

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

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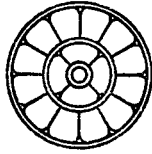
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All correspondence to be addressed to:

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

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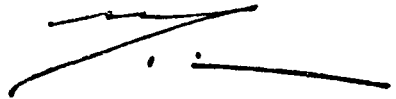


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIX

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THE MOTHER'S MASTER-MANTRA	.. 81
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	.. 82
INDIA, FRANCE AND THE WORLD: UNPUBLISHED INSIGHTS OF THE MOTHER	.. 83
THE MOTHER ON ILLNESS: SOME UNPUBLISHED STATEMENTS	.. 84
PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS OF THE MOTHER	.. 87
THE MOTHER AND THE INDIAN HERITAGE: VEDA AND GITA	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i> .. 95
HER CHANGING EYES (Poem)	<i>Amal Kiran</i> .. 100
NOT A DREAM: AN EXPERIENCE OF CHAMPAKLAL REPORTED BY HIMSELF (<i>Translated by Pujalal from the Gujarati</i>)	.. 101
A SONNET OF NIRODBARAN: WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENT	.. 102
SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE ASHRAM: A LETTER	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> .. 103
UDAR REMEMBERS	.. 105
FATHOMLESS QUESTION: AFTER UNDERGOING A LIFE-SAVING HEART-OPERATION (Poem)	<i>Minnie N. Canteenwalla</i> .. 106

CONTENTS

IF YOU SEEK TRUTH	<i>Srimayi</i>	.. 107
SRIMAYI AND THE STAGE: A LETTER BY THE MOTHER		.. 108
A SHEAF OF SYMBOLS (Poems)	<i>Chimanbhai</i>	.. 109
SILENCE (Poem)	<i>Shraddhavan</i>	.. 110
STILL FLOW HER GRACES (Poem)	<i>Kamalakanto</i>	.. 111
O NIGHT (Poem)	<i>Arvind Habbu</i>	.. 112
TOWARDS PEACE: AN ARTICLE BY SWAMI CHIDATMANANDA, INCORPORATING HIS TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO IN 1926		.. 113
SWEET MOTHER (Poem)	<i>Michele</i>	.. 117
THE IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN-MOTHER	<i>Beatrice Bruteau</i>	.. 118
THE CHARACTER OF LIFE: CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE	<i>Garry Jacobs</i>	.. 129
DIALOGUES	<i>Bina Bragg</i>	.. 138

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

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THE MOTHER'S MASTER-MANTRA

OM NAMO BHAGAVATÉ. These three words, for me they mean:

OM: I implore the Supreme Lord.

NAMO: Pranam to Him.

BHAGAVATÉ: Make me "divine".

This is the translation...it has for me the power to make everything calm.

THE MOTHER

(From Nirodbaran's forthcoming book about his contact with the Mother)

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THE whole life is a sadhana. It is a mistake to cut it into bits and say this is sadhana and that is not. Even your eating and sleeping should be a part of sadhana.

*
**

When you speak of sacrificing everything for the Divine, it means that you are very greatly attached to those things, you give a great value to them and still you are ready to leave them for the sake of the Divine.

Actually you should not be attached to anything or anybody except the Divine and apart from Him nothing should have any value for you. And in that case you cannot speak of your sacrificing for the Divine.

*
**

You must remember one thing: the dark periods are inevitable. When your psychic is active, you feel a delight without any apparent reason. It continues for some time and again the same mental or vital reactions come in and you go back to the darkness. This will continue. The brighter days will become longer and the dark periods will come after longer intervals and for shorter duration till they finally disappear. Till then you must know that the sun is there behind the clouds and you need not worry. You must have the confidence of a child—a confidence that there is someone who takes care of you and you can entirely depend upon him.

INDIA, FRANCE AND THE WORLD

UNPUBLISHED INSIGHTS OF THE MOTHER

Q. What is India?

India is not the earth, rivers and mountains of this land, neither is it a collective name for the inhabitants of this country. India is a living being, as much living as, say, Shiva. All the countries have their own spirit and if politically you make any changes, they would be unreal. For example, although Austria has become a part of Germany, still they are quite separate and the spirit of Austria is in agony. India is a goddess just as Shiva is a God. If she likes, she can manifest in human form.

*
**

It is France that can connect Europe with India. There are great spiritual possibilities for France. She will play a big part in spite of her present bad condition. It is through France that the spiritual message will reach Europe. That is why I chose France for my birth although I am not French.

*
**

From the aesthetic point of view I can say that the brown colour is better than the white, but it is quite absurd and foolish to think that anybody is better or worse simply because of his colour. The African negro thinks that his colour is the most beautiful of all. The Japanese think that people of their colour are superior to those of any other colour. Colour prejudice is a very low thing. It indicates a very low state of consciousness—a consciousness just emerging from the unconscious. It is not an idea, it is not a feeling, it is something still lower than that. When you think in terms of colour prejudice your own psychic being laughs at your foolishness; it knows that it has lived in white, brown, yellow, red, black and all sorts of bodies. When you get this sort of prejudice, bring it before your consciousness and it will disappear.

THE MOTHER ON ILLNESS

SOME UNPUBLISHED STATEMENTS

YOUR illness was not a mere accident. You did not give sufficient attention to the inner change, a psychological change with a broadening of your consciousness. You were satisfied with yourself. You were shut up in your small shell and did not try to make any progress. You said sadhana did not interest you and you thought that the little work you were doing was quite sufficient for you and nothing more was needed. It was this attitude that took you out of my protection. I gave you a warning, but you challenged Nature by saying that nothing could touch you. All these things combined and brought your mental difficulties, your weakness and illness. You must change. You must try to fulfil the conditions of Mahasaraswati, make your work more and more perfect, make progress and try for a psychological transformation. Less than this will not help you. This is the minimum and if you try sincerely my help will always be there. These days my work is going on at such speed that unless you make a serious effort you will be left far behind and not be able to remain with me. But, if you do as I say, everything will be all right.

You have this trouble. It is an indication that there is something in you that needs an immediate change. There is something that is refusing to come into the Light. If you can change the consciousness the trouble will disappear.

Tumours always indicate some difficulty in the nature, certain cells decide to be independent of the discipline of the body. They do not remain in harmony with the other parts and begin to grow out of all proportion. Generally this is the result of a very strong greed in the nature. It may be greed for material things or for power or any other subtle object.

By performing an operation you may remove the tumour, but if the inner nature remains unchanged, it will come up in some other part and all the trouble that the patient has to undergo for the operation and its after-effects will be in vain.

The cells of the body get the habit of increasing without cause. This is cancer. If you change the consciousness in the cells and get rid of their habit, cancer can be cured.

It is not very difficult to get rid of headache and giddiness. However bad your condition may be, call the Light from above. Try to feel that the Light is entering into you from the crown of your head bringing with it calm and peace. If you do it seriously, your headache and giddiness will disappear in no time.

All along I have been saying that diseases are due to the mind. It is your mind that makes you ill. You take something with the idea that it will make you sick and you will fall sick. You take something with the idea that it will cure you and it will cure you. Each and every disease comes like that. For example, T.B. comes when a person is in despair and depression, when he thinks that nobody loves him, nobody cares for him, etc. If you give him the proper environment and love, he will get cured. Even dental decay, arthritis, cancer, etc. come because of the mind.

Everything is contagious. Every good thing and every bad thing has its vibrations. If you catch those vibrations, you get that thing. The true Yogi knows these vibrations and can handle them; that is how he can give you peace, etc. Even so-called accidents are contagious. You catch others' sorrow and feel sorrowful in the same way.

If you are ill, your illness is looked after with so much anxiety and fear, you are given so much care that you forget to take help from the One who can help you and you fall into a vicious circle and take a morbid interest in your illness.

Diseases are caused by an unbalancing. By fasting or giving various treatments that go on changing from time to time, you create a sort of atmosphere in which the patient feels some safety. By giving preventive inoculations you give a strong confidence and mass suggestion that protects you from disease.

But our way is different. We do not admit a disease. You feel a little uneasy. Instead of running to the doctor you tell your body that it must not accept the illness and it must behave as normal. It must take its food as usual, it must work as usual and go on without making any fuss. You will find that the body is very obedient and it will not fall ill. Of course much depends upon the state of your consciousness and the force that you can command.

But if you accept a disease and go off your food and give up your normal routine, then the disease gets a hold upon you and you have to take the longer path of medication and convalescence. That is why I don't like that people should stop eating and working at the slightest disturbance in the body.

The other day the Governor's wife [Madame Bonvin] was telling me that when she had been in British India her daughter had caught typhoid. She was under the treatment of a German doctor, who gave her only appetising medicines and full food to her liking. With this unorthodox treatment the fever took a very short course and the girl was completely cured without any intervening period of convalescence.

If you go on thinking of the trouble, it will go on increasing. You concentrate upon it and it will swell up, it will think that it is being welcomed. But if you don't pay any attention, it will lose interest in you and go away.

If parents could leave their children alone, they would not fall ill so often, perhaps not even once out of ten times. Yes, you have not said anything to the child, but how

worried you were about its health. It appeared as if a catastrophe had happened or the child had suddenly developed cancer. It is your worry that spoils the whole atmosphere and increases the trouble.

When I was twenty, a doctor told me that in cases of troubles of the stomach or intestines, the best thing is to continue eating as usual and not to bother about the trouble. He said, "If you have acidity it will come from whatever food you take and the more you bother about it, the more it will increase. You go on changing your food and in the end you will find that you cannot drink even a drop of water without getting into trouble. But if you remain normal and don't worry, you will become all right."

And I have found this advice to be quite true.

If you want to get cured there are two conditions. First you must be without fear, absolutely fearless, you understand, and secondly you must have a complete faith in the Divine Protection. These two things are essential.

It is a question of relativity of values. You have to decide whether you give more value to yoga or to the social value of relations, etc. If you give more value to yoga, then surrender your sick relative to the Supreme and let the Supreme take care of him. Once you give me the charge of your relative, I put a consciousness upon him and it acts. It brings out the truth of his psychic. If the psychic needs to live longer for its experiences, the person survives. If the psychic need is not there and life is lingering on, the person can die in a few hours. Whatever I do will be in accordance with the need of the psychic. By surrendering to the Supreme you can call a higher destiny to prevail, whereas by being physically near you cannot help in any way.

PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS OF THE MOTHER

(These seventeen selections were made and arranged by a sadhak in the early 1930's, artistically bound in a small book and shown to the Mother. She was greatly interested and took the book to show it to Sri Aurobindo and then to keep it for herself. They serve to conjure up in a warm and intimate way the vision of the spiritual work, that was natural to the practitioners of the Integral Yoga in the early years of the Ashram.)

I

THOU shalt lead them all to their supreme Destiny....

2

O to be Love Divine, Love that is puissant, infinite, unfathomable, in all activities, in all the worlds of being! It is for this that I cry to Thee, O Lord. Let me be consumed with this Love Divine, Love puissant, infinite, unfathomable, in all activities, in all the worlds of being! Transmute me into this burning brazier that all the atmosphere of earth may be purified in my flame.

3

War is an appearance, turmoil is an illusion. Peace is there, immutable Peace.

Mother, sweet Mother who I am, O Thou who at once destroyest and buildest, the whole universe lives in Thy breast with its life innumerable and Thou livest in Thy immensity in the least of its atoms!

And the aspiration of Thy infinitude turns towards that which has never been manifested, crying out to It for a manifestation ever more complete, ever more perfect.

4

Mother Divine, with what fervour, with what ardent love I came to Thee in the depths of Thy profoundest consciousness, in Thy high status of sublime and perfect felicity, and I nestled so close into Thy arms and loved Thee with so deep a love that I became Thyself altogether. Then in the silence of our mute ecstasy a yet profounder voice arose, and the Voice said: "Turn towards those who have need of thy love..."

All the grades of consciousness appeared and the successive worlds. Some were splendid and luminous, well-ordered and clear: there Knowledge was resplendent, Expression was harmonious and vast, Will was potent and invincible. Then the worlds darkened in a multiplicity more and more chaotic, the Energy became violent, the material world sorrowful and obscure. And when in our infinite love we perceived in

its entirety the hideous suffering of the world of misery and ignorance, when we saw our children locked in a sombre struggle thrown upon each other by energies that were turned from their true aim, we willed ardently that the light of the Divine Love should be made manifest, a transfiguring force amidst these distracted elements. And that the will might be yet more powerful and effective, we turned towards Thee, O Unthinkable Supreme, and implored Thy aid. A reply from the unfathomed depths of the Unknown came sublime and formidable and we knew that the earth was saved....

5

A new light shall break upon the earth, a new world shall be born; the things that were promised shall be fulfilled....

6

My pen is mute to chant Thy presence, O Lord; yet art Thou like a king who has taken entire possession of his kingdoms. Thou art there, organising all, putting all in place, developing and increasing every province. Thou awakenest all those that were asleep; Thou restorest to action those that were sinking towards inertia; Thou art building a harmony out of the whole. A day will come when, the harmony achieved, all the country will be by its very life the bearer of Thy World and Thy manifestation.

But meanwhile my pen is mute to chant Thy praises.

7

O Sublime Love, Thou to whom I had never given any other name but who art so entirely the very substance of my being! O Thou to whom I feel vibrant and alive in the smallest of my atoms even as in the infinite universe and beyond it! O Thou who breathest in every breath, moveth in the centre of all activities, radiatest through all that is of good will and art hidden behind all sufferings! O Thou for whom I cherish a cult without limit that grows ever more intense!—permit that I may feel myself with more and more deep reason Thyself absolutely, wholly.

And Thou, O Lord, O Sovereign Master, extreme limit of our thought who standest for us at the threshold of the Unknown, make to arise from that Unthinkable some new splendour, some possibility of a loftier and more integral realisation that Thy work may be accomplished and the universe make one step forward towards the sublime Identity, the supreme Manifestation.

8

In the calm silence of Thy contemplation, O Divine Master, Nature is fortified and tempered anew. All principle of individuality is overpassed and she is plunged

in Thy infinity—Thy infinity that allows oneness to be realised in all the domains without confusion, without disorder. The combined harmony of that which persists and that which progresses and that which eternally is, is created little by little, in an always more complex and more extended and more lofty equilibrium. And this interchange of the three modes of life makes possible the plenitude of the manifestation.

Many are seeking Thee at this hour in anguish and incertitude. May I be their mediator with Thee that Thy Light may illumine them and Thy Peace appease. My being is now only a centre for Thy Consciousness and a support for Thy Action Where are the limits, whither have fled the obstacles? Thou art the Sovereign Lord of Thy Kingdom.

9

Oh let Light be poured over all the earth and peace inhabit every heart

Almost all know the material life only, heavy, inert, conservative, obscure and their vital forces are so tied to this physical form of existence that even when they are left to themselves and outside the body, they are solely occupied with these material contingencies that are yet so harrassing and painful . . . Those in whom the mental life is awakened are restless, tormented, agitated, arbitrary, despotic. Caught altogether in the whirl of the renewals and the transformations of which they dream, they are ready to destroy everything without knowledge of any foundation on which to construct and with their light made only of blinding flashes increase yet more the confusion rather than help it to cease.

In all there is lacking the invariable peace of Thy sovereign contemplation, the calm vision of Thy immutable Eternity.

And with the infinite gratitude of the individual being to whom Thou hast accorded this surpassing grace, I implore Thee, O Lord, that under colour of the present turmoil, in the very heart of this extreme confusion the miracle may be accomplished and Thy Law of supreme Serenity and pure and invariable Light become visible to the perception of all and govern the earth in a humanity at last awakened to Thy divine Consciousness.

