stupid prejudices which create an irreconcilable antagonism between material and spiritual life. And it is something so deep-rooted in human consciousness that it is very difficult to eradicate it, even in those who think they have understood Sri Aurobindo's teaching! And many people said, when for altogether different reasons I began to hold meditations again, "Ah! at last! we are returning to spiritual life..." This was indeed what prevented me from holding them for a long time. It was in order not to encourage this stupidity. But for other reasons it was necessary to do it, so I did. So long as this foolishness is not uprooted from human consciousness, the supramental force will always find it considerably difficult not to be engulfed in the obscurity of a human thought which understands nothing. That's all. All the same, we shall succeed.

I chose this book, *The Supramental Manifestation*, in order to have the opportunity of putting you into contact with a truth expressed in an almost combative form, in order to fight against this old division, this total lack of understanding of the eternal Truth.

And perhaps, when we have finished reading it, I shall be able to tell you why we have started the meditations again—but certainly not "to return to spiritual life"!

And it is so deep-rooted, oh! Even those who outwardly profess to understand—when they think of the spiritual life, they immediately think of meditation.

There we are. Now, we shall have one all the same, but for another reason!

17 April 1957

WHAT CHRIST WAS AND TAUGHT

SOME COMMENTS OF THE MOTHER ON CERTAIN APHORISMS OF SRI AUROBINDO

WHEN Christ came upon earth, he brought a message of brotherhood, love and peace. But he had to die in pain, on the cross, so that his message might be heard. For men cherish suffering and hatred and want their God to suffer with them. They wanted this when Christ came and, in spite of his teaching and sacrifice, they still want it; and they are so attached to their pain that, symbolically, Christ is still bound to his cross, suffering perpetually for the salvation of men.

3 June 1960

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

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

But the death of Christ was the starting-point of a new stage in evolution of human civilisation. This is why Sri Aurobindo tells us that the death of Christ was of greater historical consequences than the death of Caesar. The story of Christ, as it has been told, is the concrete and dramatic enactment of the divine sacrifice: the Supreme Lord, who is All-Light, All-Knowledge, All-Power, All-Beauty, All-Love, All-Bliss, accepting to assume human ignorance and suffering in matter, in order to help men to emerge from the falsehood in which they live and because of which they die.

16 June 1960

The Gospels were the starting-point of the Christian religion. To say what they have brought to the world it would be necessary to give a historical and psychological account of the development of the life of Christianity and the action of the Christian religion upon earth. That would take a long time and be somewhat out of place here.

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

But it is better to keep silent about what men have done with this message.

6 July 1960

THE EXTERNAL MAN

A LETTER BY SRI AUROBINDO

THE Sadhaks here [in the Ashram] are of all kinds and in all stages. But the real difficulty even for those who have progressed is with the external man. Even among those who follow the old ideal, the external man of the Sadhak remains almost the same even after they have attained to something. The inner being gets free, the outer follows still its fixed nature. Our Yoga can succeed only if the external man too changes, but that is the most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on. The internal being of most of the Sadhaks here, however imperfect still, is still different from that of the ordinary man, but the external still clings to its old ways, manners, habits. Many do not seem even to have awakened to the necessity of a change. It is when this is realised and done, that the Yoga will produce its full results in the Ashram itself, and not before.

THE MOTHER'S PROGRAMME

The Embodiment

THE Mother's embodiment "is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the Supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible".¹ This is, in short, Sri Aurobindo's answer to the question why she took a human form. The Mother's answer to a child's simple question why she had come, in a body "like us", was this: "because if I had not come like you, I could never have been close to you, and told you, 'Become what I am'."²

To help us become like her, to help the world grow into a likeness of divinity: this was the purpose of her coming, and perhaps also the purpose of her going. "Beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world": this is her plan. There can be no perfect world unless there are perfect men to inhabit it. To create a new type of individual and a new type of collectivity, sums up her objective.

The New Creation

The new creation must be radically different from the one we know. We live in a state of struggle and conflict. "Harmony is my aim",³ says the Mother. We live in a state of suffering. "We wish to abolish for ever the *cause* of suffering, by divinising matter with the integral transformation"⁴: such is her solution. The transformation is possible only if the Supreme Divine Consciousness manifests upon earth. "There is a Supreme Divine Consciousness. We want to manifest this Divine Consciousness in the physical life."⁵

This Consciousness is infinite. It has infinite aspects and its possibilities are unlimited. In a sort of chart drawn up by her in 1937, the Mother sets out in brief the things she has to bring into "the material world, upon the earth:

1. Perfect Consciousness.
2. Integral knowledge: omniscience.
3. Power invincible, irresistible, ineluctable: omnipotence.
4. Health, perfect, constant, unshakable: perpetually renewed energy.
5. Eternal youth, constant growth: uninterrupted progress.
6. Perfect beauty: complex and total harmony.
7. Inexhaustible unparalleled riches: control over all the wealth of the world.
8. Gift of healing and giving happiness.
9. Immunity from all accidents; invulnerability against all adverse attacks.
10. Perfect power of expression, in all fields and all activities.
11. The gift of tongues: the power of making oneself understood perfectly by all.
12. And all else necessary for the accomplishment of Thy Work."⁶
"I do only the Lord's work," she has said.⁷

Its Principles

Harmony is the basic principle.

Harmony implies a reconciliation of diversities, very often of contraries and apparent contradictions. "Manifestation is diversity. It is the Unique who deploys Himself in the innumerable, indefinitely."⁸ Some of the contraries to reconcile are liberty and order, equality and hierarchy, unity and diversity, effort and repose, power and compassion, abundance and scarcity ...⁹

The way to bring about harmony is to assign each thing its place and keep it there. "Nothing can be cut away, and perhaps nothing is more important or less important. The only thing that seems to be necessary is a harmonisation of all, which lets each thing be in its place, in its true relation with all the others, so that the total Unity can manifest harmoniously."¹⁰

This can only be done effectively by the Supreme Power. The Supreme Power takes charge of things and directs their movements and does not permit any distortion in the process. The Mother calls this "a transfer of power...it is as if a displacement of the directing will."¹¹

This transfer of power can in the existing circumstances be done only gradually. "For a very long time, very long time, one has to remain content with the inner results, that is, results of personal and individual reactions, inner contacts with the rest of the world, not to hope or will too soon that things should materialise; because one is in a hurry generally things are delayed."¹²

Manifestation is always progressive, there will be always something new to manifest. "What is manifested during one age is only the beginning of something that will manifest in the age that follows."¹³ Once this position is accepted, "according to what Sri Aurobindo has felt as the most complete truth, this conception of a progressive universe, one is led to say that it is the best possible for the unfoldment of the all that takes place."¹⁴ If there is a Divine Goal, all must necessarily be moving towards this Goal. The Goal to which the entire world is moving is constant Peace through an awareness of the Divine."^{14a}

The Process

The new creation becomes possible only by the intervention of Grace. But the Grace acts in two ways: it makes for peace and progress, and at the same time it destroys all the perversities, the uglinesses and deformations that make life so miserable. "In this age of anxiety, of tension and supertension, this sovereign peace...is still for many the true sign of the Divine intervention, the Divine Grace. In fact whatever one may want to realise, one must begin by establishing this peace, perfect and immutable; it is the base on which to work... There is another aspect of the Divine Grace, the aspect of progress which will win the victory over all obstacles, the aspect which will project humanity into a new realisation, will open the gates of a new world..."¹⁵

The only way to bring about these results is to help everyone and everything ex-

press always the Divine Will. "If everybody expressed the Divine Will, there would be no more any conflict anywhere; everything would be in agreement. It is this that I have been trying to do," says the Mother. "...But it is not very easy." Men do not want to change, they are hardly yet able to see the Divine Will. The first result has been "an increase in the confusion, because the old principles have lost their authority and apart from a very small number, men are not ready to obey the Divine Order, they are not capable of seeing it."

But this can be only a temporary phase. The Mother foresees a better state of things. "When the Manifestation will have emerged from the inconscient sufficiently, so that all this necessity for a struggle created by the presence of the inconscient becomes progressively more and more useless, it will disappear quite naturally; and the progress instead of being made through an effort and a struggle, will begin to be made harmoniously."¹⁶

From inside out, from the inner psychological state to the outer form and circumstance has been the process of evolution on earth. The Mother seems to envisage the same process in the creation of the new world. "Naturally, the first effect [of the supramental consciousness manifesting on earth] will be a change of consciousness, first in the more receptive, later in a larger number. A change in the general conditions of life can come only much later, perhaps long after the individual reactions are transformed."¹⁷

The Prospects

What shape the new world will take, what the change of consciousness needed will be, what the form and condition of the body, are questions of supreme interest. They cannot be discussed here, within the brief compass of a single article. But a word may not be out of place about the prospects of the change.

As early as August 1968, that is, barely a year after the date, 4. 5. 67, which the Mother takes as a crucial turning point in the history of the race, She could affirm, "I am sure that the movement has begun....How long that will take in order to arrive at a concrete realisation, visible and organised? About that I know nothing....Something has begun."¹⁸

The Descent of the Superman Consciousness on the 1st January 1969¹⁹ was a giant step forward. The action of the new Power that works for change had been continuous, so that in March 1970, the Mother could say, "There is, there is truly something of a change in the world."²⁰ The difficulties continued as never before, but "the body" [the Mother's body] knows that it is all over. It will perhaps take centuries, but it is all over. In order to disappear, it may take centuries; but it is now finished"²¹

She sensed the possibility of the Victory: "all on a sudden, like a Light appeared the possibility of the Victory. It is not miraculous, but it is the Intervention, the Intervention of the Supreme Wisdom. Will it be concrete?" She asks. "We shall see. It seems to come...as a possibility..."²² She felt concretely the Power that had come and was working for the Victory, in spite of all the opposition: "but Oh, the Power!

the Power, Oh!"²³

Something new, a new Power came down on February 21, 1972, "something new manifested in the world", something that insists on change. "It is as if an imperative Order: go straight or else all will go wrong...It is as if a Pressure, a terrible Pressure, to have the desired progress.... It is a sort of 'no half-measures, no compromise, no *à-peu-près*'...But that is the only way for things to move fast..."²⁴ Now, in April 72, the Mother could say with certainty that it was absurd to think that everything was going to be swept away under the force of adverse pressure. "It is absurd, it is absurd," she says with a laugh. "It is all the resistance that is going to be swept away...It cannot be but that, it will be one manifestation that will be dissolved and there will be a more beautiful Manifestation..."²⁵ "It is the descent of the supramental world... a world that wants to become incarnate in the world."²⁶

The Victory

The Victory is certain. "Victory, that is Harmony. Victory, that is the Divine. And for the Body, the Victory, that is good health. All unease and all illness is a falsehood."²⁷ This was the Word that came to the Mother on the Victory Day of the Hindu calendar, the Vijaya Dashami, in 1971.

The Victory is now assured. When will it come? Impatience is of no avail. One has to work for it to come soon.

SANAT K. BANERJI

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APROPOS OF THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO

AN OLD CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN DR. IMMANUEL OLSVANGER AND K. D. SETHNA

I

3, Gaza Road, Jerusalem, Israel, 7-2-52

Dear Mr. Sethna,

I acknowledge with many thanks the receipt by airmail of your article "The Mystical and the Misty" in *Mother India* of January 19, 1952.

I have read and reread it several times and was frequently carried away by the exquisite beauty of the language and by the poetry of thoughts. It is in such poetry that my soul finds temporary repose and rest. But the appeal of this poetry does not depend upon the correctness of the thoughts.

My questions, to which your article was a reply, were, however, concerned not with poetry but with the correctness or otherwise of thoughts and facts.

In this respect, they remained, as far as my judgment goes, without reply. You repeat the well-known Upanishadic "psychotomy" of the soul, with its Sthula, Sukshma and Karana Shariras. An arbitrary assumption, transmitted from ancient times, poetic, but based on nothing but fancy. "A permanent leaving of the physical sheath so that, unconnected with the subtle sheaths, the physical loses its support and vitality", is, when translated into common language, a euphemistic expression for death. But you say that "the terms 'death' and 'suicide' cannot have for him (the Yogi) the meaning ordinarily attached to them", and yet some thirty lines later you say that "Sri Aurobindo decided upon death in the fullest meaning" of that word. He decided, consequently, and he died in the fullest meaning of that word, like all men from Adam down to our days. "He decided", *i.e.* he did consciously commit suicide, whether by means of poison or by an act of will (if this is possible) makes no difference.

I do believe that a man, not a superman or a Yogi, can, unfortunately for him, succumb to a disease, if his will to fight it is not strong enough, or if he consciously refuses to use his will-power. This is true for some diseases, not for all. It is most decidedly not true in the case of Uraemia, which was the cause of Sri Aurobindo's death.

If, as you maintain, Sri Aurobindo consciously decided to die (or, in your euphemistic language, to leave his body), why were there Indian and French doctors about him (who, as you write, testified to the miracle of his body remaining intact for several days, in spite of the tropical climate and in spite of Uraemia!)? Did he need their help to die? Some doctors do render such help, indeed!

These doctors testified to what, if true, was an obvious miracle. If they were to publish an article about it in some serious medical magazine, such as *The Lancet*, it would create a tremendous sensation!

The Mother's announcement (*only* 41 hours after death, which word you preface with an apologetic "clinical"), giving an explanation for that miracle, "that his body is charged with such a concentration of supramental light", makes no sense. A body can be charged with anything but light. Evidently, the Mother wanted to say something else. But how can one guess what she wanted to say?

If, however, that "concentration of supramental light" (whatever it may mean) was the reason of the miracle, how is this reconcilable with your statement that it was due to Sri Aurobindo's "last act of Grace"? Was it his act of Grace that before death he still managed to charge his body with a concentration of supramental light? If not, how could he, after his death, have exercised any influence upon his body? Did his soul remain hovering in the room, still clad in the Sukshma Sharira, and keep watch over the body?

Lastly, regarding the same consciousness divided in two! Your reply does not satisfy me. I believe in God, in His Consciousness, in His Power. But He, His Consciousness, His Power, and any other attribute which we may try to ascribe to Him, is One and the same That, *Ekamevādvītiyam!* I do believe that my consciousness is a reflection of that One. The degree of perfection of my consciousness is, I believe, dependent on how well the lens of my soul is polished. But the reflexion focussed in my soul cannot be 'same' divided into two, the second twin-reflexion being focussed in someone else's soul,—I still maintain, that such a statement has no meaning and no sense, unless taken as a figurative expression, as when we speak of two "kindred" souls.