O Sweet Master, Thou hast heard my prayer, Thou wilt respond to my call!

10

Mother Divine, Thou art with us, each day Thou givest me assurance and, closely united in an identification that grows more and more integral, more and more constant, we turn to the Lord of the universe and to That which is beyond in a great aspiration towards the New Light. All the earth is in our arms like a sick child who must be cured and for whom one has a peculiar affection because of his weakness. And cradled on the immensity of the eternal becomings, we—ourselves those becomings—contemplate, flushed and glad, the eternity of the immobile Silence

...where all is realised in the perfect Consciousness and immobile Existence, miraculous gate of all the Unknown that is beyond.

Then is the veil torn, then is the inexpressible Glory uncovered. Impregnated with the ineffable Splendour we turn back towards the world to bring it the glad tidings.

Lord, Thou hast given me the happiness infinite. What being, what circumstance can have the power to take it away from me?

II

My aspiration to Thee, O Lord, has taken the shape of a beautiful rose, harmonious, in full bloom, and rich in fragrance. I stretch it out to Thee with both arms in a gesture of offering and ask of Thee:

“If my understanding is limited, enlarge it; if my knowledge is obscure, enlighten it; if my heart is empty of ardour set it aflame; if my love is insignificant, make it intense; if my feelings are ignorant and egoistic, give them full consciousness in the Truth . . .” And the ‘I’ which demands this of Thee, O Lord, is not a little personality lost amid thousands of others; it is the whole earth that aspires to Thee in a movement full of fervour.

And in the perfect silence of my contemplation all widens to infinity and in the perfect peace of that silence Thou appearest in the resplendent glory of Thy Light.

12

For the plenitude of Thy Light we invoke Thee, O Lord! Awaken in us the power of expression.

All is mute in the being as in a desert crypt; but in the heart of the shadow, in the bosom of the silence burns the lamp that can never be extinguished, the fire of ardent aspiration to know Thee and integrally to live Thee.

The nights follow the days, dawns unweariedly succeed to dawns, but always there mounts the scented flame that no storm-wind can force to vacillate. Higher it climbs and higher and one day it attains the vault that is closed, the last obstacle opposed to union. And so pure, so erect, so proud is the flame that suddenly the obstacle dissolves.

Then Thou appearest in all Thy splendour, in the dazzling force of Thy infinite glory, and at Thy contact the flame changes into a column of light that chases the shadows for ever.

And the Word leaps forth with its supreme revelation.

13

O Lord of Truth, thrice I implored Thy manifestation invoking Thee with a

deep fervour. Then as always the whole being made its entire submission. At that moment the consciousness perceived the mental, vital and physical being covered all over with dust and prostrated before Thee its forehead touching the earth, dust in the dust, and it cried to Thee: "O Lord, this being that is made of dust prostrates itself before Thee and prays of Thee to be consumed with the fire of the Truth that it may henceforth manifest only Thee." And Thou saidst to it: "Arise, thou art pure of all that is dust." And suddenly in a stroke, all the dust sank away like a cloak that falls on the earth, and the being appeared erect, as substantial as before but resplendent with a dazzling light. ..

14

Solitude, harsh and intense solitude, and always this strong impression of having been flung down headlong into a hell of darkness!

Never at any moment of life, in any circumstance have I felt myself living in surroundings so entirely contrary to all that I am conscious of as true, so opposed to all that is the essence of my life. Sometimes when the impression and the contrast grow very intense, I cannot prevent my total submission from taking on a hue of melancholy and the calm and mute converse with the Master within is transformed for a moment into an invocation that almost supplicates: "O Lord, what have I done that Thou hast thrown me thus into the sombre Night?" But immediately the aspiration rises more ardent: "Spare this being all weakening; suffer it to be the docile and clear-eyed instrument of Thy Work, whatever that work may be...."

I am exiled from every spiritual happiness, and of all ordeals, O Lord, that Thou canst impose this is surely the most painful. And most of all, the withdrawal of Thy Will which seems to be a sign of total disapprobation. Strong is the growing sense of rejection and it needs all the ardour of an untiring faith to keep the external consciousness thus abandoned to itself from being invaded by an irremediable sorrow.

But it refuses to despair, it refuses to believe in an irreparable misfortune; it waits with humility in an obscure and hidden effort and struggle for the breath of Thy perfect Joy to penetrate it again. And perhaps each of its modest and secret victories is a true help brought to the Earth.

If it were possible to go definitely out of this external consciousness, to take refuge in the divine consciousness!...But that Thou hast forbidden and still and always forbiddest it. No flight out of this world! the burden of its darkness and ugliness must be borne to the end even if all divine succour seems to be withdrawn. I must remain in the bosom of the Night and walk on without compass, without beacon light, without internal guide...

I will not even implore Thy mercy; for what Thou willest for me I too will. All my energy is solely tended to advance, always to advance, step after step, despite the depth of the darkness, despite the obstacles of the way, and whatever comes, O Lord, it is with a fervent and unvarying love that Thy decision will be welcomed. And even if Thou findest the instrument unfit to serve Thee, the instrument belongs to itself no

more, it is Thine; Thou canst destroy or magnify it, it exists not in itself, it wills nothing, it can do nothing without Thee.

For the most part the condition is one of calm and profound indifference; the being feels neither desire nor repulsion nor enthusiasm nor depression nor joy nor sorrow. It regards life as a spectacle in which it takes only a very small part; it perceives its actions and reactions, conflicts and forces as things that at once belong to its own existence which overflows the small individuality on every side and yet to that individuality are altogether foreign and remote.

But from time to time a great Breath passes, a great Breath of sorrow, of anguished isolation, of spiritual destitution—one might almost say, the despairing appeal of Earth abandoned by the Divine. It is a sorrow as silent as it is cruel, submissive without revolt, sorrow without any desire to avoid or pass out of it and full of an infinite sweetness in which suffering and felicity are closely wedded, something infinitely vast, deep and grand, too grand, too deep perhaps to be understood by men—something that holds in it the seed of To-morrow.

15

Always the word Thou makest me hear in the silence is encouraging and sweet, O Lord. But I see not how this instrument is worthy of the Grace Thou accorded to it or how it can be capable of realising what Thou intendest from it. All that is in it appears so small, so weak and ordinary, so lacking in intensity and force and amplitude in comparison with what it should be to assume this overwhelming role. But I know that what the mentality thinks is of little importance. The mind itself knows it, and passive it awaits the development of Thy desire.

Thou biddest me strive without ceasing and I could wish to have the tameless ardour that triumphs over every difficulty. But Thou hast put in my heart so smiling a peace that I fear that I know not even how to strive. Faculties and activities develop in me as flowers bloom, spontaneously and without effort, in the joy to manifest Thee, whatever the manner of the manifestation. And if struggle there is, it is so mild and easy that it can be hardly given the name. But how small is this heart to hold so great a love! and how weak is this vital and physical being to bear the force to distribute it! Thou hast placed me on the threshold of the Marvellous Way, but will my feet have the strength to advance upon it?

But Thou repliest to me that my movement is to soar and it would be an error to walk. O Lord, how infinite is Thy mercy! Once more Thou hast taken me in Thy almighty arms and cradled me on Thy unfathomable heart, and that heart said to me: "Torment not thyself at all, but be confident like a child. Art thou not Myself crystallised for My work?"

O my beloved Lord, my heart is bowed before Thee. My arms are stretched towards Thee imploring Thee to set all this being on fire with Thy sublime Love that it may radiate from it on the world. My heart is wide open in my breast, my heart is

open and turned towards Thee; it is open and empty that Thou mayst fill it with Thy Divine Love, it is empty since it can contain also all the infinite variety of the manifested world ...

O Lord, my arms are outstretched in supplication towards Thee and my heart is wide open before Thee that Thou mayst make it Thy reservoir of Thy infinite Love.

“Love me in everything, everywhere and in every being.” This was Thy reply. And prostrating myself before Thee I ask of Thee to give me that power.

O my sweet Lord, teach me to be Thy instrument of Love!

16

Each time that a heart leaps at the touch of Thy divine Breath, a little more beauty seems to be born upon the earth, the air is embalmed with a sweet perfume, all becomes more friendly.

How great is Thy power, O Lord of all existences, that an atom of Thy Joy is sufficient to efface so many darkneses and sorrows and a single ray of Thy Glory can light up thus the dullest pebble, illumine the darkest consciousness!

Thou hast heaped Thy favours on me; Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets; Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and un hoped for joys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou accordedst to me when a heart leaps up at the touch of Thy divine Breath.

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

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

O Lord, never have I implored Thee in vain, for that which speaks to Thee is Thyself in me.

Drop by drop Thou lettest fall in a fertilising rain the living and redeeming flame of Thy almighty Love. When these drops of eternal Light fall softly on our world of obscure ignorance, one would say a rain fell upon earth of golden stars from sombre heavens.

And all kneel in mute devotion before this ever renewed miracle.

17

Suddenly before Thee all my pride fell. I understood how futile it was in Thy presence to wish to surmount oneself, and I wept—wept abundantly and without

constraint the sweetest tears of my life.

And now, although I weep no longer, I feel so near, so near to Thee that my whole being quivers with joy.

Let me stammer out my homage:

I have cried too with the joy of a child turned towards its Mother—"O Supreme and only Confidant, Thou who knowest beforehand all we shall say to Thee, because Thou art its source!

"O supreme and only Friend, Thou who acceptest, Thou who lovest, Thou who understandest us just as we are, because it is Thyself who hast made us!

"O supreme and only Guide, who never gainsayest our highest will, because it is Thou Thyself who willest in it!

"It would be folly to seek elsewhere than in Thee for one who will listen, understand, love and guide, since always Thou art there ready to our call and never wilt Thou fail us.

"Thou hast made me know the supreme, sublime joys of a perfect confidence, an absolute security, a surrender total and without reserve or colouring, free from effort and constraint.

"Joyous like a child without care I have smiled and wept at once before Thee, O my well-beloved!"

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"Lo! here are flowers and benedictions! here is the smile of Divine Love! It is without preferences and without repulsions. It streams out towards all in a generous flood and never takes back its marvellous gifts."

And Her arms stretched out in a gesture of ecstasy, the Eternal Mother pours on the world the incessant dew of her purest Love.

THE MOTHER AND THE INDIAN HERITAGE: VEDA AND GITA

THE Mother has illumined the ancient heritage of India, in all its multitudinous aspects, by shedding the light of her knowledge and experience, in so far as they have been revealed to us in her recorded talks and writings. In this brief review I shall attempt to give in outline what she has said about two of our most magnificent scriptures that are perennial monuments to India's spiritual greatness.

Meaning of Scripture

The Mother's view of scriptures, taken as a whole, might be worth noting in this connection. It would put the whole thing in the right perspective.

"All these old scriptures and these old traditions have a *contenu gradué*," she observes. Their contents are as if on a graduated scale. That is to say, they relate to different levels of understanding; and "people have drawn from there and utilised one symbol or another," depending on the times, the persons and their needs. But there comes a moment when one begins to realise that these interpretations are simply "a kind of bridge, a link, between the lower manner of seeing and the higher way of knowing."¹ There comes a moment when it looks so ridiculous that people should come and tell you, "Oh, no, that is like this, and this is like that."

Thus, at one stroke the Mother demolishes the tyranny of the Book. She seems to pinpoint the word of the Gita which describes the man of Knowledge as one who has gone beyond all that there is to be learnt from the books, *śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*. The reason is clear. A scripture may contain a revelation—many of them do—"and the revelation may have a universal application; but in its form, it is always personal, always personal."² And the "formulation, *whatever it be*, the scriptures, whichever they be, are always a diminution of the experience, inferior to the experience. Perhaps there are people who need to know this."³

The Vedic Record

What Mother has to say about the Vedic record is naturally based on her own experience. One would immediately recall the letter which Sri Aurobindo wrote to her in December 1915, while she was temporarily away in Paris, about an experience she describes in her *Prières et Méditations* (November 26, 1915), of directly identifying her physical body with the entire earth—"the global body moving in the arms of the universal Personality..." This experience, says Sri Aurobindo, "is Vedic in the real sense. It is the union of the 'Earth' of the Veda and Purana

with the divine Principle." She must have had innumerable experiences of a "Vedic" character.

The Vedic record is a Promise to earth and men of a Golden Age to come. It is a sort of "demonstration, an example", of what will be—not in all its details but in its essence. It was too early at the time to make the realisation general, for "the world was quite unfit as yet." There had been many such visions of the future; the Vedic record, the Mother thinks, was the "most recent".⁴ Could it be that there was already in operation, perhaps in latent memory, the reflection of an earthly Paradise that once existed in actual fact? This seems to be likely, when we compare the description of such a Paradise given by the Mother from her own recollections.⁵

The essential note of the Vedic Promise is the victory of the Truth over the "crookednesses" that govern all our being and action; the victory will lead to a walking on the straight path. There is a "confusion, a disorder which takes any and every form, which turns into strife, useless effort, wastage—depending on the domain where you are. But materially, in the sphere of action, it is the useless complications, the waste of energy and wastage of material, the loss of time, the nonunderstanding, the misunderstandings, confusion, disorder.... Direct, direct, instead of turning round and round in an absurd and completely useless manner."⁶ Nothing could bring out the Vedic ideal in simpler language, more directly, more vividly before the mind's eye.

It is needless to add that the Vedic conception of the Truth finds a constant echo in the words of the Mother; it would be tedious to repeat them all here. But something may be said about the gods, and the adverse forces that oppose their action in man—ideas that predominate in the Veda. Agni, of all the gods, is nearest to man and most helpful. The flame of Agni is "the flame of purification and progress", which, if one could keep it alive in oneself all the time, would hasten the transformation immensely. "But it must be understood, unless one has reached a very high degree of realisation, it is practically impossible to keep this state of consciousness for a long time; almost immediately, one falls back into the egoistic consciousness of the separate 'I,—and then, all the difficulties come back..."⁷ It is this that has been the great obstacle to a generalisation of the Vedic endeavour.

As to the other Vedic gods, Indra and Surya and Varuna and the rest, the Mother makes a simple observation which assigns them their place in the Realisation to come. "It is good and necessary," she says, "to possess all the divine qualities which these gods represent and symbolise.... But, for one who aspires to the supreme Realisation, that cannot suffice.... All the gods have to disappear and make room for a sincere and disinterested seeking for the Truth and a total consecration to the object of this seeking."⁸ Man must learn "not to be dominated nor frightened by the gods of the different religions, because, as a human being, he carries in himself the possibility of uniting himself with the Supreme Lord and becoming conscious of Him".⁹ And the adverse forces, against which the Rishis pray so ardently, are

really meant to help us towards the Goal. "When these forces of destruction attack us, it is a proof that we are ready to be liberated from the ego and emerge consciously into the Divine Presence which is at the core of our being..."¹⁰

The Gita Teaching

It is to make us wholly aware of the Divine Presence within us and to make His Will govern all our life, thought and action that is the keynote of the Gita teaching. The Mother came to realise this fact, all by herself, when, in her early twenties, she was introduced to the Gita for the first time by an Indian in Paris through a "bad enough" translation in French. "'Read the Gita', he said, 'this translation of the Gita, and take Krishna as the symbol of the immanent God, the God who is within you.' And within a month, all the work was done."¹¹

The Mother says something in this connection that is truly startling. When she found the God within, she "learnt, at the same time, that the God described by most of the Western religions is no other than the Great Adversary!"¹² The Gita conception of God, that "All is the Divine", so vividly brought out in the Vision of the World-Spirit vouchsafed to Arjuna in chapter 11 of the Gita, has thus been made "extremely difficult for the Western mind to comprehend in a living and concrete manner.... One is shocked by the idea that God could be things which one does not like or approve ..."¹³

The Mother constantly harps on the theme underlying the supreme word of the Gita in its closing lines: "Abandon all man-made laws and take refuge in the Lord alone; He will free you from all sin." She does not refer expressly to these lines, but she always offers illumining commentaries. It is the Lord within the heart, the Divine Presence, that solves all our problems, the more we enter into conscious union and communion with Him. "The only security in life, the only way to escape the consequences of errors committed in the past, is the inner development that permits the constant union with the Divine Presence, the only effective guide, the Truth of our being and of every being.... Only the conscious Divine Presence is capable of mastering and conquering all violence."¹⁴ Only Krishna can enable man to bear the impetuosity of Kali.