Any attempt to hypostatise the Consciousness of God, as apart from Him, or some special reflexion of that Consciousness, leads to idolatry in the very worst sense. Bad service is done to Sri Aurobindo's memory by referring to him as to one endowed with "superhuman" power. That is deification. It must lead to a final degeneration of the circle of his readers and students to a new religious sect with new arbitrary dogmas and a new form of worship. A repetition of the fate of Sri Ramakrishna and "the Holy Mother"!

Good service to his memory would be a shortened edition of his books, freed from unnecessary repetitions, provided with annotations for the benefit of readers not familiar with Sanskrit words and Vedantic ideas.

Of special importance would be, in my opinion, such an edition of *Savitri* and of his letters dealing with questions of literature.

I shall be grateful if you let me know where I could order a copy of *Savitri*.

I hope, dear Mr. Sethna, that you will not take amiss my frank words, and I must thank you for the trouble you took in replying to my previous letter with such an elaborate dissertation.

With cordial greetings

Sincerely yours,

DR. I. OLSVANGER

Hamilton Villa, Nepean Sea Road, Bombay, 16-5-52

Dear Dr. Olsvanger,

I am glad you liked my article—but I am deeply disappointed with the reason for which you liked it. I don't at all mind your writing to me frankly. What depresses me is that you proceed from a certain purely intellectual bias and seem to have made no effort to come into contact, in a direct and concrete manner, with spiritual or occult realities. You don't even appear to understand that the major Upanishads are not mere poetry but factual statements of spiritual and occult realisations and experiences—they are poetic in form because the measured intensity of poetry is the natural medium for the *mantra*, the word-body of the highest truths of the mystical life. Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, too, is not intellectual ideas decked out in imaginative colour: it is, as Sri Aurobindo has clearly said, an expression of spiritual vision and realisation: beauty and truth are one single power in it. What may be called fictitious in it is only the story which is used as a symbol of the spiritual reality known by Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo, by the way, is not just a philosopher with a mystical bent. I was amazed at the conclusion to your fine tribute to him published in *India and Israel*. You spoke of Radhakrishnan taking up the baton dropped by Sri Aurobindo. Without minimising Radhakrishnan's gifts, one may state categorically that he and Sri Aurobindo belong to two entirely different classes. Radhakrishnan himself would never claim to be a God-realised man. Sri Aurobindo is a master of Yoga who employs the form of philosophy or of poetry to pattern out for the intellect or the aesthetic sense the actual experiences he has had. Unless you grasp this, you will never be in a state of mind to appreciate any truly spiritual figure—spiritual as ancient India conceived that term and not as a part of modern India and most of the West wash it down to the level of high metaphysics or disciplined ethics. Neither Radhakrishnan nor Gandhi can be called, in the real sense, spiritual.

Now to your criticisms of my reply. Apart from what seems to me a quibble about the word "death" and your insistence on "suicide" as a general term which, in spite of all subtle shades of difference, should cover the phenomenon of voluntary departure from the physical body, I think your statements rest on lack of proper information or of relevant experience. The *sthula*, *sukṣma* and *kāraṇa śarīras* are not an arbitrary assumption. The Upanishads speak of them because the Seers of the Upanishads experienced them and their experience can be repeated and verified. Of course, the real *kāraṇa śarīra* is a rare experience, but some approach can be made to it. The *sukṣma śarīra* is one of the commonest experiences in Yoga. I myself have moved in it out of my *sthula śarīra* scores of times, in as concretely conscious a manner as getting up from my bed and moving in my physical body! So, when you say that the well-known Upanishadic "psychotomy" is based on nothing but fancy, I can only smile and ask you to do a bit of Yoga.

When you make sweeping assertions about what is true and what is “most decidedly not true” about Uraemia, you are only talking of ordinary cases. Of course I am not asking you to believe all that I say, but the capital defect is that you have not made an attempt to understand Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga or even the philosophical structure of his system of thought and of his spiritual work. Without such an attempt it is difficult to get certain things in the right perspective or focus.

The presence of the doctors was part of the same process which included Sri Aurobindo’s “accepting” many other ordinary-looking physical arrangements. But I may tell you that the doctors were allowed to do a few things at their own request and as a concession to their solicitude. And their chief ministrations were permitted after the withdrawal from the body had decisively begun. Sri Aurobindo never took any medicines or injections in any of the physical crises through which he passed in the course of his Yoga.

I have in my hands, as I write this, the actual notes of Dr. P. C. Sanyal, an eminent Calcutta physician and surgeon. He writes: “The Mother said that Sri Aurobindo’s body would be kept till it began to show signs of decomposition. I told her that 48 hours was the maximum time for which a body could be kept. After 48 hours there were no signs of decomposition. But the French law does not permit a period longer than that, unless the French Civil Surgeon certifies. The Civil Surgeon came and we both examined the body: there was not a trace of decomposition. For more than 100 hours the body was intact. People wondered whether Sri Aurobindo was in samadhi or dead.”

I was myself an eye-witness, together with hundreds of others. Whether the case will be reported to *The Lancet* in order to create a tremendous sensation—this lies with the doctors. But there is no getting past the fact that the “miracle” was “obvious” to even scientific eyes and was genuine according to scientific tests.

However, we don’t basically build on this miracle. Sri Aurobindo’s mission is independent of it and even if this miracle had not happened, the truth of his teachings could stand.

When you comment on the Mother’s announcement I again can’t help being amused. “Light” is a very common experience in the Yogic life. One sees and feels light breaking out from several occult centres in one’s body or descending from above the head and touching or pervading or settling in one part of the body or another or in even the whole body. Light is also of various kinds and colours. This is testified by thousands of practitioners of Yoga, past and present. Light in the spiritual sense is not a mere metaphor, any more than spiritual consciousness or bliss is metaphorical. And if a human body is completely transformed, as wanted in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, one of the constant attributes of the transformed body will be a subtle luminousness visible even to the sceptic, the agnostic and the atheist. Spiritual phenomena are concrete things and compared to their concreteness the phenomena of material reality are insubstantial. It is because of this comparative insubstantiality that the theory of Maya or World-illusion acquires its real strength—until a

wider experience than that of the silent and featureless infinite Brahman, or Atman, restores the balance and makes the world a spiritually real manifestation of the Divine.

On the point about the same Consciousness divided into two or into many, I cannot do anything further than ask you to read *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo's philosophical statement of his Yogic realisations. It is evident that you have not studied this book at all: otherwise, even your turn of argument against what I have said would be different and more subtle and more cognisant of crucial issues.

I won't at present enter into any discussion as to whether one should fight shy of a word like "idolatry" or "super-human" power or what constitutes the best service to Sri Aurobindo. The one whom we call the Mother is with us and she knows best what we should do.

You can order your *Savitri* (both volumes) from the Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency, Limited, 32 Rampart Row, Fort, Bombay.¹ You may order also the book called *Sri Aurobindo's Letters on "Savitri"*, a compilation made by me from my private correspondence with Sri Aurobindo: it is designed to serve as a substitute for the long Introduction Sri Aurobindo wanted to write.

May I in my turn ask you not to take amiss anything I have spoken out in the course of this letter?

With kind thoughts, dear Dr. Olsvanger,

Yours sincerely,
K. D. SETHNA

¹ Editor's Note: SABDA at present is of course in Pondicherry.

VISION

ENTHRALLED by the Light in that luminous gaze—
Eyes entwined with eyes, as in eternity—
Heart resting itself in a glorious heart,
Oh King of Kings, may we never part!

Lead me through valleys of winding maze,
Through blinding mists of mountain tops!
The hint of that tranquil assurance in Thy face
Is to my arid mind benevolent raindrops.

Darkness surrounds me in the room—
Rooted to the spot as if in blessed stone
I stand before Thy radiant Image—
My heart uplifted — no longer alone!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

UDAR REMEMBERS

XVI

I HAVE been asked to write if I know of anything that Mother has said about U.F.O.—Unidentified Flying Objects. As far as I can remember we had several talks with Mother on the related subject of space travel, etc. and we did see some of the things the scientists had sent up into space. One night, however, we actually had the visit of our U.F.O. It came fairly slowly, from the North-West, crossed right over the Ashram and went South-East on to the sea and disappeared. It was a very bright object and lighted up the whole place. It was certainly not a meteor, its pace was much too slow for this. Later on, we asked Mother about it.

Again, as far as I can remember, Mother said that She had seen it and had understood that it was a warning of danger. It had posed a direct threat to the Ashram, Mother explained, but just because of this She saw that the whole Ashram was so well protected, as with a covering of thick steel, that nothing could penetrate and so we were all safe. It was the protection that Sri Aurobindo had worked out for us.

This brings me to another point of memory. I remember our asking Mother if there were beings on other planets or any star. Mother said there could well be—even very intelligent beings, physical beings and also subtle-physical ones. But all of them were static beings, non-evolutionary. It appears that the centre of evolution is our earth. The whole immense universe was created so that this little grain of dust, the earth, could be the home of the evolution. This is geocentricity with a vengeance! Mother also explained how these beings, even the gods from their own world, wanted so much to come to our earth and try to possess a body if even for a time—because in their own world nothing progressed—all was static—and so the desire for a movement, a progress, was very great.

There is, however, one point which has puzzled me for long, just because I did not ask Mother the question. Once She said that there are some people on this earth who are children of the Moon and these persons are rather insensible to both joy and pain, both in themselves and vicariously in others. Now I wonder if Mother was speaking figuratively or if these persons are really descended from people who came down from the Moon. I am very sorry indeed I did not ask Her this question.

UDAR

FLOWERS AND THEIR MESSAGES*

“Flowers speak to us when we know how to listen to them—it is a subtle and fragrant language.” (The Mother)

THE RISHIS of ancient India discovered the One Existence in all things. They saw the animate and inanimate alike as manifestations of Spirit pervaded through and through with living consciousness. They recognised not only the divinity of all but also the uniqueness and individuality of each. What they saw was codified and recorded in the holy scriptures, the Shastras. These rishis did not know by the mind or the senses. They perceived by a direct inner vision and identity with the object of perception. Of all animate and inanimate things on earth they found that flowers are nature’s purest manifestation of the Divine. They knew that each flower embodies in its color, form and fragrance a particular vibration or consciousness and that contact with a flower can bring one into contact with that vibration. For this reason flowers were commonly used in all forms of worship, offering and devotion. Through the ages flowers became an integral part of Indian culture playing a very significant though often forgotten role.

The Jasmine flower, for instance, was originally found at the foot of the Himalayas from where it later spread all over the world. Even today in India it is one of the best loved of flowers. It is revered for its pure white color and its sweet fruity fragrance. It is used to adorn every temple and home, it is given by the devotee to his guru, and in the South it is commonly worn as a small garland by young ladies in their hair. The particular consciousness of jasmine is purity. By offering it at the temple or to the guru, man aspires for that purity in his own being. By wearing it in the hair and decorating the home, vibrations of purity are attracted to the place where these flowers are kept.

The beauty of flowers arises from their pure vitality. But they have in them also the seed of a psychic or spiritual presence and it is this presence appearing through the transparency of vegetal life that gives them their inexpressible splendor. It is a glimpse of the Divine manifesting as beauty. Take the rose, for example. Its great perfection of form, color and smell expresses an aspiration of the soul. It is a psychic gift. Look at a rose opening in the morning with the first contact of the sun—it is a magnificent self-giving aspiration.

There is in all plant life an unquenchable thirst after light. Sunlight is the material symbol of the Divine Consciousness. The life of plants is a worship of light. If you have ever been in a forest at sunrise you can feel the flowers and trees awakening to the touch of descending light, twisting and struggling to catch it. It is a movement, an aspiration, a thirst for light. So also when the sun sets and all becomes silent, if one sits in communion with Nature, one can feel something rising up from the plants like an intense longing and love of light. The movement is so pure and powerful that

* *Flowers and Their Messages* was first published in 1973 by Auropress Trust, Auroville, South India. Unfortunately the book is presently out of print

it can awaken aspiration in man who is far more developed in his consciousness but so complex that his being is less open and receptive than a flower.

Every flower has its own unique quality of consciousness. For example, the *Gladiolus* is known as "Receptivity" for its spontaneous openness to the higher consciousness. The *Geranium* is "Spiritual Happiness". It radiates a feeling of smiling serenity. It is possible for man to discover for himself the consciousness of different flowers. The Mother has described the process and given names to over 800 varieties of flowers. She says that there is a spontaneous vibration or movement in a flower like the movement of a body, neither a sensation nor a feeling but something of both. If you contact it and feel it, it gives rise to a certain experience. If you are able to identify fully with the experience, you can perceive the quality of its vibration. The Mother found flowers a very effective medium for transmitting a particular spiritual help to the aspirants. Most commonly red and white roses were given because they were able to retain the spiritual blessing longer than other flowers. But sometimes a group of flowers would be given whose combination conveyed a certain meaning and consciousness to the recipient.

When flowers appear in a dream or vision it indicates a blossoming in the consciousness, an opening to or contact with the spiritual or psychic presence deep within or the touch of that presence in the body, nerves, heart or mind. It is also possible to use flowers as an aid in meditation, to help one experience higher and purer states of consciousness or develop certain parts of the personality. If one sits very quietly holding a "Passion flower" there can come the experience of "Silence". This silence is not mere absence of noise or even absence of thought. It is a concrete full stillness which is the foundation for great creative force and inspiration. One must know how to receive it calmly and let it suffuse through the whole being. The flower of the Night Jasmine tree radiates "Aspiration" which is like a flame of self-giving leaping forth from the heart. Day Jessamine is the flower of "Light", and meditation with it can bring a flood of pure light into the mind. The solitary pink rose brings the vibration of "Loving Surrender" to the Divine. Honeysuckle helps one develop "Constant Remembrance of the Divine". Lavishly scented Sweet Basil brings the "Joy of Union with the Divine", and fills the heart with its sweetness. Sunflowers are "Consciousness turned towards the Light". They evoke a thirst for light and a joyous seeking after it.

Color is a significant aspect of a flower's consciousness. Each color represents a certain kind of aspiration. Many occult traditions have discovered the correspondences between color and consciousness. There are some general guidelines of correspondence but also many exceptions. It depends on the flower and its other qualities. Ivory white or light cream is the color of divine bliss, "Ananda," as in the small cream-white Hibiscus. Pure white flowers generally denote purity or integrality. For instance, the white Bougainvillea is "Integral Protection". It offers protection to the entire personality. The white Gardenia, a relative of jasmine, is "Radiating Purity". Golden-yellow and orange are colors of the highest supramental or spiritual qualities.