How to find this Presence within: that is the crux of the problem, around which the Gita has erected its huge edifice. One way is to abandon all life in the world, all kinds of action and seek an extinction of being in the Absolute Reality, *brahma-nirvāṇa*. The Gita considers this as a possible solution; but it is a solution that solves nothing. The Mother emphasises this point in her own inimitable way. One is, to begin with, naturally asked to be free from all attachment. But, "you see, to be free from all attachment does not mean avoiding the occasions of attachment. All these people who hold to the truth of their asceticism not only run away but warn others that they should not try.... When we need to avoid a thing in order not to experience it, that means we are not above but are on the same level still. . . For fear that we might make mistakes in

our actions, we do nothing any more; for fear that we might make mistakes in what we say, we say nothing any more; for fear of eating for the pleasure of eating, we do not eat any more. This is not liberty; this is simply reducing the manifestation to its minimum." And, she concludes, "If the Lord wanted only the Nirvana, there would be nothing except Nirvana."¹⁵

The true liberty is "to be in constant union with the Divine and to do only what the Divine makes us do."¹⁶ That is the ultimate solution to the problem of action which the Gita offers. The Mother accepts it.

One essential condition is that the desires should go. For desires do not satisfy and cannot bring the fulness of joy and peace, which is indispensable for obeying the Divine Will. But "it is impossible to satisfy desire perfectly—that is an impossible thing—and also to renounce desire. You renounce one desire and you have another. Both are therefore relatively impossible. What is possible is to get into a state where there is no desire."¹⁷ The Gita lays out the first steps of the Karma-yoga as a powerful means to this end. To cut the knot of ego where it is strongest: that is the Gita method. And here is the way the Mother explains the thing—in a manner that even a child can understand; indeed the words were spoken in answer to the question put by a child.

"You do an action because of a desire... a desire, or what you call a need, a necessity, or anything whatever. But if you go straight to the bottom of the thing, you see that it is the push of a desire that makes you act... in fact you do it in order to obtain certain results; it is for this that you act—keeping a result in view.... But if you undo the knot [of ego] and allow a Force coming from on high or from somewhere else to act through you and you go on doing things, there are consequences, but they do not come to you any more, since it is not you who have originated the action, it is the Force from above.... And you feel absolutely free."

And immediately, there is a word of warning. It is not to be expected that one can become free, just like that. And one need not pretend that one is free when one is not. "These things come at first, in a flash, for a moment, and then they retire. It is only when one is wholly ready for the transformation that they come and settle. Well, there are people who have had it once, perhaps for a few seconds in their life.... And then the movement has drawn back, the state of consciousness has drawn back. But the memory remains. And they imitate it." That is a most dangerous thing. "You must not cover up your desires with fine theories, like the one which prompts you to declare that all you do is done by the Divine Force, and accords with the Divine Will."¹⁸

The Gita speaks of "sacrifice" to the Lord as the one important rule of life and the secret of true action. "You have to give yourself entirely to Him, make a total surrender...."¹⁹ What exactly does it mean in practice? "It means that what you do must not be done with a personal, egoistic end in view, for success, for glory or for gain, for a material benefit or for your *amour propre*, but as a service and an offering, in order to become more conscious of the Divine Will and in order to give yourself more entirely to It, until you have made enough progress to know and *feel* that it is the

Divine who acts in you, it is His Force that gives you the force and it is His Will that sustains you.”²⁰ This does not come at once. It needs, in order to get to that state, “a *stubborn will* and a *great patience*. But once you have made the resolve to do it, the divine Help is there to support and help you. This help is felt inwardly within the heart.”²¹

But we are all the time under a compulsion to act. Then how does one choose one’s work until the Divine Impulsion is clearly and unmistakably felt? The Gita emphasises the need to follow one’s Swabhava and Swadharma, one’s own law of being. The Mother makes the thing clear as crystal. “It is for you to know what is the work that interests you most, one that opens out before you the road towards perfection. It may be very modest in appearance; it is not the apparent importance of the work that gives it its true value for the Yoga.”²² For the Yoga, naturally, the work must be done without personal motives; for the object is to get out of the ego. “But it becomes much better if the work becomes an amusement and not a tedious task.”²³ The key to this lies in the “thirst for perfection”. “Whatever work you do, do it as perfectly as you can. That is the best service to the Divine in man ... In works, aspiration towards Perfection is true spirituality.”²⁴ Yoga is skill in works, says the Gita, *Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*.

The Gita insists on rising above the three *guṇas*, the movements that control and vitiate our lower nature, and are the cause of all our stumblings. Its method consists in eliminating the movements of *tāmasic* ignorance and inertia and *rājasic* violence and the other amiable weaknesses in which we normally delight, and establish first the reign of reason, the *sāttvic* quality, in all our being and nature. It is no use repeating what the Mother has been endlessly saying, about the imperative need of following the voice of reason, the true discriminating faculty given to man, before one can become fit to listen and follow the Voice of God. But here is a simple way out to which the Mother points. “All the circumstances of life are combined to teach us that it is, beyond the mind, a faith in the Divine Grace that gives us the power to go through all ordeals, overcome all the weaknesses and find the contact with the Divine Consciousness which gives us not only joy and peace but also a poise in the physical and good health.”²⁵ This is to stress the immense importance of the Gita dictum, “One is no other than what one believes himself to be”, *yo yaccraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*. To be devoted to the Lord, in mind and heart, *maccittaḥ bhava madbhaktaḥ*; this seems to be, in the Mother’s view, the essence of the Gita teaching. “Remember the Divine always, and all you do will express the Divine Presence.”²⁶

The Gita has played an immensely important role in the spiritual progress of India. “Since the time of its appearance, the Bhagavadgita,” says the Mother, “has had an immense spiritual action. But (with the new interpretation which Sri Aurobindo has given it, its influence has increased considerably, and has become decisive.”²⁷ Prophetic words these, and the lover of India may rejoice.

SANAT K. BANERJI

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HER CHANGING EYES

BRIMS there a fathomless blue?
 Then love's deep surge has made her ocean-souled!
 Shed they a fiery hue?
 Then truth has lit her mind to pure sun-gold!

Are they like purple wine?
 O she is drunk with the Ineffable!
 Outbeams a dark dew-shine?
 With pity of your gloom her lustres fill!

But when that varied glance
 Is fading to a quiet none can see
 Behind snow-lids of trance,
 She's waking in you all eternity!

AMAL KIRAN

NOT A DREAM

AN EXPERIENCE OF CHAMPAKLAL REPORTED BY HIMSELF

It was the night of 23-11-76, the day just before the last 24th November, the Golden Jubilee Day of the great Descent of the Overmind Godhead into the Yoga-perfected body of Sri Aurobindo.

At 1-30 a.m. I came back from our terrace and as usual was lying near Sri Aurobindo's bed. After a time, I saw someone with a huge body sitting on the floor beside the bed. The figure was very strange and not at all clear. It only appeared that somebody was sitting there and nothing more.

His mouth was emitting clouds of smoke, as profusely as the chimneys of big mills do and the strange thing about the smoke was that instead of going upward it was diffusing itself all around and creating uneasiness and disgust. I even began to feel that it was not Sri Aurobindo's room, but some other place altogether.

Normally, whenever I see smoke rising from incense or even from the chimney of our Dispensary, I find it a beautiful thing to look at; but this smoke emitted by that vague figure was felt as evil, positively evil. For, although I have called it smoke, it was not exactly that, but something quite different for which I have no name. The only thing I can say about it is that it merely appeared somewhat like smoke, and as it entered into the atmosphere it caused restlessness and unease.

Then suddenly I saw that a still bigger person was there, sitting just near that huge and hideous figure. I felt his presence but could not recognise him. Certainly he was neither distasteful nor ominously weird. I saw that this new great person was emitting huge quantities of bright golden flames from his mouth which spread all around. As a result, all the smoke which I have spoken of and the atmosphere created by that evil-looking vague figure were completely annihilated. The process of this annihilation is indescribable, but it looked like an experiment which a scientist conducts in his laboratory with various substances, or like a mixture that a doctor's compounder systematically prepares with several medicines. All that went on was something beyond imagination but all the same it was very interesting.

When the whole process was over, the atmosphere became full not only of peace and joy but of something more which is beyond the power of words to describe.

What was really wonderful was the fact that although the whole atmosphere was filled with flames, everything in it was cooling and soothing in the extreme. It was a glorious sight to see. The person who was pouring out flames from his mouth appeared now to be himself made of those golden flames and that golden light. It was astonishing to find that though appearing formless this person was felt as somebody who was there.

What happened to the hideous vague figure that emitted smoke I could not make out.

During this vision I thought I was awake, but when the scene ended I felt that I was only half-awake. I have called it 'not a dream', because it started with my eyes quite open.

CHAMPAK

(Translated by Pujalal from the Gujarati)

A SONNET OF NIRODBARAN

WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENT

that covers a spirit sky
Life is a veil, a cover of the sky—
is held
An infinite range of stars it keeps concealed;
And all that *these*
“We see what reaches” is too prosaic an expression
We see what reaches from that firmly sealed
Heavens *dim flickers* *things high*
Region are but faint glimpses of the High. “the High” sounds queer

Too common? Can stand
An inexhaustible source is there of Peace,
A Light unborn, undreamt of by this world:
Like songs in a silent bosom secret-pearled
the
It sleeps, bathed in a spray of seven seas.

and through
The hour has come pierced by burning sands
the
Of desert-fire, a murmuring voice is heard
What *crystal*
Of a Gold-stream. (Whose are the) mighty hands
Release
Open the music-flood of the Sun-bird?

The veil withdraws, and yet few only see
The figure of winged Light, wrapped Mystery!

I-5-1937

Sri Aurobindo: “Very fine indeed!”

SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE ASHRAM

A LETTER

THERE are several misunderstandings about the Ashram, which I would like to clear up. First of all, the ideal here and the life we lead. The impression you have received from what you call X's interpretation of Sri Aurobindo is quite wrong. You have come to believe that a society based on Yoga "is built on self-love." The truth is that it is precisely self-love in all its subtle no less than gross ramifications that the life of Yoga is meant to free us from. We distinguish two sides of our self: the so-called normal personality which is distinct from every other person, and the inner being which is an individual expression of the one divine Self in all and so is in spontaneous sympathy with all beings and all things. The first side we call "ego". We do not mean merely that part of us which is openly egoistic or selfish. We also mean whatever in us does things from the limited personal consciousness that we ordinarily are: even acts, which look as if they were unselfish and social-minded and altruistic, really stem from the same restricted human unit. If a philanthropist finds that the people he wants to help with his money or personal service are ungrateful or misuse his "benevolence", he is angry and outraged or else despondent and pessimistic. This reaction which you might consider quite natural is from our point of view a sign that behind the philanthropy there is still the small divided, individualistic self at work.

Unlike the "ego", the "soul" would be completely serene and have no personal reactions. All that it does is inwardly dedicated to the Divine and it is itself free from all self-regarding reactions. A certain wide equanimity (which means a lot of difficult self-exceeding as well as self-control) and a certain constant remembering of That which is one in all and also greater than all is sought to be practised at every moment if possible. Always a guidance from beyond ourselves is prayed for and there is a definite endeavour to shift our poise from the outer being to the inmost—what in Christian mystical parlance is known as "the practice of the presence of God". We make no show of religiosity, we follow no ostentatious ritualism, but we try to live from a non-egoistic depth in ourselves. We do not look down upon what you have called "brotherly love". Ideals of fraternity, like those of liberty and equality, are very good, and surely they reflect something of what we may term the Divine Consciousness. But as long as we live in our surface being, however refined and well-intentioned it may be, and as long as we do not make a constant methodised effort to go beyond it, we shall see that human society remains full of personal tugs of war, a play of open or concealed self-interests. "Brotherly love" which was preached from thousands of years ago has not made any true difference to man's life.

You will say it has not been really practised. Do you mean to imply that nobody in the past centuries has ever thought of practising it? There have always been well-intentioned people who have thought in terms of it and striven to cultivate it. But whatever small successes it may have had, in a few private circles and

for a little while, have been upset and nullified by the activities of unregenerate manhood. The need is to make a life-long drive towards discovering the psychic self deep within us and then to live from it. This is an arduous task and not something which can be accused of self-indulgence and self-centredness. It is exactly the opposite and therefore there are so few who lead the mystical life and do Yoga. Of course, there is always the possibility of misconstruing what one genuinely sets out to do. That is what seems to have happened with X, so that you got the impression that he was moving away from "brotherly love". But I can assure you that the real picture of the Yogic life is quite different.

Now I come to some immediate practical problems. When people make an effort to do Yoga, and especially a Yoga like Sri Aurobindo's whose ultimate aim is not to pass into a beatific beyond (whether the Vedantic Liberation, the Buddhist Nirvana, the Vaishnava Bliss-world, the Zoroastrian or Christian Heaven, the Muslim Paradise) there has to be an organised collective life with a certain minimum of rules. An extreme tolerance is attempted because human beings are so various. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have tried to give the utmost liberty to their disciples so that each one's special trend of being may be respected. As the very word "Mother" connotes, there has to be an abundance of understanding and forbearance. People are not dealt with in a strictly legalistic way. Stumblings are expected and there is always an eagerness to help one get back on one's feet and start moving. However, there comes a time when things go beyond the limit and steps have to be taken both for the sake of the stumbling person and the group in which he lives. Everything possible is always done to give a person the chance to carry on here. Only when he shows no capacity to take advantage of the tolerance and freedom allowed, the Ashram has to decide upon the definite course of sending him away. You seem to think that it is only fits of anger and tantrums that are involved. Surely a system of Yoga which tries to change human nature is full of understanding of human failings. The Ashram would never think of sending anyone out for anything short of dangerous violence.

You have yourself said in your letter that you and the society based on "brotherly love" can deal with X in a welcoming way only if it is the "old X" or else a mixture of the old and the new but not at all if you have altogether the "new X" on your hands. You say that if X has chosen definitely a certain line of life he must fend for himself. Of course you would try to let him have whatever help is possible in making him go his own way. Obviously, you set a limit to tolerance but would also attempt to act as kindly and constructively as you can. Similarly the Ashram, after a good deal of thought and watching, would try to help a person get beyond the inner spiritual pressures of the Yogic life and recover his or her balance in a different atmosphere elsewhere, with whatever means, psychiatric or any other, are available. Certain kinds of behaviour compel the Ashram to take defensive steps which are at the same time beneficial to the party concerned. Surely, there should be nothing here for you to criticise.

K. D. SETHNA

UDAR REMEMBERS

IX

FOR about two years, each day The Mother would give me a delicate white flower, in addition to the red rose which She gave every day. Two or three times She told me the significance of this flower, "It is ," She said, "the Power of Expression. You will know one day why I give it to you." I feel that now I am beginning to know.