The large double golden-yellow hibiscus is "Power of the Supramental Consciousness". Yellow is the color of mental aspiration like the flower "Mind" (Yellow Oleander) and "Mental Love for the Divine" (Yellow Rose). Usually this is greenish yellow and is distinct from yellow shading into orange which indicates light. Cream yellow flowers frequently represent vibrations from the higher mind or intuitive mind which lies beyond the normal sense and thought mind as in pale yellow Canna which is the "Illumined Mind Center." Various shades of lighter blue represent different levels of the spiritual mind, the higher, illumined and intuitive planes of truth. Pink or pale rose are the colors of the soul or psychic region which lies deep behind the heart. Pink Crepe Myrtle is "Intimacy with the Divine in the Psychic", while the "Psychic Center" itself is the salmon-pink Canna and the pink Snapweed is "Psychic Generosity". The heart or emotive center is often expressed by light-mauve or lilac-pink as in "Offering of the Emotions" (mauve-pink Hollyhock).

The darker colors denote the vital, the physical or Matter. The vital is the center of power, nervous energy and desire in man. It is usually divided into three layers. The higher vital which is closely linked with the emotions is represented by lavender, deep mauve or carmine as in "Enthusiasm in the Higher Vital" (bluish-mauve Petunia). The vital proper is often blue or dark red as in "Offering of the Vital to the Divine" (dark red Hollyhock) and "Vital Progress" toward the Divine (rose-violet Vinca Rosea). The lower material vital is denoted by dark blue, violet blue or dark purple. Red is the color of the physical, usually a clear bright red. "Ananda in the Physical" is a small cream yellow Hibiscus with a deep red center. "Physical Endurance" is a dark red Zinnia.

These are a few general guidelines, but, as we said earlier, there is a lot of variation. Flowers such as "Offering" (Hollyhock), "Protection" (Bougainvillea), "Center" (Canna), "Progress" (Vinca Rosea), "Intimacy with the Divine" (Crepe Myrtle), "Enthusiasm" (Petunia), "Generosity" (Snapweed), "Sincerity" (Aster) usually take on the quality of the center corresponding with their color.

But there are other flowers where mere color does not clearly denote the meaning. For instance, rose is "Love for the Divine" and red roses "Human Passion changed into Love for the Divine". But white roses tinged pink are "Affection for the Divine"; orange roses are "Flaming love for the Divine"; "Humility in the love for the Divine" is a lavender rose, "Surrender" is a pink Edward or Country rose, and "Integral Love for the Divine" is a solitary pure white rose. With Hibiscus the variation in consciousness is even greater depending on size, color, number of petal layers. The single red Hibiscus is "Dynamic Power" and there are many other aspects of power such as "Power of Integral Purity" which is white with a red center. A few in the Hawaiian family relate to beauty such as "Beauty of Supramental Love" (a large salmon pink flower with pink center and pale pink aura). "Consciousness One with the Divine Consciousness" is a large double light pink flower with deep pink center and cream border on the petals. The very special "Divine Grace" (Hibiscus mutabilis or Cotton Rose) is a large double flower which opens pure white and gradually

turns pink. For purposes of meditation one of the most effective is "Godhead" (Hawaian—Cromwell variety, large single flower with cream or yellow gold petals and a pink center).

Certain flowers can play a very useful role in supporting physical health. A powerful remedy for fatigue or lack of energy whether occasional or recurring is the "Life Energy" flower (Florist's Chrysanthemum). Just holding these flowers can revive one's energies very quickly, and meditation or concentration on them can relieve even a prolonged condition of exhaustion due to physical or psychological stress. The flower "Wakefulness in the Mind" (West Indian Holly or Sage Rose) can help awaken the mental faculties, remove drowsiness and inertia. The Portia Tree is called "Health" and it is known that its presence in large numbers can diminish or prevent the occurrence of disease in a large community. There are other flowers which can help attract forces of material plenty such as "Wealth" (Water lily), "Material Abundance" (Cotton Plant), "Riches" (Cactus flower) and "Prosperity" (Cannonball Tree). Another very useful flower is "Common Sense" (Sweet-scented Tobacco). Whatever one's goal in life "Equanimity" (Candytuft) creates a firm foundation and "Cheerful Endeavour" (African Daisy) provides the right attitude for sure success. In India the most highly revered of flowers are the white Lotus, flower of "The Divine Consciousness", and the red Lotus, flower of "The Avatar—The Supreme Manifested on Earth in a Body".

Growing flowers, keeping them in the home, meditating with them creates a purified and inspiring atmosphere much like burning of incense. In fact, the perfume of a flower is closely related to its significance. Flowers teach us the charm of silence and thus the self-giving which demands nothing in return. The best way to open oneself to the deep influence of flowers is to love them and to seek to discover the same qualities in oneself. Love of flowers can be a valuable help in finding and uniting with one's own true psychic being. This love means that one is drawn by the psychic vibration in the vegetal kingdom and consequently by the psychic presence in one's own self. The beauty of flowers is one of Nature's means of awakening in man the quest for his own soul.

"Life must blossom forth like a flower offering itself to the Divine."

(The Mother)

GARRY JACOBS

THE MIND AND THE HIGHEST BRAIN-MECHANISM

This essay, a preview excerpt from a book by Wilder Penfield entitled The Mystery of the Mind: A Study of the Physiology of Consciousness, recently published by Little, Brown, is reproduced here with acknowledgements to the American Scholar, Spring 1975, pp. 237-46. It began as an address to the American Philosophical Society and then developed into an assessment of present evidence about the nature of man's being.

It goes as far as purely empirical observation permits—and that, from the ultimate spiritual viewpoint, is not far enough; but it is sufficiently far to call emphatically for the pursuit of evidence beyond the scope of conventional empiricism into the super-empirical domain of Spirit.

Dr. Penfield, formerly neurophysiologist and neurosurgeon at the Montreal Neurological Institute, was honorary consultant at that institute before his death some months ago.

Bibliographic references that appear in his book have been omitted from the present text.

PHILOSOPHERS of a certain school might have hoped to silence me before I began to discuss the mind and the brain of man by arguing that, since the mind cannot by its very nature have a position in space, there is only one phenomenon to be considered, namely the brain. That statement, which is contrary to the thinking of the common man, must be looked upon as an unproven hypothesis. Like all such hypotheses, one should undertake to prove it, or to disprove without prejudice.

“That our being should consist of two fundamental elements offers, I suppose, no greater inherent improbability than that it should rest on one only.”

It is a quarter of a century since Sir Charles Sherrington wrote these words. We have learned a good deal about man since then, and it is exciting to feel, as I do, that the time has come to look at his two hypotheses, his two “improbabilities.” Either brain action explains the mind, or we deal with two fundamental elements.

To see the problem of the nature of the mind more clearly, consider with me this universe of ours in long perspective. It was only after the middle millennia that life appeared—first in unicellular organisms, then gradually in more and more complicated forms, first in the sea and then on the land. It was a very recent event as seen in this long perspective, when evidence appeared of the individual's self-awareness and purpose. Today man, with his amazing mind and his vastly complicated brain, seeks to understand the universe about him, and even the nature of life and of consciousness.

Consider the various functional mechanisms that operate within the brain. There is one mechanism that wakens the mind and serves it each time it comes into action after sleep. Whether one adopts a dualist or a monist hypothesis, this mechanism is essential to consciousness. It comes between the mind and the final integration that takes place automatically in the sensory-motor computer and it plays an essential role

that may be looked upon as functionally the highest. This recalls the thinking of Hughlings Jackson in regard to the word "high", as applied to levels of function within the brain.

That this *highest mechanism*, which is most closely related to the mind, is truly a functional unit is proven by the fact that epileptic discharge in the gray matter that forms a part of its circuits interferes with its action selectively. During epileptic interference with the function of this gray matter, consciousness vanishes, and with it goes the direction and planning of behavior. That is to say, the mind goes out of action with interference and comes into action with the normal functioning of this mechanism. The gray matter is located in the higher brainstem or diencephalon. Selective discharge in it produces a *petit mal* seizure, an attack of epileptic automatism.

The human automaton, which replaces the man when the highest brain-mechanism is inactivated, is a thing without the capacity to make completely new decisions, without the capacity to form new memory-records, and a thing without that indefinable attribute, a sense of humor. The automaton is incapable of thrilling to the beauty of sunset or of experiencing contentment, happiness, love, compassion. These, like all awarenesses, are functions of the mind.

The automaton is a thing that makes use of the reflexes and the skills, inborn and acquired, that are housed in the computer. At times it may have a plan that will serve it in place of a purpose for a few minutes. This automatic coordinator that is so often active within each of us seems to be the most amazing of all biological computers.

By listening to patients as they describe an experiential flash-back, one can understand the complexity and efficiency of the reflex coordinating and integrative action of the brain. In it, the automatic computer and the highest brain-mechanism play interactive roles, selectively inhibitory and purposeful.

Does this explain the action of the mind? Can reflex action in the end, account for it? After years of studying the emerging mechanisms within the human brain, my own answer is "no". Mind comes into action and goes out of action with the highest brain-mechanism, it is true. But the mind is peculiar. It has energy. The form of that energy is different from that of neuronal potentials that travel the axone pathways. There I must level it.

THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The material used by William James in his reasoning was psychological or philosophical, rather than neurophysiological. The "stream of consciousness," he said, "is a river, forever flowing through a man's conscious waking hours."¹

This metaphor may be confusing. A river of water cannot be altered by the man on the bank. But thought and reason and curiosity do cause the stream of consciousness to alter its course and even change its content completely. The biological stream

¹ As an undergraduate, majoring in philosophy at Princeton, I was much impressed by my reading of William James's *The Principles of Psychology*. That was, I suppose, the beginning of my curiosity about the brain and the mind of man.

that is hidden away in each of us follows the command of the observer on the bank. A stream it is, and it flows inexorably onward toward the hazy sea that waits for us all at the end of life. But there the similarity between a river and the stream of consciousness breaks down.

The contents of the stream are recorded in the brain, including everything to which the man on the bank paid attention, but none of the things that he ignored. His thoughts are recorded with the sensory material that he accepted. His fears are there and his interpretations are there as well—all recorded by this extraordinary mechanism within the brain.

It is the mind (not the brain) that watches and at the same time directs. Has the mind, then, a memory of its own? No. There is no evidence to suggest it. If the mind had any separate awareness while the highest brain-mechanism is inactive, it could make some use of a memory mechanism of its own. The ghost of Hamlet's father would need such a memory to converse with his own son. But certainly no neurophysiologist is in a position to rationalize that dramatic interview born in William Shakespeare's amazing brain and fathered by his brilliant mind.

MAN'S BEING—A CHOICE BETWEEN TWO EXPLANATIONS

Sherrington and his pupils analyzed the integrative action of *inborn reflexes* in the nervous system of *unconscious* animals. He described the remarkable neuronal machine much as it is possessed by man in common with laboratory mammals. It provides for reflex standing, walking and reacting to what the individual sees and hears, feels and smells in his environment. It is an amazing machine. When Sherrington stimulated the cerebral cortex electrically and activated one or another motor mechanism he showed that there was a *facilitation effect*. Subsequent passage of an electric current would produce the same reaction when less strength of current was used. But facilitation of the reaction was temporary. It lasted a matter of seconds or minutes.

Ivan Pavlov and his disciples, on the other hand, studied *conscious animals*. He described conditioned reflexes which the animal acquired because of the fact that anticipation caused it to pay attention to the experience. These reflexes were established and the patterns were preserved by permanent facilitation in the cerebral cortex and nuclear gray matter of the adjacent higher brainstem. This was recognized as the physical basis of the learning of skills and simple forms of reactive behavior. It was assumed to apply to man as well as animal.

Since then, further facts have come to light in the study of *conscious man*. There is the record of conscious experience. It makes possible voluntary and automatic recall of past experiences, and it includes those things to which the individual paid attention, nothing he ignored. One can only conclude that conscious attention adds something to action in the brain, action that would otherwise leave no record. It gives to the passage of neuronal potentials an astonishing permanence of facilitation for the later passage of current, as though a trail had been blazed through the seemingly in-

finite maze of neurone connections. The same principle applies to the acquisition of speech skills and the storing of nonverbal concepts. Permanent facilitation of a patterned sequence in these brain mechanisms is established only when there is a focusing of attention on the phenomenon that corresponds to it in consciousness.

If a previous decision in regard to the focusing of attention is made in the mind, then it is the mind that decides when the facilitating engram is to be added. One may assume that it is the highest brain-mechanism that initiates the brain action associated with that decision. One may assume, too, that the engram-addition is made to conditioned reflexes and to the sequential record of conscious experience simultaneously.

Is there any evidence for the existence of neurone activity within the brain that would account for what the mind does?

Before venturing to give an answer, it may be of interest to refer again to action that the mind seems to carry out independently, and then to reconsider briefly our experience with stimulation of the cortex of conscious patients and our experience of what effects are produced by epileptic discharge in various parts of the brain. This should give some clue if there is a mechanism that explains the mind.

What the Mind Does. It is what we have learned to call the mind that seems to focus attention. The mind is aware of what is going on. The mind reasons and makes new decisions. It understands. It acts as though endowed with an energy of its own. It can make decisions and put them into effect by calling upon various brain-mechanisms. It does this by activating neurone mechanisms. This, it seems, could only be brought about by expenditure of energy.

What the Patient Thinks. When I have caused a conscious patient to move his hand by applying an electrode to the motor cortex of one hemisphere, I have often asked him about it. Invariably his response was, "I didn't do that. You did." When I caused him to vocalize, he said, "I didn't make that sound. You pulled it out of me." When I caused the record of the stream of consciousness to run again and so presented to him the replay of his past experience, he marvelled that he should be conscious of the past as well as of the present. He was astonished that it should come back to him so completely, with more detail than he could possibly recall voluntarily. He assumed at once that, somehow, the surgeon was responsible for the phenomenon, but he recognized the details as those of his own past experience. When one analyzes such a flashback, it is evident, as I have said above, that only those things to which he paid attention were preserved in this permanently facilitated record.

What the Electrode Can Do. I have been alert to the importance of studying the results of electrode stimulation of the brain of each conscious man and have recorded the results as accurately and completely as I could. The electrode can present to the patient various crude sensations. It can cause him to turn head and eyes or to move the limbs or to vocalize and swallow. It may recall vivid re-experience of the past, or present to him an illusion that present experience is familiar or that the things he sees are growing large and coming near. But he remains aloof. He passes judgment on it all. He says "things seem familiar," not "I have been through this before." He says,

“things are growing larger,” but he does not move for fear of being run over. If the electrode moves his right hand, he does not say, “I wanted to move it.” He may, however, reach over with the left hand and oppose his action.

There is no place in the cerebral cortex where electrical stimulation will cause a patient to believe or to decide. Of course, there are the areas devoted to speech, whose function is arrested without the production of any distant positive response. Of course, also, there are areas of gray matter in the higher brainstem that the surgeon’s stimulating electrode does not explore.

On the other hand, epileptic discharge can take place in any area of gray matter, from diencephalon to spinal cord (except perhaps the cerebellum). “Jacksonian march” of discharge, from one nucleus of the diencephalon to another, does occur as it does in the cortex.

Activation by Epileptic Discharge. There is no area of gray matter, as far as my experience goes, in which local epileptic discharge brings to pass what could be called “mind action.”

Similarly, I am forced to conclude also that there is no valid evidence that electrical stimulation can activate the mind.

If one stops to consider it, this is an arresting fact. The record of consciousness can be set in motion, complicated though it is, by the electrode or by epileptic discharge. An illusion of interpretation can be produced in the same way. But none of the actions that we attribute to the mind has been initiated by electrode stimulation or epileptic discharge.

If there were a mechanism in the brain that could do what the mind does, one might expect that the mechanism would betray its presence in a convincing manner by some better evidence of epileptic or electrode activation. But of course I must admit that all of this is only negative evidence.

Let us consider what light our positive neurophysiological evidence can throw on the nature of man’s being.

If there is only one fundamental element in man’s being, then neurone action within the brain must account for all the mind does. The “indispensable substratum” of consciousness is in the higher brainstem. Action in the highest brain-mechanism seems to correspond with that of the mind. This mechanism, as it goes out of action in sleep and resumes action on waking, may switch off the mind and switch it on. It may, one may suggest, do this by supplying and by taking away the energy that might come to the mind from the brain. But to expect the highest brain-mechanism or any set of reflexes, however complicated, to carry out what the mind does, and thus perform all the functions of the mind, is quite absurd.

If that is true, what other explanation can one propose? Only that there is, in fact, a second fundamental element and a second supply of energy. But of course on the basis of mind and brain as two semi-independent elements, one would still be forced to assume that the mind makes its impact upon the brain through the highest brain-mechanism. The mind must act upon it and in turn must be acted upon by the

highest brain-mechanism. The mind must remember by making use of the brain's recording mechanisms. The mind is present whenever the highest brain-mechanism is functioning normally.

If there are two elements, then there must be, as I have said, two forms of energy, or at least an energy through neuronal conduction and an energy that is operative without such conduction. Could the chemical action in nerve cells in a certain area of the brain produce a second form of energy? A form essentially different from that which is responsible for neuronal conduction? Could this energy bring the mind into action even though we have not as yet discovered a structure for the mind?

These are improbabilities for the dualist to ponder, and he must still deal with many another problem. But the same can be said for the monist. Now that one begins to see the outlines of the partially separable mechanisms taking shape within the brain, and can begin to understand what the reflex mechanisms are capable of doing, the time has come to propose hypotheses and to choose the most reasonable.

For my own part, after years of striving to explain the mind on the basis of brain action alone, I have come to the conclusion that it is simpler (and far easier to be logical) if one adopts the hypothesis that our being does consist of two fundamental elements. If that is true, it could still be true that energy comes to the mind during waking hours through the highest brain-mechanism.

Because it seems to me certain that it will always be quite impossible to explain the mind on the basis of neuronal action within the brain, and because it seems to me that the mind develops and matures independently throughout an individual's life as though it were a continuing element, and because a computer (which the brain is) must be programmed and operated by an agency capable of independent understanding, I am forced to choose the proposition that our being is to be explained on the basis of two fundamental elements. This, to my mind, offers the greatest likelihood of leading us to the final understanding toward which so many stalwart scientists strive.

So many questions still confront us! But to ask them is the first step toward solution. I am confident that they will be answered in time. After adopting the dualist hypothesis one can quite logically call upon the physicists for help. Can electrical energy take two forms? What is the nature of the mind? Has it a structure? Can there be energy without structure? What is electricity? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the mind is present.

As Aristotle expressed it, the mind is "attached to the body." The mind vanishes when the highest brain-mechanism ceases to function due to injury or due to epileptic interference or anaesthetic drug. More than that, the mind vanishes during deep sleep.

What happens when the mind vanishes? There are two obvious answers to that question; they arise from Sherrington's two alternatives—whether man's being is to be explained on the basis of one or two elements.

(1) If the first alternative is chosen, the mind no longer exists when it vanishes, since it is only a function of brain-action. Mind is re-created each time the highest brain-mechanism goes into normal action. In this case, one must try to look upon the

mind as the action of a specialized mechanism of the brain, the mechanism that I have called the "highest".

(2) Or, if one chooses the second, the dualistic alternative, the mind must be viewed as a basic element in itself. One might, then, call it a *medium*, an *essence*, a *soma*. That is to say, it has a *continuing existence*. On this basis, one must assume that although the mind is silent when it no longer has its special connection to the brain, it exists in the silent intervals and takes over control when the highest brain-mechanism does go into action.

Thus it would seem that this specialized brain-mechanism switches off the power that energizes the mind each time it falls asleep. It switches on the mind when it awakens. This is the daily automatic routine to which all mammals are committed and by which the brain recovers from fatigue, recharging its batteries, so to speak.

The highest brain-mechanism switches on this *semi-independent element*, which instantly takes charge during wakefulness, and switches it off in sleep. Does this seem to be an improbable explanation? It is not so improbable, to my mind, as is the alternative expectation—that the highest brain-mechanism should itself understand and should reason and should direct voluntary action and decide where attention should be turned and what the computer must learn and record and reveal on demand.

But in the case of either alternative, the mind has no memory of its own as far as our evidence goes. The brain, like any computer, stores what it has learned during active intervals. All of its records are instantly available to the conscious mind throughout the person's waking life, and in a distorted fashion during the dreams of the half-asleep state.

WILDER PENFIELD

APPEAL

O THOU immense immaculate Light,
 Spotless splendour of the Infinite,
 Burn in my heart Thy torch, O flame,
 Nothing in me let darkness claim.
 Thou endless source of Truth's delight,
 Dwell not on Thy unreachable height,
 Descend once more from Thy lofty peak,
 Give me the Word, let Thy Truth speak!
 Thy deepest secret I would know
 And with Thee forever intimate grow.
 Untouched by shadows may I dwell!
 With Thy white fire all barriers quell!

LALITA

A DIALOGUE OF SEEKER AND SOUL*

Soul In youth you followed me through the dark Night.
You heard my Call and dared the sheer ascent.
On a peak you stood with your Maker, spent
In battle. Would you now give up the fight?

Seeker I am tired and He seems so far away!
Other men are happy with their little lives;
They have joyful children and lovely wives;
They are content to die; they never pray
For grandiose gains in spiritual life;
They are satisfied with sorrow on Earth.
Nor do they believe in the Second Birth
Or Him—or anything but gain and strife!
I should have been as other men are;
But I have wasted away all my powers,
And I have whiled away idle the hours
Following you to a cold, distant Star.

Soul He has given you the Impossible Dream
Which only He can make a reality:
You must realize the Totality!
Would you give up all for a common life-scheme?
Why should you care what other men do,
Or bother your life with theirs to compare?
They are Nature's children and cannot dare
To conquer all for THAT to Which you sue.
You have renounced your powers for Him,
And sought the Holy Truth for Love's sole end.
Would you now surrender and your mind bend
To Night, Ignorance and Falsehood—and them?
You have rested from the Divine Battle!
Not in idle work you have passed your days
For wife and children and useless cattle—
Only one who is blessed for His blessing prays!

Seeker How can I help but see the Truth you say!
But I see holy men ensconced in greed,
And He gives them all the world's things they need:
I sit alone and seem to waste away!

* After reading *A Dialogue of Self and Soul* by W. B. Yeats.

Your Truth is hard, and I am small and weak.
 How can I ever know the Truth I seek
 Though I muse forever? Indeed, He seems
 Indifferent to me and my great dreams!

Soul Would you, too, greedy and stupid become
 And pray for the idle world's worthless toys,
 For the Earth's ignorant and passing joys,
 And beat little words on the pulpit's drum?
 All are weak and small, except only He.
 Even the Gods in their pride of strength
 Must come to Him in Time's long length,
 Surrender all, and know how small they be.
 You are alone. But you need only The Divine
 Who has given you your mighty Goal,
 And for you has made the Spirit's bells toll.
 Patience! You will be free in His own Time.

Seeker I will go on though Hell itself should burst!
 Only He can quench my divine thirst!

DONALD M. REEVES

ANNOUNCING

A Special Issue of *Mother India* for February 21, 1978, the Mother's Birth Centenary

Besides the Editor's own reminiscences at some length, there will be several important contributions. Among them are:

1. A long article by Huta—*Occult and Spiritual Truths*—which will include unpublished letters and talks of the Mother as well as an account of some significant experiences of her own.
2. Maggi's recollections and reflections inspired by her daily contact with the Mother.
3. Sanat K. Banerji's article *The Mother on Her Old Body and the New*.
4. Charles Maloney's dissertation *The Mother, Death and Evolution*.
5. A relevant continuation of *Towards the Higher Life*.
6. Writings by Udhar and Nagin Doshi suitable for the great occasion.

INNER ASPIRATIONS

Little is known of the origin of this unusual text. The first part of Inner Aspirations is taken from the French edition of the Arya, Le Revue de Synthèse (No.2, September 15, 1914) and signed Ch. Kloster. It would seem that the second and third parts have never before been published: they were found among the Mother's manuscripts that belong to the period of her stay in Paris prior to the outbreak of the First World War and her first journey to India. The English translation that is given here follows very closely the French original while attempting to preserve something of its very special and unique quality of haunting beauty. Here is evoked, with many allusions to the sacred and traditional lore preserved by the West, the mystery of the inner countries opening onto the discovery of the secret self in the midst of the trials and sorrows of the life that is but a living death and leading in the end to the experience of the power and delight of the divine presence immanent in all beings and things.

I

How calm it is, this evening! No breath stirs: twilight alone fills all Nature. I hear no more the sounds of men...All is far from me, I am far from everything! And yet I feel that my heart beats at the very centre of the earth, I feel even that the sun now sinking yonder grows one with the sun that gives rhythm to the life within my breast.

O Heart! O Sun! Centre of man, centre of the planets, strange divinities of joy, serenity!

What dost thou conceal behind thy flames, thou to whom the ancient Aryan offered praise each day? What dost thou hold secret beneath thy blood, thou whom death can touch but once? Will you reveal to me tonight, O Mysterious Ones, the secret that oppresses me?...Will you tell me why I am sad and never myself, why I tread the same path anew each day, without ever fully recognising it, without *knowing*?...

Is it not possible to be what you both are: a beautiful and living force harmonious in its flow?...

All yearns to be *light* within and around a *being*: I am, we are, men of night! Hence we are not Beings but mere possibilities of Beings. I want to be a man, a BEING.

I want! Already my sadness, my superstition grow less: joy destroys, or perhaps subdues the demons. Yes, joy is a light, and conscious, deliberate joy is an equipoise. When joy dwells in a man, his heart becomes like a sun: all that is cold, all that is lonely is drawn towards this radiant centre. Thus Man enters the empire of his Gods; he speaks with those he worshipped, trembling; he loves those whom once he strove to hate.

*
**

We always see life as a chaos, a rough wild ride beneath sombre clouds streaked with tragic lightnings or azure rifts. All of us seek, as best we can, with more or less success and energy, to free ourselves from the nightmares that hold us in their grip, the sensations that increase our unease. The quest for serenity is like a seed germinating within each one of us, awaiting the auspicious hour that will permit it to realise itself in all its power and forcefully replace night with light. Yes, when I grew vaguely aware of my own tumult, in that hour when of himself the child should consecrate himself a man, it seems to me that I grew aware more vaguely still of something that none had ever named to me, that none seemed to know. They spoke of everything in my presence, but when a bolder wingstroke would touch upon this little hidden thing that I struggled to cry out, they all fell silent! My anguish engendered anguish: darkness spread within me, silence around me!

And this thing, more silent than the silence, made me mute among men; I wanted to know what *that* was, I wanted to know why that was. I questioned this one and that—a childish and a venerable act; some wept, others laughed, but none replied.

I wanted to know: I know not!

Oh! something who art within me, wilt thou speak tonight?...

2

I am unhappy and full of weariness, for I am not *Myself*! I shall be *Myself* only when I know this *something* which frightens my fellow-men and which is in me as in them.

Oh! *something* who livest in me, I speak to thee this evening.

Thou who art attired in yonder horizons, divine orb whose course our worlds pursue, how alike thou art to this *something* I seek and call forth within me. Through the winter mists thou seemest pallid to us and yet thou dost transform Nature again and again, O immensity of force! Colossal mass with thy locks of fire and storm!

Let me kneel down before thee like the Sabeans¹ of old. Perhaps this evening thou shalt reveal to my troubled mind what it is still unable to discover of itself. Oh! let me pray to thee; this prayer will go forth towards the marvel that is within me. I am a child, and playthings are good for me; may thou be the last plaything I shall flourish among men.

*

How is it that I am here this evening, far from those who have taught me to know the things of earth! In my heart I do not hate them, but I hate their wretchedness; I do not despise them, but I scorn the hovels that shelter them; I do not suffer from living in their midst, but because I do not live in them as they could live in me. I have fled them to learn to know and love them, for I neither know nor love them

¹ The inhabitants of the ancient land of Saba or Sheba in southern Arabia, who worshipped the sun and the stars.

despite the formulas that dwell in my mouth as in theirs!

I am a stranger in the midst of strangers; most often men meet only in the crudest things. Yet there is an invincible force which draws me towards my fellows—the same force draws them towards me; and still we find not in each other the royal road that lies within us; we know not how to open the doors to our inner palaces. We elude one another at the very moments when we think to grasp each other at last and forever.

I never could remain untroubled in the company of a friend; some doubt mysteriously poisoned our outpourings—a doubt extremely faint but throbbing like a pain. And why is this? Why! Most certainly because we do not know how to live, because, nine times out of ten, we catch only fleeting glimpses of each other now and then, and do not speak of the secret floods that overwhelm us, but of the outer life that is dealt to us. We talk of matters and disappointments of all kinds, and jealously suppress the murmurs of *the thing* that is within us. Months and years go by, we meet again and no longer recognise each other; the cloak has not changed, but the man who shivers underneath the cloak is no longer known to us.