There is this series of articles I now write. I was not much of a writer before and generally hesitated at the task; now it just flows. Whether I write with any power of expression or not is for others to judge but I feel in myself an expression that flows with ease. Then again there are my recitations from *Savitri* and other poems of Sri Aurobindo. I had started learning them by heart more for my own better understanding but when I began to recite I found that each time it was a glorious experience. The poetry of Sri Aurobindo, particularly *Savitri*, carries in it a great force—the force of a mantra, and so the sound of it uttered aloud creates a great vibration. This I feel very consciously when I recite, so I never hesitate to recite if asked by anyone.

There are here two stories which are connected with this. One day, when we were with The Mother just after She had given Her Balcony Darshan, someone mentioned Sri Aurobindo's poem "A God's Labour". Then The Mother told us how when She first read that poem She went to Sri Aurobindo and said: "Lord, what have you done? In your poem 'A God's Labour' you have exposed all my secrets to the whole world!" The Mother explained how this poem was specially written about Her. Then Chinmayi asked me if I knew the poem. I answered that I had, of course, read it but had not learned it by heart. She asked me how long I would take to learn it by heart—the 31 verses; I said I could do it by the time I came again for lunch. She could hardly believe it. The Mother was listening to us and said: "All right, Udhar, you learn it before lunch time and when you come for lunch you may recite it to me." And I did. It was, indeed, a privilege.

The second story is of something much later. One day Nirod said to me that he had not yet heard anyone recite *Savitri* to his satisfaction. He had heard *Savitri* from Sri Aurobindo Himself who had dictated a large part of the epic to Nirod. I had also sometimes heard Sri Aurobindo dictate passages during the time I worked in His room. It was a great experience and a great privilege to have heard Him. Sometimes the lines would come in such a flood and so fast that Nirod had difficulty in taking it all down. Sometimes a whole hour perhaps would be spent for one line till it came to a form acceptable to Him. Well, Nirod asked me to arrange a recitation as he had been told that I did it quite well. I arranged this at the Playground one evening and after he had heard me he was quite enthusiastic and said that I should leave all else that I was doing and just go round the world reciting *Savitri*, as he had felt the force of expression in me. I might yet do just that one day, as I truly feel the power of expression that The Mother has put into me. There are several persons who have

said that they have understood *Savitri* so well after hearing me recite.

I tell all this not to boast of my capacity. Really I did not have this capacity at all. It was put into me entirely by our Sweet Divine Mother. I was only Her instrument having had the aspiration so well and forcefully expressed by Sri Aurobindo in His "Hymn to Durga":

"Mother Durga! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength. We shall become thy instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. Fulfil this yearning of thy young children, O Mother. Be the master and drive thy instrument, wield thy sword and slay the evil, hold up the lamp and spread the light of knowledge. Make thyself manifest."

FATHOMLESS QUESTION

After Undergoing a Life-Saving Heart-Operation

THE fathomless question in the depths of my being—
 What errand unfulfilled,
 What task unfinished,
 That this continuance You willed?
 Perhaps the roots of love are too deep,
 Something here remains incomplete for me—
 Questioning is useless when You rule!
 Only to wait in silence, patiently.
 The Key was in Your hands
 To the cherished domain—
 Puzzled, wondering, a Sign I beg—
 What destiny is laid, what work do You ordain
 Still, on this troubled land, for me?
 A Promise was visioned, to be with You—
 Yet who am I to ask?
 Enough Your Presence given to me anew!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

IF YOU SEEK TRUTH

(The following short piece of spiritual autobiography is by Srimayi. Srimayi, so named by the Mother with the explanation "Toute-beauté" ("All-beauty"), passed away on September 25, 1976. Born Varvara Pitoeff on December 8, 1922, she joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on August 9, 1958 after a spiritual search over a long period in Europe and America. In the Ashram she was appreciated not only as a sincere sadhika but also as a finely developed personality, a charming friend, a talented teacher for years in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, besides being known for her versatile ability on the stage. She was one of several gifted children of Georges and Ludmilla Pitoeff. The former was an innovator in the theatrical world of Paris between the two World Wars, with the work of whose genius the Mother was well acquainted.)

I-2-1966

WHEN I was a child,

I saw modern-minded parents bragging they were giving the utmost freedom to their children, and at the same time, creating such psychological bonds for these children, that it was impossible for them to live in any kind of freedom.

What was I to believe, the word or the act?

When I grew up,

I saw men boasting of width of mind, of universal human principles, and at the same time rejecting spirituality, imprisoning scientists and fiercely crushing those who disagreed with them.

What was I to believe, the word or the act?

When I hungered for friends,

I met some who warmly spoke of faithfulness, sharing, helping, but when the time of test came, there was nothing but distracted silence, or a sudden absence.

What was I to believe, the word or the act?

When I looked for a guru,

I was led to one claiming that he had realized Brahman and was a pure monk, and at the same time cloistering, silencing his brother monks for fear of loss of power over his disciples.

What was I to believe, the word or the act?

When I was on the path,

I came across men loudly indignant at teachers and scriptures: they proclaimed utter freedom from it all; and at the same time they were giving advice, lecturing, writing books and tried to impose their own views on others.

What was I to believe, the word or the act?

When I read Ramakrishna's life and sayings,

I found this: "Surrender to the Mother who is one with Brahman. Seek only God. Stick to Truth. Let your word and act be one."

And He never swerved from this.

So, the answer had come. But where was I to find the Living Way?

Then I read Sri Aurobindo and I met the Mother,

And there was not one word they said that was not an experienced act of Truth.

Word and act, from the highest to the simplest, wherever one spontaneous expression of the Integral Truth Divine.

And my heart sang:

If you seek Truth, turn only to the Divine within and without, for the Divine alone is Truth and faithful to Itself.

Trust only the Integral Guide,

For he only who lives in the Truth can lead you consistently and in fulness to Truth Integral.

Be you ever in love with Truth: quotidian truths, life-long truths, eternal truths, and Truth will come to you.

SRIMAYI

SRIMAYI AND THE STAGE

A LETTER BY THE MOTHER

THERE is no question at all of "position"—nor of prestige. V[arvara] has a lot of knowledge and experience of the stage that we do not have. She is willing to share it with us. So the only sensible thing for us to do is to learn as much as we can and to be grateful for it.

Moreover never forget that we are working here for the Divine and that no egoistic feeling can be allowed to intervene and spoil the work.

Always present with you.

5-11-1958

THE MOTHER

(From *Champaklal's Treasures*)

A SHEAF OF SYMBOLS

(Continued from the issue of January 1977)

3

IF Super-Truth be Heaven's First Law of Light,—
Light putting all things at their proper place
In true Perspective of Graded Harmony—
Ritam, the Right, the Droit, is the Second Law
Governing the ordered sequence of Going Forth—
Of the multi-million Rays of the Sun of Truth;
And Brihat, the Vast, the infinite would-be worlds
Of Truth or That, would constitute the third:
The Alpha consummating into the Omega Far!...

'Tis all a Graded March of Necessity
To matter's Heart and back to Heaven again!
Out of Necessity were the high Gods born,
And of Necessity into space do they recede:
Even Indra, the Argus-eyed, Field-marshal First
Of all domains and realms of Higher Mind,
Bows to Necessity when his Hour is struck,—
And another 'Shatakratu'¹ of Higher Deeds
Takes over the ascending-escalating Throne!
So, humble labourer of the Field or Mart,
Take heart, the clogging logs thou pilest up

At the sacrificial site will keep ablaze the Flame,—and bring down sacramental
sweets!

4

Theatric Woods have a beauty of their own:
Green trees whispering messages of cheer
At the unfailing Advent of the ever-youthful spring,
And straining necks to find some kindred soul
Reflecting back their appreciative glance;
But eyes they have none to see Beauty at their feet
Scattered in stones and weeds and mossy growth,
Nor ears have they to hear the sweet refrain
Of brooklets crooning the Eternal's Code to Time!...

¹ One who performs a hundred sacrifices.

Not even the Gods can hope to discover *that*,
 Committed as they are to their 'schemata' pet
 Of stage-effects in perspectives of Time-*cum*-space,
 Of priory-proprities and balancings nice
 Twixt Spirit and Sense and Letter and Matter and Form! . .

'Tis Man alone who, of all created things,
 Can sense and spot out the beauty fugitive
 Of ephemeral adjuncts of evolving souls
 And even of burlesques of stooges' make-believe,
 All playing for the pleasure of the One who has chosen
 To cast Himself into 'Dramatis Personae'—
 To cash His creative Joy in endless meshes of Nerve and Plasm and Cell!

CHIMANBHAI

SILENCE

SILENCE, root of all things
 Like deep water lies
 Behind the shadows
 Of these tranquil eyes.

Silence, core of all things
 Like clear water flows
 Through all these hollow limbs and nerves
 As silent all the wondering body grows

Silence, womb of all things
 Like still waters spread
 Dissolves all form and name and tone
 Into force unlimited.

SHRADDHAVAN

STILL FLOW HER GRACES

STILL—still flow Her mighty graces,
Still fall Her Love's showers!
Still Her Light our lives enlaces,
And waits for its ultimate hours.

Though our pettinesses blind our seeing,
Still She watches us beyond our ken—
When from Truth we are fleeing,
Like little foolish-hearted men.

Anon in my depths a voice I hear:
"My children of Light, do not grope
In the alleys of Desire and Fear,
Look up—I am your only hope.

"Know—I am niched in your being;
Pray, and I will give strength and light
To guide you in all your seeing;
Turn to me, I am the matrix of all-delight.

"Of wayfaring Life I am the goal;
Seek me, and you shall not fail!
Cling to me, I am in your inmost soul,
Your only Truth in this Falsehood's dale.

"He grieves not, who alone me knows;
"He falters not, who on me doth rely.
The world's aspiration to me flows,
And I build Future's lucent sky.

"From nescient night to golden dawn
I lead earth to her destined role;
Mine is the silver sword drawn
To smite miser Nature's triple dole.

"Be brave to climb high, and me adore,
Do not stoop to worship Untruth's gleam!
I am in all succour and in Wisdom's lore,
I am all-Life's blessed Truth Supreme."

O NIGHT

No more shalt thou be a soothing spell
Nor thy weary heart give peace,
But a restless fitful sleep provide,
Not the soul's release.

Whence then shall we dream of silver realms
And rich with thy bosom's need
Rise to the sky and bring thee light
And the golden influx' seed?

When the sun is gone away from the height
The stars their white harps string,
And if thou wert not there, O Night,
Who would hear them sing?

Dost thou not see earth's ache, dark Eve,
That compelled by the charioted sun
Would fain in softness drink thy breath
And his excess of brightness shun?

If thy presence were unfelt, O Night,
How would dawn proclaim
In magnificence the strong Flamer's rule
And laugh in colours his name?

Had it not been for thy fertile Death
None would have had pain,
A struggle to waken the slumbering Guest
Who in thy arms is lain.

Cry not, O Void, for there's a gleam
That steadies to kiss thy lucent eyes
The soft-bodied sapphire moon's arrived,
The quiet midnight's prize.

ARVIND HABBU

TOWARDS PEACE

AN ARTICLE BY SWAMI CHIDATMANANDA, INCORPORATING HIS TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO IN 1926

*(This article first appeared in Prabuddha Bharata, November 1926, Volume XXX
No.11, pp. 506-511.)*

DISCRIMINATION and renunciation being absolutely necessary as preliminary steps towards spiritual progress, the aspirant, convinced of walking the path of good and leaving the evil and pleasant one, naturally begins to advance, as his intense attachment to sense enjoyments gradually decreases and his mind released from its lower occupation of sensuous thoughts is lightened. He then desires to go a little deeper into the mystery of the universe to find out the Ultimate Reality behind the ever-changing phenomena. Doubts and uncertainties begin to seize the mind, and to solve the riddle of the universe he occupies himself with the study of religions and philosophies. The more he studies the different schools of thought, the more his mind gets puzzled. He finds no solution and begins to think in despair that nobody, not even the ancient Rishis, could find out the Truth. Everyone has his own conception of God and the universe and there is no common ground to stand upon. Had they realised the Truth, all of them would have spoken of it identically, because if there is any Truth at all, it should be one. The Naiyayikas hold that God, Soul and Matter are three separate entities. Sankhya believes in two entities, Soul and Matter, or Purusha and Prakriti. Prakriti in its philosophy is one, but Purushas are innumerable, and all of them are infinite and eternal. Vedanta has its own theory of Advaita or oneness of existence. It does not believe in the duality of Soul and Matter as separate entities. "All is one without a second"—is the bold assertion of this school of thought while the materialists or atheists cannot find anything else in existence but Matter. In their philosophy God or Cosmic Intelligence has no place, and they emphatically deny His existence. All of these philosophers arrived at their conclusions in their different ways, and therefore the mind gets lost in all these intellectual puzzles. Tired and hopeless of getting the final decision, the aspirant almost gives up his quest after the Truth and comes to think that it is impossible to find out the Reality, and no one has really found it out. All are groping in the dark, since intellect refuses to go beyond a certain limit. Many other doubts also get hold of the mind. Hindus believe in the theory of reincarnation, while Muhammadans and Christians do not, they believe in the Day of Judgment. The greatest difficulty for the intellect is how to find out the reason of the world, as to what necessity had God, if any, to create this miserable universe, with its hideous struggle for existence, its wars and jealousies, its births and deaths. But though the aspirant despairs of finding the Reality, still his mind gets no peace, and the intellect finds no rest until it has solved the problem. This is a most critical state of mind.

Such was my own mental state some years ago when I was a householder, and I

had the experience of that miserable mental condition where one finds no peace on account of doubts and uncertainties. The Lord has well said in the Gita that the ignorant man without Shraddha or faith and full of doubts goes to destruction. To a man assailed by doubts, nothing can give peace and happiness. He can have no faith or belief in God, the Universal Spirit, and there is every likelihood of his falling into the deep abyss of sensuality, if he does not guard himself, and consequently the destruction of his soul is often inevitable. In such a disturbed condition of mind I had the good fortune to meet one of the greatest men of India, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, at Pondicherry. I had often heard of his immense spiritual knowledge and therefore approached him with the firm belief that I would get a solution of my doubts from him. The conversations I had with him were of great help to me in regaining my mental poise and calmness. One month's daily meeting with him was a source of great illumination to me; and from that time on, my spiritual progress has been on even ground. To share this bliss and illumination with the readers of *Prabuddha Bharata*, I reproduce some conversations here in the form of a dialogue with the hope that they will find it helpful in their spiritual progress. Let it, however, be understood that the language of the report is sometimes mine.

Sri Aurobindo is a man of austere habits, lives day and night within the precincts of his house, and never goes out even for a walk. He remains deep in meditation most of the time, except for an hour or two in the afternoon which he spends in seeing people who are eager to profit by his sublime simplicity. His house and mode of life are quite free from the paraphernalia of Western civilisation. He seems to be in perfect control of his mind. When people go to him, some of them talk foolishly and even abusively, but he always remains in his calm and unruffled mood, always smiling and full of happiness. To be with him even for a short time is a benediction. A person of great spirituality saturates the atmosphere about him with peace and blessedness, and one going into it cannot but be influenced and benefited. Association with men of lofty spirituality was the turning-point for many misguided and degraded souls, and thenceforth their lives were of great benefit to themselves and to others. I was ushered into the presence of Sri Aurobindo by his secretary, on previous appointment. He was ready to receive me at the appointed time. I bowed to him and touched his feet and took a seat on a chair close to him. When I sat there, he asked me what I wanted him to do for me.