A few nothings have just passed away....We turn to others and the comedy, pathetically, begins anew!...

That is why I am alone tonight. I want to walk naked under the stars. Though I must suffer long for it, I will know who I am—and thence who we are—before I return to the valley....For I love you, O my fellows, as I love this almost vanished sun and this quiet immensity, because you also love me without knowing it, just as you love all this....

You need a heart to foster you, a mouth to persuade you—may I be for you that mouth, that heart!

Oh! *something* who livest in me, I am before thee of my own will. Behold, my faith grows strong: I can hear thee without blanching....Already I feel that like the ocean roaring around a fragile craft, thou canst understand the words that surge within me! The starry night enfolds us; I am close to thee, so close, within thy Silence! Speak: the World is voiceless. Teach the ignorant, feed the hungry....Speak: it is night and I am naked.

*

“You have left your kind rather than live a sensual life in their midst; you have preferred to remain alone rather than idle away the *tranquil* days among the bleating flock. To the certitudes of a road sealed in by gigantic, immobile, unscalable walls, at whose feet men vegetate with pleasure, of a road where storms are continual but mild and the light not too dazzling—you have preferred the dangers of a narrow track leading towards the unknown on the highest peaks. There, storms are rare but terrifying and the light ever more intense. Those whom no ordeals can cast down, those who rise again with new strength, the great obscure heroes of the daily strife whom nothing can cause to stumble into the abyss, the Sisyphus-men who can make fast their rock each time they crown a summit—these hear ever more distinctly the mysterious call that

echoes in all.

“You have followed this sheer track and now you have attained the first precipitous peak. You have attempted to unravel the riddle within you: the hour has come for you to know it.

“Have you left all your pride to the briers on the path? Have you bled yourself of your last illusions to possess the truth?”

“I am naked.”

★

“The Universe, the Macrocosm, is, like man, a mass of vibrations which tend to arrange themselves in a certain order and react one upon another and one by the other. These vibrations are not yet in harmony.

“Man, the Microcosm, is, like the universe, a mass of vibrations which tend to arrange themselves in a certain order and react one upon another and one by the other. These vibrations are not yet in harmony. The discords among these vibrations seem more perceptible than the discords among the vibrations of the Macrocosm. The vibrations of the Universe tend to harmonise with the corresponding vibrations they awaken in man.

“If there be a central point of vibration in the Universe, there is also one in *all* and *vice versa*.

“The marvellous work, the most desirable work, the truly immortal, impersonal and thereby creative work is the discovery of this centre within oneself, and then its identification and indissoluble union with all centres....

“You have divined this: that is why you have awakened from among the sleepers. If you become fully conscious and aware of this centre, you can then slowly seek the harmony of all the vibrations within you. Proceeding by successive groupings, you will in time be able to reach a total synchronicity: then you will have become a BEING.

“Once you have completed this work—in one sense the most painful—you must, to obey that imperative *something* within you, within all, within everything, become one with your fellow-men and make them one with you, just as you have become one with what is within you.... Then you will have become a MASTER, and so from depth to depth throughout the universe! Then you will have become a *god*.

“When all men have awakened, when they have all become both BEING and MASTER, the ranges of human vibrations will give rise to corresponding ranges in the Universal or *vice versa*; and a Harmony, absolute in appearance, will take birth—a Harmony whose effects, if they could make themselves felt even now, would plunge the world into such delight that everything would seem divine. But this Harmony is a living thing, endlessly surpassing itself in projection, something infinitely perfectible. This means that once this first harmony has been achieved, the *universal vibration* will constantly modify the *human vibration*, which will in turn react upon it again and so on for ever!”

3

But what indeed is this *something* in you which makes you ever discontent and unable, even in simple Matter, to be truly satisfied with substance in itself or to find satisfaction in it; what is this thing which makes you seek solitude so that it can claim, so it seems, a little of what is best in you, as if it feared to die away without this nourishment? Now you will say, "a centre"; but what then is this centre within you?

First of all, only that is a centre which masters by creating. To whatever order it may belong, a centre is a necessary reality which makes other contingent realities possible.

The point—that undemonstrable—is the centre in geometry. Without it no figure could exist, since the essential line, the unrealisable ideal, is created only to join one point to another! A centre never sets bounds, even less does it set bounds to itself. We set bounds relative to the centre. The point gives birth to the circumference and makes possible an infinite succession of circumferences. The point is the invisible God of geometry and of all the sciences that follow from it; its real existence cannot be proved, neither can it be defined or limited in space. It is everywhere, and from everywhere one can loose forth the truths discovered through the point by the Euclids of all times and spread abroad the marvels they contain.

What do you perceive? . . . A swarming of suns in the gulfs, milky ways teeming in space upon space. . . . See, between these suns, the planets; between these planets, the satellites; between all these monsters, sustaining and pervading them, this marvellous, ineffable fluid, condensing and dematerialising untringly; this fluid becoming now a star, now light, electricity, plant, animal, here resonant bronze, there impalpable gas. This universal fluid is everywhere; it is in all and all is in itself; it contains all centres and potentially all forms. Does it not appear to you as simplicity and perfect multiplicity, the beginning and the end of all Matter, the supreme artist, the demurge of its own self? Look, O comparer, and tell me what norms were so propitious to Saturn; alone among her sisters, she still displays a marvellous retinue: O unity! O incorruptibility of laws! Compare the masses of Mercury and Jupiter! Look closer: what do you see? Monstrous auras like Bengal lights, penetrating and repelling one another, whirling: a folly and a fairy scene. . . . No more stars, no more beings; a formidable mist that confounds your thought, your sense of harmony and eurhythmy; no more sharp outlines, no more bounds, no more classifications! What has become of Sirius? Can you make out even a shadow of it amid these dizzying coruscations? . . .

You need other eyes to see, other ears to hear with. Your intelligence is spent, you cease to comprehend: yet this is but a threshold, the very first, for those whose eyes are true. No more abysses between the stars, no more chasms between the nebulae: a colossal mass all vibrant and active before the force that is moulding it. Is that a collapse of organised things, a single organism or a chaos, *tohu vah bohu*,¹ that

¹ "Without form and void." The Hebrew expression for chaos in the Bible (Genesis I.2).

the spirit, despite all previous appearances, has not yet fertilised with its breath?

Be not perturbed, look, since you seek to know and comprehend that *something*.... Look upon *that* and show me the empire of death, point out to me even a trace of it; seek, tell me if you can find it anywhere, tell me if you encounter Time as *they* conceive of it.

*

There is no death, if death be an interruption, definitive or not, an everlasting immobility of the thing that is dead and within death. Everywhere and at every moment there is death, if death be a different organisation, a new orientation, a modification....

There is no Time, since nothing ever comes to an end, since the atom is an infinity, a world of *eternal* possibilities. Time is not wherever there exists a centre, Time is only at the circumferences that are traced by man alone so that he may comprehend and remember.

LIFE! No more the life that seems peculiar to earth, nor even the life that energises our system, but that gigantic, UNIVERSAL life coursing through the Cosmos like a torrent; the life that bursts into a myriad fanfares throughout this fluid, this HYLE¹ whose slightest tremor brings about things which the boldest imagination cannot even glimpse.

Splendour! I am not isolated in the midst of creation. The goal exists that I have sensed for many a year. The universal life is not within me simply like water passing through a net: I can hold it without isolating it from the great All by giving it a centre of individualisation. I can make it more active, more creative, more perfect within me; I can serve it as it serves me. What men have always been powerless to satisfy in me will be gratified; but I will not be sated, satiated as they sometimes are, for I will have escaped from the gigantic chess-board onto which they crowd in ecstasy, pile up with certitude.

A little fresh air, a little true vastness! I will suffer no more: I shall let the universal life penetrate me freely, harmonise itself by harmonising me.

It will become conscious of me, I shall become conscious of it. Splendour! That is why I breathe, that is what I aspire for. In their folly men imprison the life within them, contrive to isolate it more and more from the universal, hoping thus to become immortal. It is as if they were to imprison a child in a suit of armour made to his size and finely wrought, with the hope of shielding him thus from all causes of destruction; it is as if they presumed to keep a living bird in a glass cage, hermetically sealed. Cage and armour are both coffins! Man too is a coffin—his own coffin: in it he lies down, wastes away and comes to rest in delight...I want to LIVE! ..

I want to deliver the life within me, to renew it unceasingly that it may rejuvenate and recreate me each day. May the cosmic blood run within me—the blood that Death could not even once coagulate—so that I may *be* at last!

*

¹ Matter, primal substance (Greek).

Thou shalt not touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What is this wall that threatens to crush me as it falls? Why does it stand between the universal and myself? Must then the child have armour, the bird a glass cage? No! A thousand times no! The man who wrote this understood not the VOICE. But perhaps the true echo could only receive false echoes.

A breath uplifts me, a light dawns and flickers within me!

No, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis II.17). No, thou shalt not eat of it so long as thou art a child, and thou art in childhood; so long as thou shalt not have become conscious and aware of this *something* within thee, this constructive centre, this demiurge, this secret wisdom, this inner god who will keep watch, who will call softly each day and each hour and await with patience the glory of lightnings, or the more distant, more dismal fall that plunges one back into the night....

If thou eatest of these fruits without knowing who thou art, thou shalt act like the imprudent Cercopes¹ who, thinking to lay hands on the possessions of the divine son of Alcmenes,² became his slaves. Having overestimated their strength and cleverness, they lost possession of themselves and died unto themselves. It is said that a jest enabled them to recover their freedom. Unfortunately, it will not be the same for thee who shalt die the Death; that is, having absorbed elements that are infinitely too powerful for thee to assimilate or immediately reject from thy frail organism will be completely disorganised and thence unable to effectuate in the normal way the synthesis that it needs to LIVE and SURVIVE. Man, organised to be the organiser, was made piece by piece with deliberation and patience and adorable sagacity. The universal life, like a prodigal mother, endowed him with every depth, girded him with its virile genius, crying out to him, "Thou shalt be what I am: a perpetual becoming. A day will come when all paths will open before thee, when thou shalt in truth become the King of creation, the archangel whose eyes shall blaze like suns. For that, follow step by step thy boundless path; even as thou learnest, thy insight will increase, Thou shalt discover thyself as one discovers a World, and thou shalt stand speechless. But thou shalt not recognise me for thy creatrix, O Unigenus, until the day when, returning to thy own palace, thou shalt follow with amazement and rapture these mysterious labyrinths where I live and muse. Thou art what the hypogea³ beneath the land of Khemi⁴ will one day become! In thee I have impressed my chants, my ecstasies, my dazzling secrets, my epics, my vertiginous rhythms, my supradivine roundels, my sparkling, sparkling choreographies!

"Thou shalt follow the meanderings of thy wonderful syrinxes⁵ until the hour

¹ In Greek mythology, the cunning gnomes who attempted to steal the weapons of Hercules while he slept, and who were changed by Zeus into monkeys.

² The mother of Hercules.

³ Subterranean tombs.

⁴ Also spelt "Keme": the black land; name given to Egypt by the ancient Egyptians.

⁵ Rock-cut tunnels, as in Egyptian tombs.

has come for thee to unseal the sarcophagus chamber, the mysterious heart of the vast cavern. If thou art a *Being*, if thou art a *Man*, thou shalt unveil neither a coffin nor a mummy but a cradle where that *something*, now sighing, now calling, lies dormant... thy Royal Self, thy Divine SELF. Then let thy joy shine forth; light the lamp of the sanctuary.... The little inner god will awaken and his smile and his gaze will overwhelm thee with joy."

CH. KLOSTER

(Translated by Pushan)

MIRACLES OF THE MOTHER'S GRACE

I

MANY are the miracles which take place in our daily life but unless they are very striking we do not seem to notice how the Mother's Grace is constantly with us.

On the 18th of June when I was returning home in the evening after seeing half of a Bengali picture at the Playground, I suddenly stumbled near my house. I would have had a bad fall and hurt myself, but a subtle hand came and laid itself across my chest. It not only prevented me from falling but made my body straight. For a moment I was astonished but then at once I knew that it was the Mother's hand. The experience was most concrete. I offered my sincere thanks and gratitude to Her.

2

On the 21st of June I went with my servant to the laundry because she had been sent back with the message that no clothes had been given by me that time.

The people in charge said: "We have gone through the pad of chits several times but your chit is not at all there."

They seemed rather annoyed at my persistence and handed me the whole bundle to go through. I remained quiet and prayed for the Mother's help and then I opened the bundle at random. Lo! there was my chit, complete with the number of clothes and the date! Everybody was surprised how I had managed to find it without the slightest difficulty, when they could not do so, even when they had searched the whole bundle. What else can this be except a miracle of our sweet Mother's Grace?

LALITA

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of November 1977)

THE WHIRLPOOL OF DESIRES

2

SRI Aurobindo's Yoga offers scores of avenues for exploring one's goal of life. One could embark on a voyage, charter one's own route, catching the thread of one's past evolution. All of us live below our potential. If we do not allow our capabilities to lie idle, we can be much better than what we are. The deep-rooted tree of desire has many offshoots; let me pin my attention here on one of its twigs or branches, the desire of the vital for delicacies—I mean the control of the palate. Before we go to that it may be interesting to turn to the Ashram atmosphere for a moment, which was permeated with Sri Aurobindo's Presence at the time when the number of the members of the Ashram was very limited. As flowers and plants respond to light and air so did our hearts bask in that Presence.

"How should a novice," inquired an American lady "imbibe the idea of a new life that people speak of here?"

"No instruction. No persuasion to do this or that. That is not the way of Sri Aurobindo's teaching. Nothing about the Mother till the inner being seeks to drink deep from that eternal fountain. Let the novice enter the atmosphere and ask himself: 'Do I feel anything new in contrast to where I was? Is there anything that touches my heart?'"

When I repeated the question of the American lady to another lady, who was also an American, at another time, she was quick to reply:

"Well, the first thing that captures the soul is the atmosphere. All is so quiet here. In America we cannot even dream of so much peace and tranquillity. We have to be always on our feet. Not even once during the day there rises a desire to sit still for a while and open ourselves to something other than the world we live in. Everything is new here, the land is new, the people are new, their way of living is new, the environment is new. It takes time to adapt oneself to this new situation."

"This refers to the surface change. The change must come from within, then you will discover something so new that no height of imagination can envisage it," I commented.

"It is for that I have come with my children so that they might be initiated into a new way of life from their early age."