Q: My mind is very much disturbed and finds no peace on account of doubts regarding God and the universe and their mutual relations, and also owing to the senses not being under control. The desire of obtaining peace is my object.

A: The reason of the world cannot be conceived or explained by the intellect. It is a thing to be realised, intellect is unable to solve the riddle.

Q: What is then the necessity of all the philosophies, if they cannot reach the Ultimate Reality?

A: Philosophies only lead one to the gate, to enter (the Supreme) is the work of the Soul.

Q: If the philosophers have reached the common goal, then why such divergence of opinion? If all of them have reached the destination, then they should describe the Reality in one way only.

A: Philosophers can look only at a section of the Infinite, not at the whole; hence the difference in experience.

Q: To find out the reason of the world is a great problem, and unless it is solved, the mind cannot find rest. Please help me to find the solution.

A: This problem is impossible to solve, unless the mind is made still and you realise yourself, viz., gain your Godhead. Then you can find out the reason of the world. The Purusha feels Ananda in activity. It is only a portion of the Infinite that transforms itself into the world. Let this problem be placed in the hands of the Atman or Purusha. He has entangled himself in Prakriti and he can come out of it himself. The mind cannot solve this and you are trying to do this with that frail instrument. Leave it to him to solve. It is his pleasure to get mixed up with Prakriti and then come out of it at his sweet will. If you have the full conviction and faith that you are the Purusha, above and beyond Nature, then you should not mix yourself up with the mind or think of yourself as the mind. Be firm in this conviction. But if the mind does not obey you, let it be free. I would not put any pressure on the mind if it is wilful, but would leave it free, neither obstruct its way nor help it in any way. I would of course admonish it about the spiritual goal and let it choose between the spiritual bliss and worldly pleasures.

Q: Please tell me the best and easiest way to control the senses and then to know the Atman.

A: The surest and safest way to that end is to try to detach one's Atman from the entanglement of the Prakriti, to feel oneself as the witness. If Prakriti tries to envelop the Soul, the wide-awake Atman should refuse to be influenced by her and consider himself quite above and free of her. Of course this is very difficult in the beginning, but when a habit is formed, then the bonds are broken, and the Soul gains full mastery over the forces of Nature. At first the beginner should try to keep this witness-idea before the mind's eye as much as he can, and gradually develop it in such a way that it may never leave the mind. A strong will is required and the aspirant must not despair if any conspicuous result is not soon obtained. He is sure to be free, if he persists. Sometimes a strong reaction sets in and the Prakriti attacks the Soul vehemently. But the Yogi need not lose heart but fight her out to ultimate victory.

Q: To obtain early control of mind, is it not necessary to live in spiritual environments as much as possible?

A: Yes, it is very necessary; environments do influence the mind very much.

Q: When you say that the Purusha should watch the movements of the Prakriti and consider himself as a witness, does he actually do this or is it the mind that does it?

A: The mind can have two functions, the one going out and the other going in; but it is only an instrument in the hands of the Purusha

Q: Is the Purusha active or inactive?

A: He is both active and inactive.

Q: But why has he any necessity of action?

A: He feels ananda in action but is unattached.

Q: Is it possible to still the mind completely?

A: Yes, it is. I had this experience with a Yogi in Northern India with whom I stayed for two months during my political life, and he taught me to still the mind completely.

Q: During meditation I find my mind absolutely restless. What should be done in such a state?

A: Yes, it is not easy to still a wandering mind. The only way is to gather it again and again and gradually it will calm down. It will be a fair success if you could still it even for a minute. You will feel calmness.

Q: I do not know myself; it seems therefore that my inability to watch the mind for even a short time is due to ignorance. Can I know myself?

A: Many persons are doing this watching of the mind without actually knowing themselves. It requires no self-knowledge.

Q: How can I improve?

A: Patient practice is the only way to improve.

(According to his instructions I began to meditate and watch the mind, but I found that when I was watching it the mind did not go anywhere, but as soon as I forgot myself as a witness, it began to run. I told him of it and asked him what I should do.)

A: You have no power to divide the mind into two, the watcher and the watched. Your mind is mechanical and has become like a prison. This has to be broken. You should therefore practise to think of the Supreme Power and Light just above your head and should aspire with devotion to bring Him down into your mind to make it passive and consequently illumined. Leave everything in His hands and think of yourself only as an instrument for Him to use at His own will.

As soon as you get up in the morning, lay yourself at His service unreservedly

and dedicate yourself to Him and think that whatever happens is from Him. Persistence in this practice will in course of time bring passivity of mind and make the mind fit for higher knowledge. You should find out environments which may help you in your uplift. You have an emotional temperament and should live in surroundings where Bhakti predominates.

SWEET MOTHER

MAY I sit by your feet and rest in you
May all separation cease
May the floods in my heart release themselves
in your paradise of peace.

May the words of my soul surge pure and true
May the cogs in my throat be still
May all efforts dissolve into
the loving servants of your will.

I have come so far to touch your feet
All within me aches
But no hardship will ever suffice
to extract this love so great.

Silence now turbulent warriors
The flames you dutifully fed
are limp like arms upon her lap
Her hand is on my head.

MICHELE

THE IMAGE OF THE VIRGIN-MOTHER

IN this period of resurgence of feminine consciousness, there is a good deal of concern about images of the feminine. We have sex-symbols, stereotypes, and archetypes. Most of the concern is with the images women have of themselves and the images men have of women. But an image of feminine nature need not be limited in its significance to being an image of women, designed to provide for social and psychological needs. There are also larger problems of more general image needs which we share as human beings, and I should like to approach what I have to say from that point of view. A number of questions will be raised along the way which may form the basis for further discussion.

The first question we may raise is: Are images important? I do not wish to use here the usual definition of image as a previously perceived object which is no longer present to the external senses but is remembered or composed from a number of such memories. By image I mean an item of human consciousness in which all the faculties of that consciousness are integrated. It is not an element of the intellect only, that is, not just an idea. It does not belong exclusively to the domain of the emotions; it is not simply a feeling. It is not to be restricted to the perceptive or the esthetic realm as if it were only a form and an appreciative response. Nor is it merely an axiological entity. It is a figure in our consciousness to which each of these faculties has made its appropriate contribution. It is an esthetic form which embodies an idea and a value in which we have a significant amount of feeling invested.

Is it important? I would say yes, it is quite important, precisely because it focuses and integrates the major dimensions of our consciousness. I believe that we operate from our image-base in consciousness most of the time, perhaps all of the time. Ideas, for instance, may be projections of the image on the plane of intellect, and the relations among them may be suggested by the profounder reality of the subliminal images of which they are reflections. Conversely, then, in order to make an idea fully fruitful in the life of consciousness, it may be important to trace it back to an image which integrates its intellectual content with harmonious esthetic, axiological, and emotional components.

How many great discoveries, even in the most abstract fields, have come in the form of images, accompanied by esthetic feelings, and received with emotions of reverence, joy, and humility: Kekule's vision of the carbon atoms dancing in the benzene ring, Descartes' insight into the analytic expression of the geometric relations of the walls and ceiling of his room, or the legendary bathtub experience of Archimedes. Images seem to pull our scattered thoughts together and present them to us in a single glimpse in which understanding, delight, and gratitude are united in one ecstatic response.

Images also give us a sense of orientation, of balance, and of reference. They occupy a basic position in our consciousness structure, and serve as anchor points, foci, or centers of gravity for the feelings and thoughts that crystallize around them. That

is to say, they provide, or encapsulate, meaningfulness in our lives. Without them, we would either feel very superficial or very much at sea. The sense of rootlessness that we sometimes complain of is an awareness that we do not have adequate images functioning in our consciousness. Our most comprehensive ideas, our most fundamental judgments, most precious values and deepest emotions are bound up in the images. This is why there are always images of the Divine, whether or not they are anthropomorphic images or graven images. The real images are living images. Their home is in the profoundest reaches of our consciousness.

Joseph Pearce, in his provocative book, *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg*, suggests that our views of reality are like an expanding clearing in the forest. The forest represents the unknown, the unstructured, the unformed. The clearing represents the known, the patterned, the assimilated. We are always nibbling at the forest, he says, enlarging our clearing, incorporating into it timbers selected according to the questions we have formulated on the basis of previous lumbering expeditions.¹ Taking up this suggestion, I would say that our images of reality are these clearings. Out of the Great Formlessness of Chaos we draw these universal forms, so that our experience may have some structure, so that our consciousness may have some organization.

Organization is structured heterogeneity, characteristic of the world of the finite, and distinguished from the "homogeneity" of the infinite, or the pure being beyond all form. And just as heterogeneity, or organization, of energy (being the opposite of entropy), makes action possible in the physical world, so heterogeneity, or image focusing, makes significance possible in the world of consciousness. Images are the most general and most comprehensive manifestations of the Infinite Being on the finite plane. From them all more specialized and more detailed contents of consciousness arise.

If images do function in this way, and if they are therefore important, we may next ask how things stand with us today in the matter of our image-health. Do we have strong, clear, active images, giving shape and significance to our multitude of thoughts and feelings so that we experience meaningfulness and centeredness and peace in our conscious lives? Perhaps many do. Probably many do not. Complaints of meaninglessness, lack of roots, inability to "put it all together," are not rare among us. In fact, a good deal of activity is devoted to efforts to find satisfactory images. Some of the most constant of the old ones have recently failed us. God is dead, the radical theologians inform us; motherhood is threatened by women's liberation; and apple pie may be spun out of reach by the inflation spiral.

Are all our houses feeling the sand shifting beneath them? Have we had too much of science, as many think, or is it simply that we are suffering from "future shock"? Joseph Pearce, having worked through his explanation of the mutual mirroring of mind and world, and having bemoaned many of the lethal paths we have followed and the corrupting images and ideologies on which we have fed, calls for "an image, a mythos, representing a way upward and outward where creative longing can

be released and not denied.”²

We need a new world view that will synthesize our scientific knowledge, our emotional needs, our esthetic feelings, and our values. Probably our basic difficulty is just that we cannot get these departments of our experience to resonate with each other in any acceptable—or even recognizable—way any more. Our *God* ideas are either too anthropomorphic to square with science or too abstract to meet our emotional needs. In either case, we have difficulty relating them to our own ethical standards and find practically no esthetic value in them. Our images of the *cosmos* are probably the strongest that we have, but they do not bring us peace. They suggest that neither God nor man has any rightful place in this statistical, essentially meaningless world. Our images of *ourselves* as persons are the most confused of all. Almost everyone is engaged in some sort of search for self, either her or his proper “role” or relationship, or some reality that escapes roles. But all the roles are in flux today and it is not clear how the role-transcending self is to operate within the world of personal relations. I think that we may justly conclude that it would do no harm to look about for some new images, hopefully some that will integrate the God-cosmos-self aspects of our experience.

I intend to propose the Virgin-Mother as one possible image that may fulfill some of these needs for some people. However I am not proposing Her primarily in a sexual or emotive context, but primarily in a metaphysical and mystical context. Social and emotional factors are not absent, but they are not central. To abbreviate my whole argument, I think that we may analyze all of the above considerations of need for an image as so many variations on the fundamental metaphysical problem of “the One and the Many”—a metaphysical problem whose different solutions have corresponding mysticisms attached to them; and I think that we may see the Virgin-Mother as an embodiment of one type of solution to this problem and as a Deity appropriate to one type of corresponding mysticism

The qualities that I will accent in my proposed image of the Virgin-Mother will appear more clearly if we take a contrasting image first. I should like to stress that this alternative image is provided strictly for the sake of contrast and is therefore deliberately described in such a way as to emphasize the points of difference and thus to highlight the characteristics brought out in the analysis of the Virgin-Mother image. It is not really part of my thesis to attempt to discredit this image, although it is shown here to disadvantage.

Let us simplify, then, and say that there are basically two types of solution to the One/Many problem: the solution by *separation* and the solution by *union*. The solution by separation presumes that the One and the Many are separate and in some kind of opposition to each other. The One may be seen as alone real; the Many in this view are said to be illusory, or only real on another, non-ultimate level. Or the Many are alone real, and the quest for an ultimate unity among them is said to be vain, an affectation of the human mind which has no support in reality itself. A variant of this view is to regard the Many as organized according to the needs of our minds

into functional unities here and there which pragmatically serve our limited and mutable purposes. The opposition between the One and the Many in these cases can be extreme to the point of complete denial or annihilation.

Another possibility, however—and the one I will use to contrast with the Virgin-Mother—is to regard the One and the Many as separate but both real. In this case, if there is to be any relation between the One and the Many, it must be an imposed relation, *i.e.* a relation of the will. This view would seem to correspond roughly to the common theistic position, in which God is One who can exist alone, independent and absolute, while creatures are Many who exist only by the will of God, dependent and relative. Being is thus primarily divided into the Uncreated and the created; there is no room for ambiguity.

The opposition between the Many and the One in the theistic scheme is first of all their mutual otherness in the very type of being they have. But then a series of other oppositions follow. Because the relations between God and creatures are in the realm of the will, they are all relations with at least potential oppositions in them. The transactions between God and creatures are of the nature of commandment/obedience, revelation/faith, covenant/loyalty, grace/gratitude. Each of these dialectical transactions bears a potential shadow, on one side or the other: the creatures may disobey and be punished; God may not reveal, thus leaving the creature in darkness; God may not make the covenant, refusing the creature His aid, or the creature may not remain loyal, thus losing his claim to the covenant; God need not bestow grace, or even if He does, the creature may prove ungrateful. At the least, the opposition amounts to a face-to-face posture, a contingent giving and receiving. At the peak, the opposition becomes rejection and open enmity, resulting in the total downfall of the creature.

Reverting to our definition of image, we may notice that these are ideas developed principally in an ethical context and carrying a heavy emotional freight. Esthetically they are highly dramatic. The archetypal image would seem to be the Father-son relation.

Why is the Father image appropriate for focusing these metaphysical and ethical relations with their particular esthetic and emotional atmospheres? Perhaps because fatherhood, as expressed in generation, is an act of separation. The father is at no time physically united with the child. His psychological orientation toward the child also tends to be one of confrontation rather than of coincidence. Father's love for the child tends to be conditional: Father loves the child if the child obeys, if he succeeds, if he fulfills his father's will. Father gives the child certain things, and in return he has certain expectations of the child.

When fatherhood is applied to God, it is characterized by the parallel concepts of creation out of nothing—*i.e.*, the Father's own substance is not committed to the offspring—and of relations of the will, such as covenant, obedience, loyalty, and faith. There is frequently some image of challenge, such as a testing of the required faith or obedience, with consequent reward or punishment. An aura of contingency colors the whole relationship, with at least some hint of threat in the background. The emo-

tional tone runs from dedicated concern to do the Father's will, thereby earning His approbation, to intense fear and dread of offending the Father, thereby losing all.

The mystical relation to a God so imaged works out from this emotional spectrum. It begins with a sense of unworthiness—the great contrast between the worshipper's misery and the glory of God—and proceeds through gratitude and devotion, with faith and hope, to self-adandoning love and passive union with God, in which the creature maintains his identity as creature, and his sense of being nothing in himself, but is taken up into the Divine Being and permitted to participate in the Father's life. It is a mysticism of duality, experienced primarily through the will.³

Selecting and generalizing perhaps still more dangerously, but still for the sake of contrasting the *images*, we may remark that social relationships among human beings in a Father-God culture tend also to emphasize relationships of will which are responses to perceptions of separation. Relationships of law and of economic and political organization of the possessions of and powers of the separate "I's" and "you's" predominate. Dominion and control are key considerations. Productive work is important. Loyalty within the group and separation from other groups is emphasized.