"Hope you will stick to your views. A question rises in my mind off and on: 'Even for the discovery of a single strand of a scientific theory, Western people do not mind devoting twenty or thirty years. The more difficult their problems the greater their absorption in the task. But why do they fail to do the same for the

exploration of their inner life? Why within a year or two do they feel bored, frustrated and leave the attempt?"

She shrugged her shoulders and observed in a dignified tone: "The answer is simple. In the research work the mind is constantly fed by hopes of discovering something hitherto unknown. The more one delves into the deeper level, the greater the determination to fathom the secret. Here one does not know how to make the first move. No guidelines. In trying to bring control over oneself one gets nothing but knocks and knocks that tell on the nerves. This makes one exclaim: 'Is this called a New Life?'"

Such was exactly the case with a German youth. He did all in his power to bring control over his unruly thoughts, imposed on himself strict discipline and austere habits but could not pull on for long and left utterly disappointed. The question that troubled one of his co-travellers on the path: "How can I have faith in one of whom I know nothing? I have been taught all my life to have faith in none but myself. How could I give myself to somebody else?" He protested and contended.

"Let the storm pass. Then in the quiet hours of the day let yourself probe and ponder why you have taken such pains to come to this place. Surely the first attraction must have been an ideal. Then it becomes your duty to be true to the ideal, drawing sustenance from the atmosphere. Time must be given to the seed to break the hard soil and sprout. The first work of Yoga is to help you breathe a new air. But you will have to go a long way, walk a million miles to taste the real joy of a new life."

Unless a change comes in the attitude, the mind refuses to be convinced. The co-traveller too left.

"Nothing comes without a price and a struggle," so said the Mother in one of her talks. Sri Aurobindo is also emphatic on the point. When asked why he did not write things in a way that the mind could grasp easily and digest, he wrote half-humorously:

"If I said only things that human nature finds easy and natural, that would certainly be very comfortable for the disciples, but there would be no room for spiritual aim and endeavour. Spiritual aims and methods are not easy or natural (e.g., as quarrelling, sex-indulgence, greed, indolence, acquiescence in all imperfections are easy and natural), and if people become disciples, they are supposed to follow spiritual aims and endeavours, however hard and above ordinary nature and not the things that go easy and natural".¹

Thus each one is left to build his future in his own way, drawing inspiration from the atmosphere if he felt inclined. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo never interfered even if we faltered. We were expected to learn by experience and grow conscious. Their way of dealing was quite different from the traditional ways. Sri

¹ Both the letters have now been published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, pp. 257 and 263.

Aurobindo is recorded as saying:

“I never point out to anybody his defects unless he gives me the occasion. A sadhak must become conscious and lay himself before the light, see and reject and change. It is not the right method for us to interfere and lecture and point out this and point out that. That is the school-master method—it does not work in the spiritual change.”¹

To pick up the thread of my story. There were many kinds of rigidities in my nature. I could never give myself to serious reading of Sri Aurobindo’s literature. Just on reading a page or two, there arose a tension in the mind. If I compelled it, it revolted. On my request Parichand who had just joined the Ashram agreed to take a class for half an hour a day. He went on reading but my mind travelled to far-off lands, the ears seemed sealed, and I could gather nothing. When the garden work was entrusted to him he stopped. My mind felt relieved.

It never struck me to write of my problem to the Mother. Perhaps some part in me shrank from being exposed: “Many do not write because they are not yet prepared for the pressure on them to progress rapidly which that would mean.”² Sri Aurobindo once wrote.

S had the same trouble with the books. He frankly confessed and wrote to the Mother: “I find no interest in reading Sri Aurobindo’s books.” There was no reply, but from the very next day he perceived a change in himself. Slowly he began to read Sri Aurobindo with as much absorbed interest as usually found in the reading of novels. He had no idea one could derive such sweetness from spiritual literature.

The Mother performed a minor psychological operation and his consciousness opened. I kept my defect concealed as if it had been something precious and I had to fight for more than twenty years to cross the hurdle.

Instead there grew in me a natural bent for meditation and a propensity to ‘learn by doing’, as goes the famous saying of Dewey. This is how it began.

In the days of which I am speaking, Sri Aurobindo’s letters were treated as personal treasures and none of us was inclined to make them public. (They were made available to one and all after 1950.) I did not know in what respect the function of the vital being differed from that of the mind. All I knew was that an impure mind was a hell by itself and I was fighting desperately to bring some control over it.

On the occasion of the marriage of his eldest son, Prithwi Singh wanted to present something to the inmates of the Ashram. He was a great lover of books. His selection fell upon *Bases of Yoga* which he got distributed, to each of us, by the Mother on the Prosperity day. Its lines acted like *mantras*. But I could never read more than four or five pages at a time. The moment something surged from within by the impact of Sri Aurobindo’s nectar-like words, I would drop the book, give myself to silent meditation. Thus grew in me the habit of learning by doing. The leaning towards meditation was perhaps due to the light and power that were packed in the air. These two things helped me to enter into the heart of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga.

¹ ² *Ibid.*, p. 262.

I am afraid it might appear a tall claim but there is no denying the fact that they created in me *rasa* in the pursuit of Yoga. Instead of shrinking, the being welcomed, rather invited, new adventures.

I might be interrupted and asked, "What about the atmosphere prevailing today?" No explanation from my side. I produce here the version of two visitors.

I happened to meet on the road a known figure—the Manager of the Calcutta branch of the Punjab National Bank. On my enquiring about his long journey he replied in a tone as if his heart were speaking: "Believe me, the moment I enter the Ashram atmosphere I feel I have come to heaven. You don't know how pitiable is the condition of Calcutta today. It is a hell." This was about his visit on August 15 in the Birth Centenary year of Sri Aurobindo: 1972.

During the August Darshan 1977, a homoeopathic doctor, practising in a suburb of my home town, came to see me. He had been coming to the Ashram for more than thirty years whenever he could afford. I enquired how he was faring. He answered in a pained tone:

"No one considers himself safe. One does not know what awaits him the next day. Five sturdy people gather together and compel you to do their bidding, threatening dire consequences if there is any hesitation. When I came here I felt I had come to another world. What peace is there in the atmosphere!

"It was the Mother's grace that brought me this time, you know. A well-to-do merchant wanted to visit the Ashram with his wife and a friend but did not know whom to approach. On my getting permission, etc., something unusual happened on the day he was to start. Due to some sudden happening, it became impossible for his friend to join him. Now what to do about the seat that had been reserved for him? The merchant requested me to avail myself of the ticket."

Paying glowing tributes to the Mother the doctor observed: "We feel the Grace of the Mother more predominantly than when she was in the body. Sitting here you cannot imagine our plight. She comes to our rescue unasked. I was offered a free stay by an inmate of the Ashram. I intend to prolong my stay but the family pull is there."

An episode of the Mother's last months among us comes to mind:

A high-placed officer of the Government of India tried to make a pilgrimage to the Ashram at least once a year. He could not be here in August 1972, for which he felt very sad. He came in November. On every visit he took with him at the time of his departure something from Pondicherry for his near and dear ones, who kept their eyes fastened on the date of his return. He told me: "Among my co-workers whoever happened to receive a Blessing packet of the Mother got promoted to a higher grade." Instances can be multiplied of those who found their life sweetened by the Mother's Grace.

With this background I revert to my story about the conquest of desires.

In my deep and intense search for the reason why all my attempts to reach the depths of the heart had met with total failure, I lighted upon these lines of the Mother:

“First of all he must give up his desires, whoever wants to follow this path; for desire is the most obscure and the most obscuring movement of the lower nature. Desires are motions of weakness and ignorance and they keep you chained to your weakness and to your ignorance. It is the same with all lower impulses, jealousy or envy, hatred or violence, because they do not belong to the true nature of the Divine...”

To keep the consciousness always at the highest pitch is a tough job even for the mighty. An event readily comes to my memory:

My cousin held a good opinion of me. He had to go to Germany for the purchase of a recording machine. He thought if he could persuade me to join his business, he could be relieved from his branch office in Burma. I too had a great regard for him. It was the purity of his character that made him the hero of my heart. For recording purposes he had to come in contact with the beauties of Bengal's screen but he never allowed himself to be pulled by “the downward gravitation”. It was to take the recording of Dilip Kumar Roy's music that he had come to Pondicherry in 1936 with all his huge equipment. He hired the town hall at Rs. 50 a day for three days.

He was invited one day by a well-known local merchant to dinner, as he was his agent. I came to know that the luxury dish contained 36 varieties as per ancient tradition. But when my cousin wanted me to join him, I firmly said “No”. The same “me” had been looking at paltry eatables with covetous eyes. And why had it been so? Sri Aurobindo has not left the question unanswered:

“The desire-soul refuses to submit to the Divine law.”

Things that appear trifling are yet such as do not allow us to breathe a new air. Let us cite what Sri Aurobindo says in this connection :

“These small desires obstruct greatly the change in the outer consciousness and the being must be free from them if the transformation is not to be hampered there.”

Some link to these words can be traced in this line of *Savitri* :

His little hour is spent in little things,¹

(*To be continued*)

¹ *Savitri*, Vol. II, p. 186.

ILION : AN APPROACH AND A STUDY

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1977)

3

APART from the apparent formal deviations, there are striking structural differences between the traditional epic and *Iliad* of Sri Aurobindo. The time-span allotted to the happenings in *Iliad* is very short, not even one full day, perhaps not more than five to six hours. It is as if the entire Tragedy of Troy took place in one single momentous hour towards which the entire "labour of mortals" was leading itself for years and centuries together. In this microcosmic presence of Time two movements cross-cut each other. The first of these—a horizontal movement—leads the mortal victims of the divine will from Light to Darkness, from Dawn to Night. That is how the poem begins, with a description of dawn which is the carrier of the veiled fate whose face and feet alone could be seen by the obscured vision of the human inhabitants of Troy. The poem concludes with a picture of the godless night : "And in the noon there was night."¹ All the characters in the poem appear to be treading the way from twilight to darkness, symbolizing the loss of vision. The enactors of the Olympian design die, in a sense, a spiritual death which is followed by the actual physical death. Troy, the principal protagonist of the poem, is doubtlessly facing the problem of extinction; but more serious is the problem—and this is the chief emotion evoked by the poem in the mind of the reader—of the disintegration of consciousness. Discord is the root cause of destruction. The doom of Troy lies inherent in the severance of the link between the voice of God and the action of Man. The wider the breach, the more pervasive the darkness!

The second movement is very closely linked with the first. It is a vertical movement leading the human enactors of the divine will from the earth to Hades; from a higher level of consciousness to a lower one, we may say the level of inconscience. The images employed by Sri Aurobindo to describe the material conflict unmistakably evoke emotions corresponding to these two movements in the mind of the reader. The main difference between *Iliad* and the traditional epic, as well as a major part of the poem's aesthetic success, lies in the effective compression of these twin movements into the momentous moment in which the action covered by the poem takes place. There is a greater architectonical complexity in *Iliad* than has so far been realized.

Iliad, understood in this particular manner, easily fits in with the entire sphere of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. The insistent interest in the problem of death, the tendency to pierce behind the "accidental vestures of things"², and the interpretation of the

¹ This phrase does not come at the actual end of the poem but at the end of Book VIII, which from the thematic point of view is the conclusion.

² P. B. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*.

material in terms of the spiritual, these themes, that form the very soul of his poetry, become evident here once again, if the Penthesilea-and-Achilles story is reduced to a statement of the harmony between the movements of the progression of the poem and the discord between the divine will and the mortals' action. The way in which Sri Aurobindo interprets the legend in this poem makes it clear that he attributes the destruction of Troy to a conflict between Lust and the Furies. This fatality is spearheaded by the consistently adamant denial by the human beings engaged in the conflict to listen to the voice of wisdom that comes through either Cassandra or Antenor or Briseis. The ultimate result of this unreconciled divorce between the divine word and the human instinct is the fate of Troy—a foregone conclusion—an absolute destruction. Thus the root cause of the tragedy of Troy—a city built by Apollo, a divinity—is the disintegration of the higher soul of man into a divided and blinded ego with an obscured vision.

This poem, apparently a heroic and narrative but nevertheless a symbolic one, stands as a representation not only of an event that occurred just once, but also of an eventuality that recurs always and unfailingly in the history of mankind and in the life of an individual. That *Iliad* is not only the story of the Trojan war but also the signification of a recurrent human phenomenon is made clear to us by certain frequently employed images. One of the crucially important images is the following one :

All that is born and destroyed is reborn in the sweep of the ages;
 Life like a decimal ever recurring repeats the old figure;
 Goal seems there none for the ball that is chased throughout Time
 by the Fate-teams;
 Evil once ended renews and no issue comes out of living :
 Only an Eye unseen can distinguish the thread of its workings.¹

The recurrence of the enormous waste of human life is equated by Sri Aurobindo with death (“no issue comes out of living”). The final victory in the conflict is always of Dis, the deity of death, whether it be the conflict between the Trojans and the Greeks, the Lust and the Fury, the West and the East, Penthesilea and Achilles or the concepts of honour of Paris and Achilles on the one hand and those of Antenor and Briseis on the other. It is Dis who steals the entire show during the day of battle. The disintegration of consciousness, the divorce between man and God and the consequent victory of death are beautifully represented in the closing lines of the ‘Book of Gods’ :

Then in the fane Palladian the shuddering priests of Athene
 Entered the darkened shrine and saw on the suffering marble
 Shattered Athene’s mighty statue prostrate as conquered,

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Iliad, Collected Poems*, Birth Centenary Library, Vol No 5, Ashram, 1972, pp 394-95.

But on its pedestal rose o'er the unhurt image of darkness
 Awful shapes, a Trinity dim and dire unto Mortals.
 Dumb they fell down on the earth and the life-breath was slain in their
bosoms
 And in the noon there was night. And Apollo passed out of Troya.¹

This victory of death—actual and symbolic—is the ‘repeating figure’ occurring in a passage quoted earlier; and hence Troy becomes a prototype of mortality and the inevitable iron law of death it has to face. Even the heroes and wise men like Achilles and Odysseus cannot escape or avert it, for, superhuman beings as they are, the evolution of their minds has not reached the level of a spiritual gnosis. Hence the finest flowers of the human culture have to submit to the stroke of death. *Ihon*, therefore, is Sri Aurobindo’s genesis of the human ‘fall’—which is at once the original and the recurrent fall. The poem is also a symbol of the permanent human epigma: Death. *Savitri* completes the cycle by representing a symbol of the redemptive dawn that brings salvation, synthesis and Life. If the divorce between the divine and the human consciousness that causes death is the theme of *Ihon*, the theme of *Savitri* is the marriage of earth and heaven which provides the key to an eternal life, a stage leading to a permanent restoration of Paradise on the earth, here and now.