Hostility is countenanced and in its attenuated form of competition is encouraged. However, it should be noted that the same accent on relationships of will leads to the concept and practice of charity, love of the stranger and even of the enemy, and to heroic sacrifice for one's fellows.

When the separation image focuses the life of the mind, logical distinction is basic, and choice between mutually exclusive alternatives is a common way of posing problems. In the natural world, the gulf between man and other creatures is stressed, and the right of the human being to use other creatures for his advantage is claimed. Life is seen in terms of competition and struggle, rather than in terms of cooperation and balance. It is worth noting that, strictly speaking, the Father-Creator-image sets limits to the creative ambitions of the creature, and there is always a question of whether the creature is engaging in pride, presumption, and attempted usurpation of the Father's prerogatives. Perhaps, though, this idea acts as a kind of stimulating challenge, for it is a fact that the advances in science, technology, and social relations that have been made in the West have often been made against the entrenched belief that this or that arrangement in Nature or society could not, or should not, be understood, controlled, manipulated, or changed by man. Nevertheless, the advances have been made and they have consistently pushed back the territory that had been reserved to God alone.⁴ Agriculture, Galilean-Copernican astronomy, democracy, and the theory of evolution come to mind as successive battles of man's creativity against what was presumed to be God's creativity. The struggle in this area is still apparent in the birth control issue and, for some, the righteousness of the exploration of space!

The point is that the image of the separated Father dominating, exacting obedience, and jealous of any independence on the part of His creatures, does not of itself encourage strength, self-reliance, and self-development, except, first, as a

reaction against such domination and second, as an effort to imitate the Father and become in turn one who dominates. An instance of the latter may be seen in the relation between the sexes. The male, identifying with the masculinely imaged Deity, affirms his divine right to rule over the female, to dominate her as the Father-God dominates him.⁵ And, unless we are careful, the women's struggle for liberation from this domination may be merely another case of the former: a reaction against domination which still accepts the separation image of being and therefore would still be in danger of thinking in terms of opposition and potential conflict. I doubt that this is the way to meet our contemporary need for "an image, a mythos, representing a way upward and outward where creative longing can be released and not denied."

Now let us try the image of the Virgin-Mother and see if it fares any better. We go back to the two types of solution to the One/Many problem. One type was the solution by *separation*, and the other, which we will look at now, is the solution by *union*. In the solution by union there is no question of reducing reality to either the One or the Many. *Union* means a both/and solution rather than an either/or solution. Both the One and the Many are real, therefore, but they are not separate. They are only distinct, and even their distinction is ambiguous.

The One is primary and the Many are contained within it, but the difference between the Many and the One is subordinate to the union of the Many with the One. It is not an imposed or attained union but an originally given union. The relation between the One and the Many, therefore, is not so much in the realm of will as it is in the realm of substance, nature, being. It is not the usual theism but what we may call "panentheism": the One manifests itself in the Many and indwells them—as they also dwell within the One—but the One is not thereby exhausted in its manifestation, nor does it fail to maintain its transcendence with respect to the Many. Consequently, there is, from the point of view of our logic and our familiar conceptual schemes, a certain ambiguity in the distinction of the manifestations from the Transcendent One. There is a sense in which the relative beings of the world are obviously not God, and a sense in which they cannot possibly be anything else but God.⁶ Or we might say that God as beyond form is the Transcendent One, and God manifest in form is the multiple world.

As a consequence of this union and mutual indwelling, there is no sense of opposition between God and the world. The life of the Deity pours continuously and unconditionally into the beings of the world, which develop not as a response to the Lord but as a spontaneous unfolding and blooming of the Divine Life which they themselves are, in finite form. The life-energy circulates among the beings of the world, being communicated by each to all within the comprehensive oneness of the Divine Being. Transactions are not dialectical but radial and wholistic. That is, they are not transactions back and forth, between two poles, but development is from the center outward to all, and involves the whole at every stage. The image is nondualistic rather than dualistic. There is hypothetical or contingent relation

between the Transcendent Being and the Manifest Being; they are thoroughly one, in the dynamism of a single life. There is, therefore, no suggestion of threat, or fear of loss, or possibility of enmity.

The esthetic tone of this view is harmony and placidity rather than challenge and drama. The emotional content is strong in the area of security, warm affection, contentment, and delight. Ethically, the profile is low, stressing natural goodness and encouragement to grow and expand rather than conform to command. The image is clearly maternal.

In generation the mother has an ambiguous relation to the child, who is both different from her and united with her. Possessed of his own reality, he is nevertheless composed of her substance and experiences her as his environment. This tonality continues to characterize (in gradually diminishing degree) the postpartum relationship of mother and child. She tends to coincide with the child by a kind of empathy and to relate to him more in the affective than on the volitional level. Her love is unconditional; she makes no demands on the child as the price for her concern and loyalty. Her expectations with regard to the child are that he should grow up and be himself.

Parallel to the remarks made above about the Father-image, what might we expect to be the social and humanistic expression of the maternal, or unionist, view? I would hypothesize that a sense of "we" would obscure the contrast between "I" and "you", that the basic social perception would be of life in common: a tendency to see every other as contributing to, and being a part of, each one's life. I would expect social actions to arise more from spontaneity than from obligations and formal organization of community life to involve participation and contribution to decision-making by all. There would be openness toward anyone not belonging to a local group, a readiness to admit him, the presumption being that in reality all belong to one great community. People would not try to control one another, take advantage of one another, or be superior to one another, because they would experience genuine satisfaction in the achievements of others, whose lives would be perceived as part of "our own" life. The motivation to be creative and to achieve oneself would be, not the hope of outdoing others, but the delight in the discovery, the creation itself, and the pleasure of contributing to the larger life of the community.

We might expect creativity in a maternal culture to be directly encouraged, because the creative activity of the Mother is precisely to promote growth and independence on the part of her offspring. If God is conceived as Mother, Her own creativity is in no way in conflict with the creativity of Her children. They cannot "usurp" Her prerogatives, because it is precisely Her intention that they *should* be creative. They are not separate from Her; they *are* Her creativity in the finite world. By the same token, they would express their creativity in unionist ways. They would tend to see problem-solving not as a choice between mutually exclusive alternatives but as a synthesis of contending arguments which can be accommo-

dated if one can find a larger view. They would prefer to include all claimants in a settlement rather than reject any. Their justice would move toward healing and renewing life rather than toward punishment. They would not take advantage of the nonhuman world but would regard it too as the offspring of the Mother with whom they hold life in common. Such is our euphoric view of a culture under the image of the Mother.

But, now, why a *Virgin-Mother*? The Virgin is the figure of the Transcendent Unity as the Mother is the figure of the productive and nurturing Manifestation. The Deity is both simultaneously in one Being. Penelope Washbourn presented a fine paper in Los Angeles last summer⁷ in which she developed the theme of the Virgin as the "one-in-herself," the one who belongs to herself, not to another, who is a whole being with powers and prerogatives in her own right, whose identity is not defined by reference to another, who is independent and free. There is no need, here, to repeat that interpretation, with which I concur. But I would extend the interpretation of the Virgin a bit further by emphasizing the notes of unity and independence as they point to the quality of Transcendence.

In the image which I am proposing, virginity is intended to represent and to express not a premarital condition, or an abstinence from sexual relations, or any type of moral purity. These factors may themselves be symbolic of the quality which I feel is the heart of the Virgin image: the nonduality of Being, the undifferentiated character of Pure Existence, the Infinite, the Transcendent. The Virgin is that Infinite Being which is beyond all categories, all predicates, the One about whom strictly nothing can be said.

However, this Unity is consubstantial with the unlimited potency to manifest all the finite beings of all possible worlds. As Virgin, the Deity transcends all the worlds, but as Mother She brings forth all the worlds. And here I think we may usefully superimpose two images of the Mother: the delivered mother who does not live her children's lives for them but promotes their own proper selfhood, growth, and freedom, and the pregnant mother, whose children are of her, distinct from her, within her, and living by her. My own feeling is that as a figure of union the latter image is the more relevant, but I mention the former in order to disavow any suggestion that the freedom of reflexively conscious beings such as ourselves is somehow seriously compromised by this proposed relation to the Deity.

I think we have to recognize that the *image* vehicle of expression, as distinguished from a defined idea, is valuable in cases such as this, just because the situation to be expressed is experienced as being ambiguous, even paradoxical. If we wish to regard reality as a union of the One and the Many, and to see the Deity as both Transcendent and Manifest, then the image of the Virgin-Mother would seem to be highly appropriate, because it embodies the two levels of paradox that characterize this situation: first, the finite and the infinite, the formed and that which is beyond form, are somehow two "sides" of the same being; and second, the finite beings are both distinct from the infinite, having a certain freedom and independence in their individual reality, and

also identified with the infinite, upon which they are wholly dependent, for they live in it and it lives in them.

We can see now the nature of the mysticism that corresponds with this metaphysical view: it is an experience of union with the Deity as simultaneously One and Many. The mystic experiences being identified with the undifferentiated Infinite and Transcendent Being, and also being distinct from it, but distinct as being identical with its own Manifest aspect. The mystic knows herself/himself as *Virgin*, as One and Transcendent, and also as *Mother*, as a unified multiplicity, a cosmos of individuals, and finally as *Child*, as one particular individual dwelling in the cosmos of the Mother's life.

What would be the emotional correlates of a spiritual life tending to such a consummation, and through what stages would it progress? As was said above of transactions in the energy-world conceived under this perspective, the progress would not be dialectical but radial and wholistic. The spiritually sensitive person in this context would have from the outset a dim sense of her/his unity with the Virgin-Mother in these paradoxical ways. This sense would deepen and elaborate and become clearer and stronger, but could always be the whole sense of union. An atmosphere of security, peace, order or structure, meaningfulness, beauty, bliss, and expanding being and consciousness would characterize the spiritual life. The love relationship between the Deity and the mystic would not be an exclusive face-to-face I-Thou encounter, but a sense of shared life, as if the Love which is the Life of God both causes the mystic to be, even constitutes her/his entire individual being, and also pours through that being, radiates out from it to all other individuals, and reaches out by means of it to newness of being in the finite realm. God's love for the mystic and the mystic's love for God would show in the latter's own creativity.

I think that the main question to be raised at this point is whether the Virgin-Mother image can actually function adequately in the consciousness of contemporary people. I have tried to describe it as "representing a way upward and outward where creative longing can be released and not denied." But do we really have a set of esthetic feelings and deep-seated emotions entwined about an image of the Virgin-Mother which can be interpreted as a framework constructed of the metaphysical ideas proposed here? Are there aspects of the image which we would reject? Are there aspects of our experience which the image neglects? Recognizing that these questions still remain to be answered, I will conclude with some words in behalf of the adequacy of the image of the Virgin-Mother.

One of the features of this view that especially commends it to me is the way in which it harmonizes the images of *self*, *cosmos*, and *Deity* in one whole, something that I think is particularly important for us today. The *individual person* sees herself/himself in this perspective as a child of the Mother, united with and distinct from Her, intimately related to all other finite beings, children of the same Mother. But the individual also sees herself as a microcosmic Virgin-Mother. We mentioned earlier the present confusion about roles and the search for the self beyond

roles. The individual as microcosmic Virgin-Mother realizes herself as both an indefinable being beyond all roles and as a multiple manifestation of unlimited creative roles. She does not ultimately identify herself with any particular role or set of roles, because she centers herself in her transcendent aspect; but the freedom that comes with realization of her transcendence releases her creativity so that she fully and fruitfully lives, in an authentic and wholistic way, in whatever roles she chooses as media of her self-expression and loving relation to other beings.

If the cosmos is seen as the Divine Mother, the human being is encouraged to feel at home in the world. She is not a nonentity there or a statistic. She/he is a member of a living, unfolding mystery; she is a participant in an ongoing act of creation. Creativity characterizes the cosmos. One very important part of it is the creativity of the reflexively conscious being in it—on our planet, the human being. The world need not be seen as hard, cold, or impersonal. Emotional interpretations are not determined by scientific facts. The facts are rather subject to interpretations arising from other sources. We tend to give selective attention to those aspects which image to us the emotional tone we have already adopted. For instance, the vastness of the universe in space, time and numbers can just as well be seen as magnificent and splendid, rather than as frightening or destructive of human significance. It all depends on whether one feels united with the universe itself and with the Transcendent Being manifesting in the universe. The Virgin-Mother is, of course, a uni-verse: a creative, evolving multiplicity comprehended in a structured unity—one Nature, ruling through one Law, one fundamental energy, complexifying itself endlessly in marvelous and beautiful forms. Feeling Her presence as safety, intelligibility, and expansion into novelty, we should find our life in the world meaningful and satisfying.

Seeing *God* as Virgin-Mother gathers together our ambiguous feelings about God in a unique way. We recognize immediately the transcendence of God, Her unity and supremacy, Her position as Ultimate Reality and Absolute Being. We anchor ourselves on this: this is our rock, our gravitational center. Compared with the mutability and the limitation of everything we know on the finite plane, this is far removed and other. And we want it to be clearly distinct, because only so can it provide for us that final surety and significance that we require. But we also want to be united with this Absolute Being, not to be shut out from it, and not to be imprisoned in finitude. But yet again, we do not want to lose our own selfhood and be reduced to being an “aspect” of the Divine, or a puppet on God’s string. The complex image of the Virgin-Mother suggests that all these desires can be fulfilled without conflict with one another. As children of the Mother we have our own individual lives and unique selfhood, which is nurtured and promoted by the Mother, in whom we find comfort and sustenance. As united with the Mother Herself, we find ourselves at home in the great universe, living beyond the limitations of our particular embodiments, participating in cosmic creativity. As worshippers of the Virgin, we adore Her Transcendence and Unity, and as mystics united with

the Virgin, we center ourselves in our own unity and transcendence which are not different from Hers.

Metaphysics and mysticism, and the images which embody them, are always more or less matters of personal preference. The Virgin-Mother image may unify the experience of some but not of others. Some may prefer the heroic atmosphere of the Father-figure. Others may advocate various combinations of the qualities expressed by both images. And still others may advance quite different images. At this point in our lives, when evolution seems to be focusing on the development of our consciousness itself, we need a rich variety of images to integrate our present experiences and to stimulate us for the future. Perhaps the Virgin-Mother will be one such fruitful image.

BEATRICE BRUTEAU

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- 3 Cf., e.g., Walter T. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New York: Mentor, 1960), p. 129.
4. Cf. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), Chapter 1, for a somewhat similar idea
5. Cf I Cor. 11 3.
6. See Stace, p. 238.
- 7 Penelope G. Washborn, "Differentiation and Difference—Reflections on the Ethical Implications of Women's Liberation," delivered at the International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, September, 1972.

THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of January 1977)

2

The Basic Principles

THE principles basic to the psychology of life may be stated:

I. *The Principle of Evolution:*

“Evolution is the one eternal dynamic law and hidden process of the earth-nature.”

“An evolution of the instruments of the spirit in a medium of Matter is the whole fundamental significance of the values of the earth-existence. *All its other laws are its values of operation and process*; this spiritual evolution is its own pervading secret sense.

“The history of the earth is first an evolution of *organised forms* by the working of material forces.

“There follows on this initial stage an evolution of life in the *form and organisation of a hierarchy of living forms* by the working of the liberated life-forces. The next step is an evolution of mind in living bodies and an organisation of more and more conscious lives *by the process of developing mind-forces.*”⁶

From this quotation we understand that the primary law of all earthly life is evolution—evolution of physical form, evolution of living organisms and groups, evolution of mind and mental forms. This means that all movements of life have this motive as their underlying direction and it should be possible to discover the evolutionary nature of life’s movements.

Secondly, we see that all the principles or laws which may be formulated to describe the psychology of life are simply “values of operation and process” of this basic law. In identifying life’s characteristic movements this fact of evolution must always be kept in mind. This being the very broadest principle of life, we may expect it to be most easily identified in a historical perspective.

II. *The Physical Life:*

Though man is mental he still shares in the traits of his animal ancestors and his life bears the stamp of that heritage. “The characteristic energy of bodily Life is not so much in progress as in persistence, not so much in individual self-enlargement as in self-repetition. . . . Self-preservation, self-repetition, self-multiplication are necessarily, then, the predominant instincts of all material existence.”⁷ These three movements of preservation, repetition and multiplication apply not only to the animal but can be

seen to play a fundamental role in the life of man and society. Extracted from their physical base we can see that each of these movements represents a fundamental law of life forces.

III. *Interaction of Life and Mind:*

The quotation on evolution cited above reveals another basic fact of life. The growth of life into higher, more organised and complex forms is made possible by the development of mind and mind's interaction with life. "The characteristic energy of pure mind is change and the more it acquires elevation and organisation, the more this law of Mind assumes the aspect of a continual enlargement, improvement and better arrangement of its gains and so of a continual passage from a smaller and simpler to a larger and more complex perfection."⁸ As mind develops, we may expect life to express this tendency towards increasing size, organisation, complexity and perfection.

This principle is quite obvious when applied to the evolution of mental man from the vital animal and equally so when referred to the evolution of man's social existence toward more complex and civilised forms. But we must extend it a step further to apply it to the general character of life movements. In other words, as mind evolves on earth in man, not only do animal forms, individual behaviour and collective life change, but the very quality and character of life movements and events changes as well. We shall return to this point further on.

IV. *The Expression of Life in Man :*

In the field of human consciousness, the most important channel through which life forces express is the behaviour of the individual man. "All life is the play of universal forces. The individual gives a personal form to these universal forces. But he can choose whether he shall respond or not to the action of a particular force. Only most people do not really choose—they indulge the play of the forces... It is only when one can make oneself free of them that one can be the true person..."⁹ That is, life forces flow through the channels of man's physical, vital, emotional and mental character and express as human behaviour. But the resultant expression depends not only on the nature of the force but also on the nature of the person through which it passes. In other words, the expression of life forces is a function of human personality.

For example, the force of anger or rage in the animal is very short-lived and directed toward whatever is in proximity. Whereas in man the force of anger can flow through the channel of jealousy which is a perverse mental attitude applied to life. In doing so, the force gains longer life, the capacity for fine discrimination and initiation of complex actions. Or it can meet up against a strong idealist will which refuses to give it scope for expression at all.

Human personality is composed of innumerable elements of which physical habit and vital traits are the lower forms, feelings and sentiments, beliefs and understanding the higher. In normal everyday existence the physical and vital are the customary

channels through which life expresses. The greater proportion of mankind lives almost exclusively in this realm and gives no higher direction to these forces than that of habitual living. Where heart in man is developed, the emotions and feelings provide a higher direction through which life forces are channelled into relationships of personal affection and group loyalty. Where mind is developed they find a still higher direction and expression. The mental thought, understanding and idealism gives direction to these forces. The mental will, which is the highest point in human evolution, commands them into action and is influenced by the understanding. It is only when these emotional and mental components are mature and active that we can rightly speak of individual character. In their absence it is only the social custom or behaviour that expresses. When individual character is refined, unselfish, idealistic, etc., we have a cultured individual. "...as more organised forms of life appear, this grows into a life-mind and vital intelligence largely mechanical and automatic in the beginning and concerned only with practical needs, desires and impulses...But slowly mind starts its task of disengaging itself; it still works for the life-instinct, life-need and life-desire, but its own special characters emerge, observation, invention, device, intention, execution of purpose, while sensation and impulse add to themselves emotion and bring a subtler and finer affective urge and value into the crude vital reaction...When human intelligence adds itself to the animal basis, this basis still remains present and active, but it is largely changed, subtilised and uplifted by conscious will and intention..."¹⁰

Even in a mature character, it is normally the lower channels that are active though the higher may lend color or refinement to their activity. The higher elements of character usually come into play only in times of stress or crisis where man's will is fully active to meet the demands of life. In these situations even the half-developed character of the lesser man will reveal itself. When the demands of life, the forces to be dealt with, are beyond the strength and capacities of man's character, we see a disintegration of personality or inability to act and find man the passive object of forces greater than himself. Here it is not the man's character that is determinative but the general conditions in which he is placed. The process of channelling the life forces into higher and more complex patterns of behaviour is the process by which personality and character develop in the individual.

To take the process one step further, we can briefly consider the evolution of man beyond the mental level. When the mental will becomes fully developed and consents to spiritual growth, it can do so only by surrendering itself to the Divine Will. By this act it reverses the process of concentration and expression of life forces through its character channels onto life. Instead it concentrates the life forces on the Divine and gives up the prerogative of choice in their expression. By contact with the Divine behind the heart or above the mind these forces are transformed. In their place a higher spiritual force descends and expresses through man's personality in 'life.

V. The Nature of Life Forces:

Before proceeding further with the expression of life forces through man we must

consider some of the characteristics which govern their behaviour. The essential quality of these forces is summed up in the statement, "Life is Force and Force is Power and Power is Will."¹¹ The life forces are powers of effectuation with an intention. "The struggle of limited forces increasing their capacity by that struggle under the driving impetus of instinctive or conscious desire is therefore the first law of life."¹² These forces interact through struggle and conflict. The stronger grows by domination over the weaker. "It is, moreover, the nature and claim of any Force in the manifestation to be, to survive, to effectuate itself wherever possible and as long as possible, and it is therefore that in a world of Ignorance all is achieved not only through a complexus but through a collision and struggle and intermixture of Forces."¹³ The basic qualities of the bodily life—preservation, repetition and multiplication—are merely the physical expressions of these tendencies of the life force.

VI. *The Nature of Action:*

Human action is the expression of life forces and it has their character. Each action is in the nature of a struggle or intermixture of forces. Each act creates and generates a force which is strengthened by repetition. Each act tends to repeat itself, to multiply and increase in intensity by repetition. We can imagine life as a virgin forest. Each original action is like a pioneer forging a new path. Once he has cleared the way, others can easily follow and make the path more clear and well established as they do so.

The life of the individual and the society can be similarly viewed. Each act by the individual generates a force for that act to repeat in himself or in others. If the force behind the act is strong he continues to repeat it and others follow. If it is weak the act may be successfully opposed by other forces and negatively fall back on him. The unspoken word, the unexpressed will or emotion can also go out as forces and produce their effects.

VII. *The Results of Action:*

The result of an act is determined by the type, quality and intensity of the forces expressed. "...all energies in Nature must have their natural consequence."¹⁴ "As is the nature of the energies so must be the nature of the results."¹⁵ By this statement we do not refer to a moral system of reward and punishment, an evaluation of each act in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, etc. Each act has a quality of its own and brings a corresponding result in its own plane. Ethical and moral results pertain only to acts in their own sphere.

"Action is a resultant of the energy of the being, but this energy is not of one sole kind...there are inner activities of mind, activities of life, of desire, passion, impulse, character, activities of the senses and the body, a pursuit of truth and knowledge, a pursuit of beauty, a pursuit of ethical good or evil, a pursuit of power, love, joy, happiness, fortune, success, pleasure, life-satisfaction of all kinds, life-enlargement, a pursuit of individual or collective objects,

a pursuit of the health, strength, capacity, satisfaction of the body...all these differences in the nature of the energy have to be taken into account and each must have its appropriate consequence."¹⁶

The life forces passing through the channel of human character result in action and the strength of the action determines the strength of the result. If a man acts in relation to an inanimate object the strength of his action depends on the strength of his body, the enthusiasm and energy of his vital available for the action, the interest and determination of his will to implement and the knowledge of his mind to guide. For instance, a man digging a pit in the ground may dig faster and deeper if he is hunting for treasure than if he is a slave labourer. When man acts in relation to other living beings or other men the factors influencing the intensity of his action become more complex. In the social life of man there are, in addition to character traits, some other major determinants of the strength for his action such as health, wealth, position and education.

VIII. *The Actor and the Results:*

"Each being reaps the harvest of his works and deeds, the returns of the action put forth by the energies of his nature, and those which are not apparent in his present birth must be held over for a subsequent existence. It is true that the result of the energies and actions of the individual may accrue not to himself but to others when he is gone; for that we see constantly happening—it happens indeed even during a man's lifetime that the fruits of his energies are reaped by others; but this is because there is a solidarity and a continuity of life in Nature...."¹⁷

This principle states that not only are the results of an action determined by the nature of its energy but that these results accrue to the human instrument through which these energies express and also to those related to him either through physical heredity and proximity, vital association, emotional attachment or mental idealism. For present purposes we leave aside the influence of actions from past lives

IX. *Correspondence of the Inner and Outer Life:*

"Man's being, nature, circumstances of life are the result of his own inner and outer activities, not something fortuitous and inexplicable."¹⁸ This principle is an essential key to the mystery of life's character. The relation of outer action and inner condition is obvious. But in addition to this there is a direct relationship between man's inner condition and the movement of life events around him. "Circumstances are, without exception, the objective projection of what is inside yourself."¹⁹ In the context of normal social man, it means that the outer conditions and events surrounding and impinging on his existence are a direct expression of his personality and character traits and the movements which issue out of them. The principle of correspondence dismisses the influence of chance and fate by revealing

what we see as chance in life to be an outgrowth of what we are inside. It must be understood that this system of correspondence is highly complex as it is based on the complex activity of man's physical, vital and mental beings with all their interrelationships.

The mechanism by which this principle acts is the "invisible Forces in Life-Nature that belong to the same plane of Consciousness-Force as this part of our being, Forces that move according to the same plan or the same power-motive as our lower vital nature."²⁰ These forces are attracted by corresponding forces or traits within man and their action on him and his environment reflects the status and dynamics of his own nature. From this we can understand that there is a deeper truth in the phrase "Character is destiny" than that propounded by the psychologists. Character is the channel for life forces flowing through the individual which directs and alters them according to its own nature. It is also the determinant of how life forces outside the individual express themselves in what we normally consider the circumstantial, fortuitous, accidental movements of life.

X. *Moral Retribution:*

In discussing the principle determining the results of an action (VII), we stated that this concept does not imply an ethical, moral or religious conception of karma whereby good is rewarded by prosperity and long life, or evil punished by their opposites. From the evolutionary view, the appearance of an ethical or religious conscience in man marks the rudimentary beginnings of man the mental being with its dual sides of will and knowledge. In animal nature, justice plays no part. The law is survival of the fittest. But man is moved not only by instinct or impulse. He possesses the capacity to choose, will and act. He perceives a relationship between the act and what comes back to him. At the level of consciousness this principle is invariably true. It is the law of Karma. But with the birth of religion, law and ethics, man sought to simplify the equation and set it to his immediate needs. Out of this emerges the principle that moral right is rewarded and moral wrong is punished though in many cases the reverse proved to be the case in the context of earthly life.

Nevertheless, there are occasions when life results do appear to follow a law of moral retribution, where "there intervenes a strand of connection or rather interaction between vital-physical good and ill and ethical good and ill."²¹ This is possible because man's energies, desires and movements are mixed together in their working. "...Our vital part does demand substantial and external rewards for virtue, for knowledge, for every intellectual, aesthetic, moral or physical effort; it believes firmly in punishment for sin and even for ignorance."²² The demand or belief acts as a channel through which life forces flow fulfilling man's expectation. "Nature takes us as we are and to some extent suits her movements to our need or our demands on her."²³ It is often seen that an individual's sense of guilt or sin is quickly followed by his downfall or punishment. The result is determined not by an ethical law of nature but by the individual's own insistence, whether conscious or subconscious, that such a law be operative.

There are other occasions when the results of action seem to obey a moral law. "It can be often observed that when a self-assertive vital egoism goes on trampling its way without restraint or scruple all that opposes its will or desire, it raises a mass of reactions against itself, reactions of hatred, antagonism, unease in men which may have their result now or hereafter, and still more formidable adverse reactions in universal Nature...the very forces that the ego of the strong vital man seized and bent to its purpose rebel and turn against him, those he had trampled on rise up and receive power for his downfall."²⁴ When human will misuses the limited forces at its disposal, the greater forces of life eventually react against it and man "receives the adverse return in the guise of defeat and suffering and failure."²⁵

XI. *The Expression of Life in Society:*

As we have considered the means by which life forces express through the behaviour of the individual man (IV) we must now examine its counterpart in the human collectivity. As in the individual this expression is a function of individual personality, so in the collectivity it is a function of the social character of the group. In its lower forms this character is the social custom and habit of the people. In its higher forms it is their civilisation and culture. This social character represents the channels through which life forces can express themselves in the collective life of the people. Earlier we have stated that in an unformed man of predominantly physical and vital nature, life forces are able to flow virtually free from distortion or direction by the human will and express as general human behaviour. But where mind or heart is well developed, the life forces flowing through the individual are given direction by the human will and their expression bears the stamp of individual character. The same principle applies to the collectivity. For example, in a primitive society the position of leader goes to the most powerful physical-vital man. If a stronger man kills the leader, the people will naturally accept the new man without hesitation. The force of life will have its free play without interference from higher planes. But when a society has developed a civilised moral order, the appointed king is invested with sovereign respect and his murder will be met with moral indignation and social outrage. Rather than quickly returning to equilibrium, the forces of life may enter into prolonged conflict and strife until the outrage has become subdued or the act been avenged.

XII. *The Expression of Social Character in Life:*

Not only does life express itself through man (IV) but the movements of life in the environment are determined by the character of the individual (IX). Then we may ask to what extent the movements of life in society are determined by the character of the society. Let us examine this principle from an evolutionary perspective.

The movement of physical elements such as water is fully determined by physical laws. Water flows according to the principles of gravitation, friction, etc. When we turn to the animal which is vital, we see a similar determination at the vital-physical level, *e.g.*, reproduction, respiration, digestion, etc. But at its own level of vital life,

there is little coordination among the animals, or organisation of the life around them. In other words, the vital animal is fully organised at the next lower level but only partially so on its own level.

Coming to man there is the gradual emergence of mind. The power of mind expresses itself by organising the next lower plane, *i.e.*, the social life of the group. As mind develops and society matures, becomes civilised, the life or the society becomes more organised (III). The activities of its members are subject to social and legal restraints in the form of custom and law. Behaviour is limited to well-defined grooves expressive of the social character. The instrumentation for this organised expression is chiefly the social members themselves. Frequently it is conscious and intentional, *e.g.*, the policeman apprehending a criminal or the father preaching ethical behaviour to his son. But in many cases it is subconsciously transmitted through the habits, traditions, sentiments and values of the social group, *e.g.*, the reverence of the people for the monarch is an effective bar against rebellion as is the moral condemnation of adultery.

XIII. *The Law of Correspondence in Social Life:*

There is a correspondence between the inner character of man and the movements of life which touch on his personal sphere (IX). The same principle holds true for the society except that in this case the "inner being" which is reflected in outer life is a composite of the ideals, thoughts, sentiments, emotions, desires and activities—what we have called the social character—of the group members in their common social existence. This character expresses itself through the seemingly 'chance' interactions of its members and the 'accidents' of physical nature within the society and around it. It is often in these cases that the true social character of life most clearly reveals itself.