(Concluded)

G. N. DEVY

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 512.

MAN AND WOMAN

(Continued from the issue of September 1977)

3. Physical Health

“A PERFECT harmony in the proportions, suppleness and strength, grace and force, plasticity and endurance, and above all, an excellent health unvarying and unchanging, which is the result of a pure soul, a happy trust in life and an unshakable faith in the Divine Grace.”

“Weakness and fragility may look attractive in the view of a perverted mind, but it is not the truth of Nature nor the truth of the spirit.”

“If you have ever looked at the photos of the women gymnasts you will know what perfectly beautiful bodies they have, and nobody can deny that they are muscular.”

THE MOTHER

Health has been defined as the physical, mental and social well-being of an individual and not merely absence of disease. For a woman specially and for all human beings generally, health should find the first and most important place in one's life. Without a strong and healthy body one cannot do anything in this world happily. Without it one merely exists but does not live. Health is the real key to happiness. In today's world it is very difficult to find truly healthy persons, hence we find people who are somehow living and lack zest and enthusiasm for life. This is true more of women than of men. Due to early neglect and improper diet and also wrong notions of beauty among women both in India and in the West, it is very rare to find perfectly healthy women. The number of illnesses from which women suffer keeps on increasing. From early childhood a girl is rarely taught to look after her health and grow into a strong and healthy woman so that in future, when she does become a mother, she may give birth to healthy children. Health is the most important factor in a woman's life, for in the absence of health she suffers from many diseases. Mostly, in India, girls have a tendency to become suddenly isolated from all play and physical exercises, as soon as they reach puberty, which results in making them an unhappy lot and not only affects their physical health but also upsets their mental balance.

Health must be cultivated from childhood and opportunities provided for all children, boys as well as girls, to make their bodies healthy and strong. Proper nourishment, exercise in fresh air, regular walking and play are all needed for the all-round growth of a human being. If we really want women to play an important role in the life of society and of the nation, then provision must be made to help them to grow into happy and healthy youth instead of feeble and fragile creatures. Physical training is essential for both boys and girls, for it helps the body to grow harmoniously and well-proportioned. Each and every girl is not called upon to become a gymnast,

but at least she must be strong and free from diseases. Most of the young girls in India today suffer from anaemia and some deficiency, which results in various kinds of menstrual disorders. It is a well-known saying that a woman's health is judged from the regularity of her monthly period. Hardly we shall find young women who are free from the so-called female diseases, which in fact mean nothing more than menstrual disorder.

It will be enlightening for many of us to know what the Mother has told the young girls in the Ashram, who have bodies as muscular as those of young boys. She says:

“It is true that we are, in our inner being, a spirit, a living soul that holds within it the Divine and aspires to become it, to manifest it perfectly; it is equally true, for the moment at least, that in our most material external being, in our body, we are still an animal, a mammalian, of a higher order no doubt, but made like animals and subject to the laws of animal Nature.

“You have been taught surely that one peculiarity of the mammal is that the female conceives the child, carries it and builds it up within herself until the moment when the young one, fully formed, comes out of the body of its mother and lives independently.

“In view of this function Nature has provided the woman with an additional quantity of blood which has to be used for the child in the making. But as the use of this additional blood is not a constant need, when there is no child in the making, the surplus blood has to be thrown out to avoid excess and congestion. This is the cause of the monthly periods. It is a simple natural phenomenon, a result of the way in which the woman has been made and there is no need to attach to it more importance than to the other functions of the body. *It is not a disease and cannot be the cause of any weakness or real discomfort.* Therefore a normal woman, one who is not ridiculously sensitive, should merely take the necessary precautions of cleanliness, never think of it any more and lead her daily life as usual without any change in her programme. This is the best way to be in good health.”

Someone asked the Mother some questions regarding these monthly periods. Two questions and Her answers are given below:

Q. Why are some girls completely run down during their periods and suffer from pain in the lower back and abdomen, while others may have slight or no inconvenience at all?

The Mother's Reply :

“It is a question of temperament and mostly of education. If from her childhood a girl has been accustomed to pay much attention to the slightest uneasiness and to make a big fuss about the smallest inconvenience, then she loses all capacity of endu-

rance and anything becomes the occasion for being pulled down. Especially if the parents themselves get too easily anxious about the reactions of their children. It is wiser to teach a child to be a bit sturdy and enduring than to show much care for these small inconveniences and accidents that cannot always be avoided in life. An attitude of quiet forbearance is the best one can adopt for oneself and teach to the children.

“It is a well known fact that if you expect some pain you are bound to have it and, once it is come, if you concentrate upon it, then it increases more and more until it becomes what is usually termed as ‘unbearable’, although with some will and courage there is hardly any pain that one cannot bear.”

Q. How can a girl overcome her suffering and pain during her periods ?

The Mother’s Reply:

“There are some exercises that make the abdomen strong and improve the circulation. These exercises must be done regularly and continued even after the pains have disappeared. For the grown-up girls, this kind of pains comes almost entirely from sexual desires. If we get rid of the desires we get rid of the pains. There are two ways of getting rid of desires; the first one, the usual one, is through satisfaction (or rather what is called so, because there is no such thing as satisfaction in the domain of desire). That means leading the ordinary human-animal life, marriage, children and all the rest of it.

“There is, of course, another way, a better way,—control, mastery, transformation; this is more dignified and also more effective.”

(To be continued)

PUSHPA A.

THE TORTOISE AND THE MOUSE

A STORY

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1977)

MAURIZIO found one day that his whiskers were beginning to turn white.

"We aren't getting any younger, old friend," he said.

"No, Mousie, I suppose we aren't, but we are getting wiser, aren't we?"

The small rodent did in fact now lead an exemplary life. His temperament had mellowed and Angus's patience seemed to have seeped into him so that he was no longer at all the excitable and, let us admit it, somewhat unreliable Maurizio of yore.

"Have you ever thought," said the mouse, to whom the white whiskers had come as a shock in spite of his new wisdom, "that we may die without having achieved anything?"

"Haven't we said it a million times: Do or die."

"We've said it. Perhaps we've said it too often so that we don't really believe it any more. Would we go on if we really believed it?"

Angus stopped munching his lettuce.

"I'm glad you asked, Mousie, for I've asked myself the same question and do you know what I've thought? I've thought that I would want to go on. For what would we otherwise be doing? Preparing theses? Trembling at what the critics might have to say about our latest role?" At the thought of this they both started giggling and then they laughed harder and Angus started snorting. The mouse hadn't seen him laughing like this since that day when they had both been banished and, in fact, it hadn't happened since that day. And the laughter triggered off the memory of the experience and the little pink flower of which Angus hadn't thought for so long. And he saw clearly that that was the answer to the mouse's question and if he hadn't been laughing so much he would have told him so. And it seemed such a brilliant idea of their maker's, making the mouse's appetite and his own fear; they fitted so beautifully. The whole world was sown with joyful little pink flowers. He tried to tell this to the mouse who was now regarding him anxiously, for Angus seemed about to roll over onto his back with laughter. This only increased Angus's hilarity. But he very much wanted to tell Maurizio to share this all important thing with him, so he gurgled out between gasps:

"...answer...your...question...little pink flower." Maurizio who was hanging on to the edge of Angus's shell very desperately was neither amused nor interested.

"Very Zen, I'm sure," he snapped, "but could you just try to keep right side up?" But the mouse's protests only increased Angus's hilarity and he turned over onto his back and laughed and kicked his legs like a two-year old. And Maurizio stood above him very angry and glaring down into his face with his sharp teeth bared.

Now we come to an interesting part of our story. There was Angus on his back

quite defenceless and looking into the rodent's fierce face and he had neither the slightest intention nor desire to get back into his shell and there was Maurizio gazing down on Angus's lovely fleshy neck and he was very cross and he even felt like ripping Angus but he wasn't in the *slightest* tempted to eat him. The idea simply couldn't occur to him. So you can see the work had been done. But this is the frustrating part: they didn't know it. And I am only the narrator and can do nothing about this. Otherwise I would stop the story and politely tap the angry mouse on the shoulder and say, "Look here, can't you see that it's all right now?" Or I would try and get Angus to stop laughing and say, "Yes, indeed a little pink flower in full bloom", or some such thing. And he would immediately understand, but I can't, so I continue, confining myself to reporting events as they actually happened.

With much heaving and pushing and the help of a fallen branch which he used as a lever Maurizio finally got the tortoise right side up again. He was prepared to be cross and reproving and grumble about not being so young and about thoughtless tortoises (all this incidentally being somewhat exaggerated, for the years in the wilderness had made him much more fit than he had ever been in his younger days and it had not cost him as much effort as he had supposed it would) but Angus was so conciliating and so happy that he was mollified and just chattered his teeth a little. He made such heroic efforts to stop laughing and snorted so hard that in the end Maurizio grinned and tried to understand what Angus was trying to say.

"I was just saying, or trying to say, dear Mousie, that I've enjoyed this time in the wilderness immensely and it seems clear to me that the nicest part is the doing and even success couldn't be sweeter." In fact from his theatre days Maurizio knew this to be quite true: in the end it was the endless rehearsals, the struggle to perfect a single gesture or project precisely the right emotion that was sweet to remember, not the critics' praise.

"Yes, I suppose so."

"So that I can say, yes definitely I would go on," finished the tortoise. And that is exactly what they did. They went on. And the old reflexes went on. But now Angus was so jolly (he was always smiling like a Chinese sage) that the whole thing became like a game and in fact they now renamed it the don't-do game and after a while they spoke of it as The Game for short.

Then one day there was a tremendous storm and the spot where they'd been living suddenly became the bed of a rushing river. With the mouse clinging to his back Angus let himself be carried along by the current, exerting himself now and then only as necessary to avoid some hazard, until, the flood abating, they were deposited in a new region, somewhat more lush and consequently more populated than their former habitat.

Nothing daunted they resumed their lives and, on the very day after their arrival in the new area, prepared to begin a fresh round of the game. They had bowed to each other three times and Angus had shouted, "Do or die." Maurizio had replied with a cheerful "Do or die." Or rather he had said, "Do or...", when his voice broke

off in a squeak on the last word. Angus was already giggling a little as he allowed his head to be drawn in by a force greater than his own, for just as Maurizio now delighted in charging at him for the joy of charging he delighted in withdrawing (letting himself be withdrawn, he would have said) for the joy of withdrawing. But even as his head was sliding in he realised that it wasn't Maurizio bounding towards him. It wasn't a mouse at all. It was something much bigger and as it came towards him he saw it was one of those 'as-big-as-a-cat' bandicoot rats of which we have already spoken; it was advancing rapidly, its stomach close to the ground, its coarse black hair standing up on end, its teeth bared. And Angus's head came out. Came out, I tell you. And he was smiling. I know that at this point one is supposed to say he was afraid and his courage consisted in his coming out in spite of his fear but he wasn't at all afraid. And there he was standing on a big stone, fully exposed and smiling, smiling away like a Chinese sage with his eyes slits in his round face and with only a Ming beard needed to complete the picture. The rat, who had never seen a Chinese sage and so did not note the absence of the Ming beard, was nonetheless astounded. He had never seen a tortoise behave in this fashion before. He had never seen a tortoise not draw its head in when he charged and it was clear that this tortoise was not going to draw his head in. He had seen plenty of tortoises and plenty of turtles (for they were now much nearer the sea and Harmione's retreat) and he liked their meat as much as anybody and more than most, but he did not know what to do. In fact all he could do was to stare into the tortoise's face. He stared into it for a long time and then he turned and walked away. Maurizio who had by this time recovered from his shock sprang at the bandicoot but the latter took scarcely any notice of him, abstractedly shrugging the little paw from his shoulder and continuing pensively on his way.

And now finally the two friends realised that their work had not been without results. They even remembered the day Angus had rolled onto his back laughing and not drawn his head in and they kept on asking themselves how they could have missed it and they laughed incredulously. They kept shaking their heads and laughing and saying, "All the time it was there. It was done." And as is the way with these things they could hardly believe it so they had to repeat it over and over again to hear themselves and each other say it in words as though words would make it set and keep it there for them.

And finally with the joy and the relief of the whole thing they began to fall into a nostalgic mood, and the mouse said:

"Let's have one last game for old times' sake."

"By all means, Mouse." And in all solemnity they went through the preliminaries which by now had become many and complex. They abluted, they saluted the sun, they recited some special words, they made some withdrawing and advancing movements, they took their positions and bowed three times to each other and Angus shouted,

"Do or die," then he said, "Hey, Maurizio, perhaps it should be 'Do or try'", for this is how they made their innovations, on the spur of the moment. And Maurizio

said,

“Right you are. Do or try. That was cutting it fine. Do you realise, old friend, that’s the last innovation.”

“Yes, from here on all we can have is pageants.”

“I’ve always wanted to stage a pageant. What a shame we never had flags. Right. Now once again.”

“Do or try,” shouted Angus. His voice was firm. In Maurizio however was the tiniest quiver of doubt. But he had seen that Angus wasn’t afraid of the bandicoot so he couldn’t in reality be afraid of him, a small mouse, and if Angus wasn’t afraid of him he knew, he just knew, that his mouth wasn’t going to water.

“Do or try,” shouted Maurizio and ran forward as fast as he could and Angus wasn’t pulling his head back but just smiling and smiling and so was Maurizio, for all he could see through his tear-blurred eyes was not a meal but his old friend waiting for him and he pulled up just in front of him.

“A millimetre away from your nose you said. Remember?”

But Angus was too moved to reply. He simply embraced his small friend.

They were still discussing all this late into the night and analysing why in the world it had all gone on for so long without their noticing that the work was done.

“Well,” said Angus at last. “It’s all very beautiful and a great mystery and no matter how much and how often we discuss it we’ll never get to the bottom of it. And I for one don’t mind at all. But I say Maurizio, I wish that at some stage we could have incorporated a little flower into our ceremony. We took the whole thing much too seriously, that’s why it took so long. If only we could have had some little pink flowers.”

“We shall. We shall. In the pageant we’ll each come on carrying a little pink flower.”

“How lovely, Mousie. I’d like that very much. It’s thoughtful of you to say we can do that,” for Maurizio was quite strict about the purity of pageants.

“Yes, of course we can, since it played such an important part for you. You know, Angus, you say it took a long time but in a way I’m astonished that it took such a short time. Of course I’m not getting any younger. My whiskers are turning white.”