XIV. *Moral Retribution in Society:*

The concept of moral retribution has been considered earlier (X). Here we need only refer to one aspect in its larger social context. As an individual's moral, ethical or religious beliefs may tend to be self-fulfilling, so also the collective beliefs of the society. Where a particular fear, emotion, attitude or idea is shared in common by the social group, it becomes an effective channel through which life forces can flow. For example, we may take the idea of auspicious hours. In some parts of Indian society there is a very strong belief in the significance of auspicious and inauspicious times of day. A foreigner may ignore their indications as a mere superstition and never notice any difficulty. But if a man with this social upbringing suddenly decides to stop referring his acts to the prescribed time of day, he may find everything going wrong for him. The channel for this result may be the remnants of belief in the practise in his subconscious or the social expectation of those around him disapproving of his action. Even when others are unaware of his activity it may be a response from the deeper layers of character in the society which have cherished the tradition for thousands of years.

XV. *The Social Atmosphere:*

There remains one other major conception to be mentioned—what is sometimes referred to as the “atmosphere” surrounding or pervading a society from time to time, for example the atmosphere of evil portrayed in the opening scenes of *Macbeth*. As with individual behaviour and life events, the sources of atmosphere are not singular. Normally the social atmosphere is an expression of the social consciousness of the collectivity. But at critical times in the life of a society there may be abnormal stirrings of deeper tendencies in the subconscious or subtle-vital consciousness of the community which erupt on the surface as foreign war, horrible acts of inhumanity or natural calamities.

The principles outlined above are rough formulations in mental terms of some of the major characteristics of life events. But it must be kept in mind that “the many-sided dynamic truths of all action and life”²⁶ cannot be “perfectly classified, accounted for, tied up in bundles by the precisions of our logical intelligence in its inveterate search for clear-cut dogmas.”²⁷ The art of seeing and knowing life in all its subtlety and complexity requires more than simply a few principles. But what can only be suggested by a principle can become living and even familiar when applied to the facts of life itself. We will now endeavour to do this in reference to life as portrayed by Shakespeare.

(*To be continued*)

GARRY JACOBS

NOTES

6. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, p. 14.
7. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 16.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 318.
10. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 614.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 942.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 806.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 807.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 810.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 806.
18. *Ibid.*
19. The Mother.
20. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 813.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, p. 813-4.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 814.
26. Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, p. 34.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

DIALOGUES

(Continued from the issue of January, 1976)

Synopsis:

Isabella, the Italian Renaissance princess, suddenly suffers the loss of her husband, Ludovico. Thereafter, her life and interests change radically. She begins to ask mental questions for the first time, and starts to study at a nearby abbey. Finally she takes vows as a nun to better pursue her new seeking but is unable to satisfy herself. She dies disappointed and receives the solace of her beloved goddess, who soon sends her forth into life again to continue her quest.

CHAPTER XIII

As the soul emerged upon the world, she found her outer being already adult. The world around her still presented as fresh and beautiful a face as ever, but she saw it unaccountably troubled as it had not been before.

Meanwhile, upon the awakening of her inner self, her outer being suddenly felt itself quieten and deepen. She sensed within herself a new identity that lifted her inexplicably beyond the confines of her present existence as a young Parisian girl in her twenties by the name of Martine, daughter of a well-to-do merchant in the bustling city. All at once, she found herself beginning to think and ponder. Not that she had ever really been a thoughtless butterfly, but now she felt herself invaded by something greater.... Not a spiritual or mystic impulsion—the goddess had after all promised that she would not reveal herself sufficiently to allow of such an urge—but by the current of the times... a current that whispered “Revolution.” Yet why and wherefore revolution? Was it mere economics? Martine had already read and studied with exceptional breadth for one of her age and status, and she had listened to the news as it came in from her father’s friends from both city and province. And though some spoke of poverty and taxation and unrequited toil, something told her that the springs which fed the current of revolution had their source elsewhere. It was, rather, that the earth was tiring of kingship and the whole outworn principle of vassal and overlord. Somewhere within her, her own being had tired of it, and would no longer consent to remain silent.

She sought initially to meet as frequently as possible the young people among her acquaintances who, she knew, held liberal views. Still further, she came within a hair’s breadth of involving herself with a secret revolutionary society which both king and court had at first ignored but now sought to stamp out with every means at their disposal as an imminent danger to the state. Fortunately however, Martine’s father came to learn of her intentions at the last moment and in a fit of utmost alarm—for he realized as perhaps his daughter did not, that her involvement would jeopardize not

only his business but the safety of his entire family—hustled her out of the city as fast as he could

Martine found herself, after four days' journey, in the safe-keeping of an elderly but still vigorous uncle and aunt who had a considerable land-holding in the provinces north of Paris. But though she felt no discomfort in her new pastoral surroundings, she found no substitute there for the lively intellectual climate of the great city. For days she spoke little to her new foster parents, for she had, in actuality, been sent to them in disgrace, with instructions that they were free to marry her at the earliest opportunity to any village boy who would have her. But as time wore on she allowed herself to become more and more engaged in the simple peasant tasks of the life and people around her. She came to find joy in tending the cattle, walking over the damp green fields in the early morning, or losing herself in the endless chores of the kitchen. Even her uncle and aunt could now be heard to whisper to each other that Martine didn't seem to be turning out so badly after all. In the end she might make as good a villageoise as anyone.

But life did not hold so comfortable a Utopia of conventionality in store for the young Parisian. Within a short time, Martine was again observed to be acting strangely. She began to spend precious money on the luxury of writing paper and was often seen talking to the drivers of caravans on the way to Paris. Her aunt and uncle fumed privately, for never had they or anyone else in the village grappled with such a problem. Finally that ever-meddlesome but nevertheless efficient instrument, the Hand of Fate, solved the problem in its own remarkable and satisfactory way. A well-to-do family of the nearby provincial capital happened to be passing through the village. Already blessed with numerous children, they were about to be presented with another, and were on the lookout for a governess-*cum*-nurse. Martine, hearing of their need, hurried to proffer herself, and was quickly accepted. Her uncle and aunt meanwhile were delighted to be rid of their problem charge, though they made a great show of tears and remonstrance when they discovered she would finally be leaving them for good.

From then on, none about Martine saw or cared what she wrote or to whom. None tried to plumb her thoughts, for one in her position was scarcely supposed to have any. And none was there to press for her marriage, for as far as her employers were concerned, the longer she remained single the better. It was enough that they found her efficient and quiet with the children. They were, moreover, pleasantly surprised to learn that she could tutor her charges in music and simple arithmetic as well as in reading, writing and the rudiments of Latin. As a consequence, Martine's employers treated her well. They gave her a position of responsibility in the house, and allowed her to go where she pleased during her free time.

Martine could have prayed for little more. The shaded walks of the city park became her domain, the stone seats her work tables, the market place her centre of despatch. So at last she became what she had sought to be the last several years—vehicle of a facile pen and of the ideas that tumbled through her brain, forerunners of a new

age of human endeavour now teetering on the brink of manifestation. From where did the girl receive this flood of iconoclast inspiration? She herself did not know. She could trace it to no particular incident in her childhood, to no memorable turning point in her more recent past. It seemed to come rather from a mounting accumulation of all her experience, an experience which told her that man must be free before his peers and his God. No man may enslave another, nor sit in a position of privilege over his brothers. Had kings once been heroes and true leaders? They were no more. The lives they now led were a travesty and mockery of the nation's dignity and well-being. The true heroes were those—the enlisted poor—who went forth to battle for no cause of their own, and died while their monarch luxuriated in his cloth-of-gold tent behind the lines.

To later ages, the products of Martine's pen would have seemed mediocre enough—the ideals trite, the expression commonplace, the case overstated. But to Martine they represented the living truth about which it was impossible for her to remain silent. All about her she saw the conservatism that kept the monarchical order in continued existence. And everywhere she saw its abuses, its stupidities, its injustices entrenched and built up over how many ages she could not tell. But most of all, she rankled at the pride—the pride of the king's guard, the king's couriers, the king's officers, the king's troops, and worse than all the rest, the king's courtiers and nobles. It was a pride that was marked on its other face by a groveling subservience, an abject abasement of spirit in those of less than noble birth—an abasement that she found almost as nauseating as the seemingly needless economic deprivation and poverty of those belonging to the lower estates. The monarchy was all but ravaging the provinces, and her friends in Paris must know what she was observing daily at first hand. Once again she sought out the wagon train drivers on their way to the capital. They responded slowly at first and then more readily to her form of camaraderie with its masculine touch that spared her from the problems of a too feminine appeal. In the end, most would happily carry her letters, and on their return journey bring her the replies. Yet surely none was aware of the strange and heady mixture of firebrand idealism and humanitarian discontent that marked the little cargo of paper he transported each time along with the bulk produce in the train destined for the great city.

“How long shall our people remain less than animals?”—one of them ran. “The oxen that haul the wagon in which this letter rides ate their fill this morning, but Robert, the driver, and his little boy only drank. You will say that the oxen must do the pulling of the wagon and not the men? Of course, you are right, but should the beasts outlive their owners, what then, my friends? You can be sure no oxen would reach Paris if the men in the wagons were to sicken and die. And you can be sure too that one day there will be no flour even for the cakes on the dining tables of Versailles if these very men in the wagons die first and their oxen after them. We are not to speak of the wagon drivers' families who have stayed behind on the land and forced this harvest from the black soil only to see it vanish down that long insatiable road to the king's table.... How long will the Divinity in his heaven permit these atrocities? It

cannot go on, friends and comrades. Something must change. Is there yet no move in Paris to curb this outrage? I long to be with you. Here I have seen enough. I yearn now for the company of like-minded soldiers-at-arms....”

And in another:

“Is there any justification in one man being lord over his fellows? Any reason why the overfed duke in the carriage should be more worthy than the peasant, strong but withered through underfeeding?”

And yet another:

“Lord, do you not see the plight of our people?”

The blind appeal did not go unheeded, though once again as the goddess had promised, the Divinity consistently bore a veiled face and the human instrument was constrained to seeking and crying out with the light of the rationalistic human mind alone. So it was that Martine called to God with only her external voice. Her appeal was directed toward the heart and mentality of man, for it was that she now saw as the one thing before her, the one thing of ultimate significance. And surely in terms of the age it was neither a false nor inconsistent perception. For that passing moment it was the purpose of history itself—man would be rational, man would be equal and free before God and his own kind, man would live in fraternity. The great force of this composite ideal descended upon Europe in the 1700’s, gaining momentum decade by decade, and Martine became one of the many gathered up in its swirling waters as it swept on to its inevitable denouement. Indeed, the great Mother had put on such a mask of anger and rankling discontent, that none, least of all her little daughter, caught any glimpse of her benign splendours behind the terrible disguise. Instead, pushed ahead by the irresistible and dreadful current, the Divinity’s human instruments continued to shout their slogans against the oppressor unaware of what it was that gave them the impetus to act.

Eventually, Martine’s pleadings with her friends bore fruit. A small troupe of itinerant performers in their gaily painted van sought her out and delivered to her the note she had been waiting for.

“Enroll yourself with these good people,” it said. “Learn to sing, dance, act—anything—and they will bring you to Paris. Here, meanwhile, much entertainment awaits you. We have arranged for you to stay where your parents will not find you.”

Breathless with delight, Martine ran to her employers and told them she had been summoned immediately to Paris. Nor could any of their remonstrations restrain her, because she must be present, she said, for the resolution of a family crisis. She would surely come back when it was over and she promised to write.

Now began the gayest moments of her life. Each evening, by the nightly camping site, she would have a dancing lesson. Fortunately, she was blessed with a good physique and an abundance of vital energy, so that she learnt fast and was soon able to perform her simple steps with much verve and a good novice’s modicum of style. Even her plain, thoughtful face came to life when she danced and she exuded

a happiness and enthusiasm which made up for her lack of beauty. So it was that she ceased to be the grim revolutionary and became a light-hearted 'stage artist, revelling in the applause of her rustic audiences, and thereby living her ideal of equality and brotherhood through her performances rather than through remote writings on inanimate pieces of paper.

Finally, however, the graver reality returned to assert itself. Martine and her fellow-performers reached Paris after a leisurely three weeks of playing all the villages and small towns *en route*. In the great city things had reached a state of crisis. Unknown to itself the monarchy was tottering. Elaborate plots for every conceivable purpose from impersonation to assassination and clandestine murder abounded, and Martine found herself involved in one of them a few moments after her arrival. The troupe to which she belonged was to provide a "rustic" evening's entertainment at Versailles before the court and, most important, before the Queen, who delighted in such affairs. What espionage or other secret business was to be transacted behind the scenes while the performance was in progress, Martine was not told nor was she interested in knowing. Her job would be to hold the attention of her audience with her dancing, and to succeed in that much she would already have her hands full. She now spent hours with the troupe's dancing master working out the best arrangement, and then many hours more practising her routine. For in her revolutionary fervour, she was determined to do her part as well as possible, particularly considering her status in the troupe as its latest recruit. The old hands were even busier, for it had been decided that they would stage a playlet. They were now to be seen memorizing their lines, while the older women frantically prepared new costumes of a splendour previously unknown to the little caravan.

At last the great evening arrived and the troupe found itself in an antechamber within the vast sprawling palace. Hardly a player could be seen who was not muttering a prayer or repeating his lines under his breath as he dressed, for they were all fearfully nervous. Who would ever have guessed that their little group would be chosen to perform at *court* albeit as part of a backstage plot? But they would be good enough to prove their worth *despite* the plot—they would be the best Versailles had ever seen—ah, how those prayers and ambitions soared as the last hooks were fastened, the last ribbons tied five minutes before curtain time!

And then all at once they were there, Martine was there—miraculously transported into a wonderland such as she had never imagined. She saw around her the enchantment of a million twinkling candles, of dresses like vast billowing confectious, of cascading laces, of silks flashing their peacock hues in the soft, dancing subtleties of the light, of white powdered wigs, of—in a word—an immaculate and sumptuous gentility, as rich as a garden of paradise yet as unaccountably fragile and somehow precious as a piece of Dresden china.

It was not that the scene so captivated Martine that she could not dance. She danced as well as she had ever done or better, inspired by the wonder of her surroundings. For indeed she found herself in a kind of trance. But somewhere behind

the immediate functioning of her physical mind that was concentrated upon her performance, another deeper faculty was musing, questioning, feeling—

Blessed heaven, was this the world they were conspiring to destroy? This magic, this creation of elegance more refined perhaps than any the world had ever known? Were these ethereal creatures seated on their gilded chairs in this hall of gilt-framed mirrors the ones that would suffer the pain of a violent casting-down, perhaps even death? Could they indeed suffer and die or would they simply be shattered into a thousand pieces like the china statuettes they so resembled? Pain and death were for peasants and caravan drivers, servants and the stall keepers in the muddy streets. But here? Somehow, all at once she was overcome by a sense of terrible recoil. She didn't want to be around when the disaster—now so imminent—happened. Oh yes, she recalled all the years of writing about revolutionary change, all the recent weeks of discussion and planning. But now she knew the plan was set, the stage was set, destiny had been fixed in its purpose and the glamorous, resplendent victim stood in all its glory before the headsman waiting for the final stroke.

As Martine bowed her way off the stage after her last brief dance, she felt not only nauseated by the premonition of a catastrophic *fait accompli*, but gripped by a sense of her own superfluity now that the revolution stood on the brink of success. In the back room, she quickly stripped off her costume, put on her everyday clothes, and to all intents and purposes disappeared. Neither her troupe members nor her Parisian friends ever found her again, for she took care to disguise her flight.

(To be continued)

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