“They have already turned white, but it makes you look very distinguished like the fine mature Shakespearean actor that you are.” They both giggled at this. “Or game player and pageant stager if you prefer.”

“I do. I do prefer. I really am looking forward to the first pageant but, as I was saying, my whiskers are turning white just as a mature mouse’s whiskers should and the scales of your shell are turning white just as a mature tortoise’s should.”

“Hullo. I can’t remember any of the tortoises in Tortoise-land turning white. Am I really? How interesting.” Maurizio climbed on Angus’s back to confirm his observation. Angus was indeed turning white. “It’s even a little flaky,” he called down and chipped off a small piece of shell and threw it down for Angus to see.

“Yes, it’s quite crumbly. Is there any more like that?” he called up.

"Let's see. Yes, plenty more," and the mouse started chipping it off with his teeth. It fell in a small pile all around the tortoise like plaster off an old ceiling.

"I wonder what it means," said Maurizio.

"Never mind," said Angus.

"All the same, Angus, I wonder whether we shouldn't go somewhere where you can get attention."

"Fiddlesticks, Mousie. I've never felt so well in my life. Just when we've got everything together I'm not going to go and spend my time in waiting rooms. A bit of shell won't be missed, specially now, eh, mousie?" and he winked at his friend. Maurizio agreed but what he hadn't told Angus was that it looked as though the whole shell was affected. This was something that Angus soon realised in any case, for every day when he woke and stretched a little heap of shell flakes stirred around him and day by day he felt lighter and lighter. He felt, as he had said to the mouse, better than ever before in his life and whenever Maurizio greeted him in the morning with an anxious "How did you sleep, old friend? How d'you feel?" he would say "Fine. I feel absolutely buoyant." And indeed as the weight of his shell constantly diminished he seemed about to float. He had never realised quite what a burden his most precious possession had been. He breathed more freely and moved more quickly, more gracefully now though of course he could still not keep up with Maurizio.

The mouse still thought of it as a misfortune because the poor shell looked so ugly and if it had not been that Angus's face grew more and more radiant by the day Maurizio might even have thought it eye-sorish. But it was a fact that Angus's face now glowed so beautifully that Maurizio could hardly keep his mind on the shell problem, a failure for which he often reproached himself, for if he did not look after Angus, who would?

And then one day all that was left of the shell crumbled away and in its place was a thin tight film which bore completely new markings. A good tortoiseshell is beautiful in its own heavy serviceable way but this new skin with its translucent quality was something else again.

"It's very elegant," said Maurizio. "I can see your spine shining through it."

"But I didn't know I had a spine," said Angus reaching around to his back, which he could now do quite easily.

"Feel, Mousie." Maurizio put out his paw.

"Eek."

"What's the matter?"

"Oh nothing. But, Angus, you're supposed to be a cold-blooded creature."

"Well, no, just tepid."

"Oh all right." After much consideration they agreed that what Angus felt like could be described as neither warm nor cold, and Maurizio decided that what he had taken for a spine was a string of luminous nodes of approximately golden orange hue.

(To be continued)

MAGGI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Poems from Auroville. Published by Auropublications. Price Rs.10.00

THIS is going to be a subjective review. Of course all reviews are subjective, but this one is going to be avowedly so.

To me the value of someone's opinion of, say, poetry, lies precisely in the fact that it is that person's opinion. Pronouncements are fine, if they are pronounced as the ideas of Mr. So-and-so, well considered and (hopefully) sincere. It is only when they are delivered in the name of Truth and Eternity that they become wearisome. What follows is my personal opinion of this book.

What we want of a poem is that it should lift us out of ourselves. I know this sounds old-fashioned, but it's the only way I can think of at the moment to put the matter. We want the poet to show us something worth seeing, to chant or orchestrate a melody or flight of music that is worth hearing. We want this because we seek. Some poets have brought us objects of beauty, things of delight. We want more. Others have brought us curious wares of thought and substance. We want more. The greatest have captured in the forges of their hearts the essence of an ore so rare that we can only gaze and gaze and, gazing, wonder. There is something that has to be said and this is because the thing we seek has not been wholly or even partially delivered. We turn to the poet because of his power of sight—and because he can say what he has seen. And his saying is our seeing.

Poems from Auroville opens with a batch by a poet whose work has not been over-published. (I mention here that while the poets represented are listed along with their poems in the book's table of contents, no names appear in the text itself. It seems to me that this is because the anthology is not intended to feature individual talents, but to be the expression of a group-consciousness. For this reason I will not refer to the poets by name.) The first poet's freshness, as well as his poems' inherent value, makes them among the most interesting in the volume. They also epitomise some of the strong points and failings of today's poetry.

It was winter; and the morning
Of the new year's first sin.

This dramatic opening gains much of its power from its perhaps unconsciously metrical rhythm. One might almost scan three minor ionics (final short permitted) and a spondee.

The sixth of January, found
the three men dying of anger.

Some of the drama is still there, but the rhythm is practically gone. The rest of the poem, despite the one compelling line
sovereignty over many ruins,
is hardly better than prose.

Nowadays people scoff at the drawing of a distinction between poetry and prose.

I don't know. To Sri Aurobindo rhythm is "the subtle soul of poetry", the "most potent, founding element of poetic expression". He deplored the casting aside of the "ancient discovery of cadenced beat and concentrated rhythm", for what is styled *vers libre*, a "free" verse that "seems to be in practice nothing but a licence for writing prose in variously cut lengths". This is of course exactly what ninety-five per cent of contemporary poetry is. It's too bad Aurovilians can't find another path to the new world.

But is it not just by using metrical rhythm and rhyme that the new world can be discovered? Listen:

Silent trees shield the sun
Rigidly guarding its going.

Decent metre here supports a weak though in part well-worded image. But while reading the rest of this poet's offerings, we squirm uncomfortably as he seizes triumphant hold on rhymes that, after all, are terribly overworked. It is only occasionally that the right note is found:

And we feel in their cries
A last song of yearning,
A hymn to day's turning,
To the light that never dies.

We too can feel: profound vision is beautifully embodied in language that reaches towards perfection on its own level. But surely another word could be found for the first "to".

The poems on pages 19 to 25 are the most mature in the book. The rhythm is always fine, if slight. The same comment could be made about the substance. One is left with the feeling that one has read a good poem about which nothing is really memorable.

Lack of space will, unfortunately, prevent me from doing more than skimming the surface. In a poem like "The Morning Air", there is a lovely naive charm of happy wonder. In others, one finds a mistily recondite significance. Much of this type of poetry, however, does not rise above a certain level of imaginative vision clothing itself more or less ably in more or less rhythmical prose.

Still some poems stand out from the mass. Those presented on pages 39 to 52 form all told the most successful section of the anthology. The poet's former cymbal-clashing and megaphone slogan-shouting are absent, or almost absent; in their place we have a body of genuine thought and vision and aspiration. "Out of the Vedas" is an especially fine poem. The just audibly whispered surface cadence seems to bear within it a rhythm that transforms the poet's vision from pleasant fancy into something authentic that is subtly communicated.

I'm sorry that one poet is represented not by the beautiful lyric—one of the finest published in an Ashram journal in recent years—that contains the lines

Caught in the wind's caress the pine trees sing
And open in the heart a secret door—

lines which, in their proper rhythmic context, are all one could ask or hope for, but rather by a few flameswept, moonstrewn, starfilled extravagances. There is also one poem which is almost a programme piece. I am exceedingly grateful to the editors for having otherwise excluded such city-of-dawn melodramas and sermons, too many of which have been published.

My favourite poem from Auroville is "Memento Mori". The imagery is stark, sharp and incisive. The rhythm, combining the best of free verse and metre and reaching beyond both towards that freely self-measured soul-cadence which will be, I feel, the sound-basis of the poetry of the future, rings always true—except in the last two lines, which seem to be an afterthought tacked on rather carelessly just to round the thing off.

I'm going to stop here. I ask the forgiveness of the poets I have omitted and, more, the clemency of those against whom I have offended. I refer them to the beginning of this review. Subjectively speaking, this is a worth while volume of poems. An attentive reader will find much of present worth and more of future promise.

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EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of November 1977)

16

“SIR,” said Dr. Johnson, “a man who is tired of London is tired of life.” There are a lot of Dr. Johnson’s sayings that we do not agree with, but this one we whole-heartedly accept. For our impression is that you can be in London for two years and there still will be things you have not seen or places you have not visited. And if you have seen all that there is to see, as a tourist you would surely like to see some of them again.

We woke up early in the morning impatient to get through the morning routine and be on the move. Someone once wrote:

Two things make woman slow, we find,
When going any place.
For first she must make up her mind
And then her face.

It may be true. Yet in London, for once, it was not true. By eight-thirty we were waiting for the taxi to take us to the nearest Tube station. The Underground railway was a new experience. We have been through tunnels but to travel ten or fifteen miles inside a tunnel was a novelty. Everything in the Tube station is done automatically and electrically. We never see a station master, or his office, or the ticket examiner, or even a guard. The whole place is full of notices, and lighted instructions and illumined arrow signs, and charts and maps and key-boards. The key-boards are very interesting. From a long list of names of stations you pick out the starting-point and the destination. Then you insert the plug. And lo! in front of you a whole line is illumined to show exactly where you have to get down or change. In a Tube station any newcomer can without the help of anyone go anywhere and never get lost. In fact one can never get lost in London. It sounds fantastic. But it is true. Everywhere you go there are signs and notices and instructions. The Bobbies and the Londoners themselves are extremely helpful.

In the Tube station, once you have bought the ticket you go in only to be confronted by a huge underground machine with a knee-deep barrier, across which are bars that never move until you have inserted the ticket in the slot. There is a rumbling noise and the ticket is sucked in with such force that you are afraid (at least when doing it for the first time) of the fingers being sucked in also. From the other end comes out the ticket duly punched, only then the bar moves. The noise of the Escalator continues to grow. For the newcomer it is a bit disconcerting. This rumbling noise and the steel plates coming under the feet from nowhere could be rather frightening unless you have someone with you who has lived in London before. (Sanat had lived

for several years in London as a student.) The steel plates soon break into steps. So if the feet are not just in the middle of the steps when they start forming you have an uncanny feeling of being thrown down. Getting off the Escalator is equally unnerving. One has to run. Yet the Londoners just glide out of it with very little concern. But it must be said that once you have got over the initial fear the Escalator is great fun. The boys run down the Escalator whistling as if it was too slow for them. Later on we too felt like whistling.

*

We went to see Madame Tussaud's wax doll museum one morning. The museum is housed in an enormous mansion. Some of the halls are on the second floor, some on the third. On the first floor some sort of carnival was going on. There was music, and ice-cream booths and coca-cola stalls and all sorts of tinsel decorations made the place gay. Young people were all over the place. Rather lost in the crowd Sanat asked a policeman the way to the staircase. He was actually talking to a life-size wax doll. We laughed and laughed but the people around us were not surprised. They only gave us an indulgent smile and went their way. Londoners don't seem to get shocked at anything.

The exhibition is a wonderful show. We spent there two hours but that was really not enough. Madame Tussaud was a French aristocrat put into prison during the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution. As a pastime she used to make wax dolls at home; it was her hobby. In prison she had nothing to do, so she continued with her hobby. With a lot of time on her hands she perfected her art. Finally when she escaped to London she started an exhibition and it became world-famous. Some of the capitals of Europe have tried to copy her and have opened wax doll museums and call them Madame Tussaud's. Yet the original in London is incomparable.

All the dolls in the exhibition are life-size figures. As we entered we saw a huge wall; on it were written some lines about the Battle of Trafalgar in golden letters. Next we were inside a dark hall. Most of it was a ship's deck—the deck of a warship. We heard sounds of bombardment and of crashing shells, and screams and saw tremendous golden-red flames flashing out of the guns. The whole thing was so realistic that for a fraction of a second we became panicky. There in front of us was Nelson dying on the deck. The wax figure is so well done that as in the case of the policeman we would have thought it was really Nelson, with one arm on the shoulder of a sailor and the other dangling on his side. On paper it sounds so simple yet we were really surprised at the verisimilitude. After this we went through several halls full of gymnasts, heavy-weight champions, sprinters and tennis players. Most of the famous artists of today and actors and dancers and car-racers and voyagers to the moon were also there. No one could come out of these halls without meeting his or her favourites.

On the third floor is the King's Hall. There you meet all the kings and queens and the great statesmen and politicians of England and also some of the foreign digni-

taries. In front of the King's Hall sits Madame Tussaud herself, an exquisitely beautiful old woman smiling at you. They told us that Madame herself had done her own wax figure. She sits there so charmingly that you almost feel like saying, "Hullo, darling." In the King's Hall there is a special stage for the present Queen and her family. The figures are done marvellously well, for they look exactly as we see them in the pictures. The Queen looks gorgeous. The Princess is a little flimsy beside her imperious mother and stately father. Princess Margaret, *chic* in her violet dress, stands next to Princess Alexandra who looks charming in her cream-coloured velvet. Nearby, neatly cordoned stands Henry VIII with his harem. One felt like singing:

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
 How does your garden grow,
 With silver bells and cockle-shells
 And pretty maids all in a row?

The costumes too are done very beautifully and very true to the age. The figures look so alive that you could almost start a conversation with any one of them.

A few years ago we had seen in a magazine the picture of a wax model of Pandit Nehru. When we actually visited Madame Tussaud's, Nehru's figure was not there. No one could tell us why it was so. Mrs. Indira Gandhi was there. Everyone knows that she is one of the most attractive women of our day. Yet the figure there is not at all attractive. Perhaps if you complained to Bernard Tussaud the great great grandson of Madame Tussaud who had done the figure, he would say that he had never seen Mrs. Indira Gandhi at all, and that he had done the modelling with the help of a photograph only.

The method of doing the modelling work today is very different from what it was at the time of Madame Tussaud. While Madame Tussaud actually used to take death-masks of the French Revolutionary leaders, Bernard Tussaud thought it was too dangerous a process, as the subject had to breathe through straw quills when the clay impressions were made. So he has developed a new technique of his own. In 1970 Tussaud's celebrated the bi-centenary of the Madame. There was a great dinner party where everyone who was someone had been invited. There Lord Mountbatten is said to have commented, "They always keep you up-to-date by taking out a few hairs and adding a few wrinkles." As we were coming out of the King's Hall there appeared just at the place where we could look straight ahead a notice saying, "Escape the Chamber of Horrors"; and we did.

(To be continued) .

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI