



# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JUNE 1977

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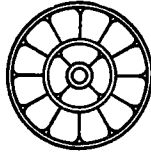
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.

A stylized signature or flourish consisting of several overlapping horizontal lines.

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIX

No. 6

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

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	.. 425
TRUE IMPULSE FOR ACTION: AN ANSWER FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER	.. 426
MATRIMANDIR: THE SANCTUARY OF TRUTH	.. 428
<i>Compiled by Kailas</i>	
THE MOTHER AND THE INDIAN HERITAGE: BUDDHIST DISCIPLINE— THE DHAMMAPADA AND ITS TIMES	.. 432
<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i>	
THE MOTHER'S BIRTH CENTENARY, 1878-1978 (21st FEBRUARY): THE MOTHER'S LIFE—SALIENT FACTS	.. 436
<i>Indra Sen</i>	
UDAR REMEMBERS	.. 438
TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE	.. 440
COMMERCIALISM IN YOGA	.. 443
<i>Jibendra</i>	
THE WORDS OF POETRY	.. 444
<i>K. D. Sethna</i>	
PONDICHERRY REVISITED (Poem)	.. 452
<i>Minnie N. Canteenwalla</i>	
MORNING DEW (Poem)	.. 453
<i>Georgette Coty</i>	
A SHEAF OF SYMBOLS (Poems)	.. 454
<i>Chimambhai</i>	
PURUSHA (Poem)	.. 455
<i>Seyril</i>	

## CONTENTS

THE CHARACTER OF LIFE CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE	<i>Garry Jacobs</i>	.. 456
GOLDEN EPIPHANY (Poem)	<i>Amiyangshu</i>	.. 461
FOOTNOTES TO THE FUTURE: PURUSHOTTAMA YOGA	<i>V. Madhusudan Reddy</i>	.. 462
THE GRIM ADVENTURE OF COLONEL PONSONBY		.. 468
SULTANI: A SHORT STORY TRANSLATED BY V. CHIDANANDAM FROM THE TELUGU OF V. SIVARAMA SASTRY		.. 471
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE: MA KE GEET GAE JA (Sing Thou Songs of the Mother)—Hindi—by Har Krishan Singh <i>Reviewed by Savita Aurora</i>		.. 480

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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

You are frightened because your breathing seems to stop when you try to concentrate. Don't enter this path of Yoga if you are so full of fears. Suppose it comes to the worst, then what will happen? You may die—and then? What great harm will be done if you are dead? Our Yoga is not for cowards; if you have no courage, better leave it—your fears will bring disaster.

\*

Fear is hidden consent. When you are afraid of something, it means that you admit its possibility and thus strengthen its hands. It can be said that it is subconscious consent. Fear can be overcome in many ways. The ways of courage, faith, knowledge are some of them.

\*

Unless you work hard you do not get energy, because in that case you do not need it and don't deserve it. You get energy only when you make use of it.

\*

Do not forget even for a moment that all this has been created by the Divine out of Himself. Not only is He present in everything, but also He is everything. The differences are only in expression and manifestation.

If you forget this you lose everything.

# TRUE IMPULSE FOR ACTION

## AN ANSWER FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

*Before undertaking any action one tries to know whether the impulse comes from the Mother or not, but generally one doesn't have enough discernment to know it and yet one acts. Can one know from the result of the action whether it came from the Mother or not?*

ONE does not have the discernment because one does not care to have it! Listen, I don't think there is a single instance in which one does not find within oneself something very clear, but you must sincerely want to know—we always come back to the same thing—you must sincerely want it. The first condition is not to begin thinking about the subject and building all sorts of ideas: opposing ideas, possibilities, and entering into a formidable mental activity. First of all, you must put the problem as though you were putting it to someone else, then keep silent, remain like that, immobile. And then, after a little while you will see that at least three different things may happen, sometimes more. Take the case of an intellectual, one who acts in accordance with the indications of his head. He has put the problem and he waits. Well, if he is indeed attentive, he will notice that there is (the chronological order is not absolute, it may come in a different order) at first (what is most prominent in an intellectual) a certain idea: "If I do that in this way, it will be all right; it must be like that", that is to say, a mental construction. A second thing which is a kind of impulse: "That will have to be done. That is good, it must be done." Then a third which does not make any noise at all, does not try to impose itself on the others, but has the tranquillity of a certitude—not very active, not giving a shock, not pushing to action, but something that knows and is very quiet, very still. This will not contradict the others, will not come and say, "No, that's wrong"; it says simply, "See, it is like this", that's all, and then it does not insist. The majority of men are not silent enough or attentive enough to be aware of it, for it makes no noise. But I assure you it is there in everybody and if one is truly sincere and succeeds in being truly quiet, one will become aware of it. The thinking part begins to argue, "But after all, this thing will have this consequence and that thing will have that consequence, and if one does this..." and this, and that... and its noise begins again. The other (the vital) will say, "Yes, it *must* be done like that, it *must* be done, you don't understand, it *must*, it is indispensable." There! then you will know. And according to your nature you will choose either the vital impulse or the mental leading, but very seldom do you say quite calmly, "Good, it is this I am going to do, whatever happens", and even if you don't like it very much. But it is always there. I am sure that it is there even in the murderer before he kills, you understand, but his outer being makes such a lot of noise that it never even occurs to him to listen. But it is always there, always there. In every circumstance, there

is in the depth of every being, just this little (one can't call it "voice", for it makes no sound), this little indication of the divine Grace, and sometimes to obey it requires a formidable effort, for all the rest of the being opposes it violently, one part with the conviction that what it thinks is true, another with all the power, the strength of its desire. But don't tell me that one can't know, for that is not true. One can know. But one does not always know what is necessary, and sometimes, if one knows what is to be done, well, one finds some excuse or other for not doing it. One tells oneself, "Oh! I am not so sure, after all, of this inner indication; it does not assert itself with sufficient force for me to trust it." But if you were quite indifferent, that is, if you had no desire, either mental or vital or physical desire, you would know with certainty that it is that which must be done and nothing else. What comes and gets in the way is preference—preferences and desires. Every day one may have hundreds and hundreds of examples. When people begin to say, "Truly I don't know what to do", it always means that they have a preference. But as here in the Ashram they know there is something else and as at times they have been a little attentive, they have a vague sensation that it is not quite that: "It is not quite that, I don't feel quite at ease." Besides, you were saying a while ago that it is the result which gives you the indication; it has even been said (it has been written in books) that one judges the divine will by the results!—all that succeeds has been willed by the Divine; all that doesn't, well, He has not willed it! This is yet again one of those stupidities big as a mountain. It is a mental simplification of the problem, which is quite comic. That's not it. If one can have an indication (in proportion to one's sincerity), it is uneasiness, a little uneasiness—not a great uneasiness, just a little uneasiness. Here, you know, you have another means, quite simple (I don't know why you do not use it, because it is quite elementary); you imagine I am in front of you and then ask yourself, "Would I do this before Mother, without difficulty, without any effort, without something holding me back?" That will never deceive you. If you are sincere you will know immediately. That would stop many people on the verge of folly.

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# MATRIMANDIR

## THE SANCTUARY OF TRUTH

*“Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine’s answer to man’s aspiration for perfection.”*

The Mother

WHAT is this perfection for which man aspires and with which the Divine responds?

“A divine perfection of the human being is our aim. We must know then, first, what are the essential elements that constitute man’s total perfection; secondly, what we mean by a divine as distinguished from a human perfection of our being. That man as a being is capable of self-development and of some approach at least to an ideal standard of perfection which his mind is able to conceive, fix before it and pursue, is common ground to all thinking humanity, though it may be only the minority who concern themselves with this possibility as providing the one most important aim of life. But by some the ideal is conceived as a mundane change, by others as a religious conversion.

“The mundane perfection is sometimes conceived of as something outward, social, a thing of action, a more rational dealing with our fellowmen and our environment, a better and more efficient citizenship and discharge of duties, a better, richer, kindlier and happier way of living, with a more just and more harmonious associated enjoyment of the opportunities of existence.

“By others again a more inner and subjective ideal is cherished, a clarifying and raising of the intelligence, will and reason, a heightening and ordering of power and capacity in the nature, a nobler, ethical, a richer aesthetic, a finer emotional, a much healthier and better governed vital and physical being. Sometimes, one element is stressed, almost to the exclusion of the rest; sometimes, in wider and more well balanced minds, the whole harmony is envisaged as a total perfection. A change of education and social institutions is the outward means adopted or an inner self-training and development is preferred as the true instrumentation. Or the two aims may be clearly united, the perfection of the inner individual, the perfection of the outer living.

“The object of our synthetic Yoga must, in this respect too as in its other parts, be more integral and comprehensive, embrace all these elements or these tendencies of a larger impulse of self-perfection and harmonise them or rather unify, and in order to do that successfully it must seize on a truth which is wider than the ordinary religious and higher than the mundane principle.

“All life is a secret Yoga, an obscure growth of Nature towards the discovery and fulfilment of the divine principle hidden in her which becomes progressively less obscure, more self-conscious and luminous, more self-possessed in the human being

by the opening of all his instruments of knowledge, will, action, life to the spirit within him and in the world. Mind, life, body, all the forms of our nature are the means of this growth, but they find their last perfection only by opening out to something beyond them, first because they are not the whole of what man is, secondly, because that other something which he is, is the key of his completeness and brings a light which discovers to him the whole high and large reality of his being.

“Mind is fulfilled by a greater knowledge of which it is only a half-light, life discovers its meaning in a greater power and will of which it is the outward and as yet obscure functioning, body finds its last use as an instrument of a power of being of which it is a physical support and material starting-point. They have all themselves first to be developed and find out their ordinary possibilities; all our normal life is a trying of these possibilities and an opportunity for this preparatory and tentative self-training. But life cannot find its perfect self-fulfilment till it opens to that greater reality of being of which by this development of richer power and a more sensitive use and capacity it becomes a well-prepared field of working.

“Intellectual, volitional, ethical, emotional, aesthetic and physical training and improvement are all so much to the good, but they are only in the end a constant movement in a circle without any last delivering and illumining aim, unless they arrive at a point when they can open themselves to the power and presence of the Spirit and admit its direct workings. This direct working effects a conversion of the whole which is the indispensable condition of our real perfection. To grow into the truth and power of the Spirit and by the direct action of that power to be made a fit channel of its self-expression,—a living of man in the Divine and a divine living of the Spirit in humanity,—will therefore be the principle and the whole object of an integral Yoga of self-perfection.”

What is needed to fulfil this aspiration for perfection?

“In the process of this change there must be by the very necessity of the effort two stages of its working. First, there will be the personal endeavour of the human being, as soon as he becomes aware by his soul, mind, heart of this divine possibility and turns towards it as the true object of life, to prepare himself for it and to get rid of all in him that belongs to a lower working, of all that stands in the way of his opening to the spiritual truth and its power, so as to possess by this liberation his spiritual being and turn all his natural movements into free means of its self-expression. It is by this turn that the self-conscious Yoga aware of its aim begins: there is a new awakening and an upward change of the life motive. So long as there is only an intellectual, ethical and other self-training for the now normal purposes of life which does not travel beyond the ordinary circle of working of mind, life and body, we are still only in the obscure and yet unilluminated preparatory Yoga of Nature; we are still in pursuit of only an ordinary human perfection. A spiritual desire of the Divine and of the divine perfection of a unity with him in all our being and a

spiritual perfection in all our nature, is the effective sign of this change, the precursory power of a great integral conversion of our being and living.

“The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender,—an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing—the mind’s will, the heart’s seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature;

“rejection of the movements of the lower nature—rejection of the mind’s ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind,—rejection of the vital nature’s desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being,—rejection of the physical nature’s stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, Tamas, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine;

“surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti.”

“A Yoga of integral perfection regards man as a divine spiritual being involved in mind, life and body; it aims therefore at a liberation and a perfection of his divine nature. It seeks to make an inner living in the perfectly developed spiritual being his constant intrinsic living, and the spiritualised action of mind, life and body only its outward human expression. In order that this spiritual being may not be something vague and undefinable or else but imperfectly realised and dependent on the mental support and the mental limitations, it seeks to go beyond mind to the supramental knowledge, will, sense, feeling, intuition, dynamic initiation of vital and physical action, all that makes the native working of the spiritual being. It accepts human life, but takes account of the large supraterrrestrial action behind the earthly material living, and it joins itself to the divine Being from whom the supreme origination of all these partial and lower states proceeds so that the whole of life may become aware of its divine source and feel in each action of knowledge, of will, of feeling, sense and body the divine originating impulse. It rejects nothing that is essential in the mundane aim, but enlarges it, finds and lives in its greater and its truer meaning now hidden from it, transfigures it from a limited, earthly and mortal thing to a figure of infinite, divine and immortal values.”

The Divine’s Response is the second stage:

“A greater perfection can only be arrived at by a higher power entering in and taking up the whole action of the being. The second stage of this Yoga will therefore be a persistent giving up of all the action of the nature into the hands of this greater Power, a substitution of its influence, possession and working for the personal effort, until the Divine to whom we aspire becomes the direct master of the Yoga and effects

the entire spiritual and ideal conversion of the being.”

“It proceeds by a personal effort to a conversion through a divine influence and possession; but this divine grace, if we may so call it, is not simply a mysterious flow or touch coming from above, but the all-pervading act of a divine presence which we come to know within as the power of the highest Self and Master of our being entering into the soul and so possessing it that we not only feel it close to us and pressing upon our mortal nature, but live in its law, know that law, possess it as the whole power of our spiritualised nature. The conversion its action will effect is an integral conversion of our ethical being into the Truth and Right of the divine nature, of our intellectual into the illumination of divine knowledge, our emotional into the divine love and unity, our dynamic and volitional into a working of the divine power, our aesthetic into a plenary reception and a creative enjoyment of divine beauty, not excluding even in the end a divine conversion of the vital and physical being. It regards all the previous life as an involuntary and unconscious or half-conscious preparatory growing towards this change and Yoga as the voluntary and conscious effort and realisation of the change, by which all the aim of human existence in all its parts is fulfilled, even while it is transfigured.

“To open oneself to the supracosmic Divine is an essential condition of this integral perfection; to unite oneself with the universal Divine is another essential condition... a union with the supreme Being, Consciousness and Bliss and a unity with its universal Self in all things and beings.

“Moreover, since human life is still accepted as a self-expression of the realised Divine in man, there must be an action of the entire divine nature in our life; and this brings in the need of the supramental conversion which substitutes the native action of spiritual being for the imperfect action of the superficial nature and spiritualises and transfigures its mental, vital and physical parts by the spiritual ideality.”

“There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unflinching aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.

“But the supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth....

“These are the conditions of the Light and Truth, the sole conditions under which the highest Force will descend; and it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties.... There must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power; there must be a constant and integral choice of the Truth that is descending, a constant and integral rejection of the falsehood of the mental, vital and physical Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature.”

(Compiled by Kailas from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Cent Ed. Vol. 21, Part IV, Ch. 2 and *The Mother*, Cent. Ed, Vol. 25., pp. 12-14; pp. 1,2,3.)

# THE MOTHER AND THE INDIAN HERITAGE

(Continued from the issue of May 1977)

3

## BUDDHIST DISCIPLINE

### The Dhammapada and its Times

“WE thank the Buddha for what he has brought to the progress of humanity; and as I told you in the beginning, we shall try to realise a little all the beautiful things he has taught us. But we shall leave the goal and the result of our efforts to the Supreme Lord who is beyond all comprehension.”<sup>1</sup>

With these magnificent words of appreciation and reverence the Mother concludes the series of Talks she gave to the Ashram children on the *Dhammapada*, once every week, for a period of more than a year, during 1957-58. These Talks are evidence, if evidence is needed, of the importance she attaches to the psychological discipline laid down so systematically in the Buddhist teaching. Of this discipline, the Pali *Dhammapada* provides a sufficient base. That is one of the reasons why the Mother chose this work as the text for her Talks.

A question may be asked—and the question has been discussed by modern scholars with no final solution of the problem—whether the *Dhammapada* as it has come down to us really represents the very words spoken by the Buddha. The question is, strictly speaking, of academic interest, like the question about the Gita. The important point is that it reflects the Buddha’s thought clearly enough; and expressed in a poetic manner—the *Dhammapada* ranks among the great works of religious literature—it has had an immense influence on the Buddhist world. The way the Mother has interpreted it will certainly make for its glory in the years to come. In one of her Talks she speaks of the *Dhammapada* as an utterance of the Buddha.<sup>2</sup> At another place, in these Talks, she seems to express a doubt.<sup>3</sup> We may perhaps leave the matter at that.

There is a remarkable thing about the *Dhammapada* to which the Mother draws pointed attention. It needs to be emphasised, for, as far as I am aware, this is a point that has been missed by most historians of our culture. “Throughout this teaching,” says the Mother, “there is one thing to note. It is this: one never tells you that to live well, to think rightly is the result of an effort or a sacrifice, but that, on the contrary, it is a delectable state that removes all suffering.” This is clear enough from the text. But she goes on to add, and here is the novelty: “in those days, in the time of the Buddha, living the spiritual life was a joy, a beatitude, the happiest condition, that which freed you from all the worries of the world, all suffering, all cares, that which made you happy, satisfied, contented.”<sup>4</sup>

In the books one hears a lot about the intellectual stir and the "revolt" that produced Buddhism and all the other heterodox sects of the sixth century before Christ. But that it was a return to the spirit of the Upanishads has not been so clearly seen. "When I read these ancient texts," the Mother comments with a touch of regret, "I have precisely this impression that from the inner point of view, from the point of view of the true life, there has been, well, a terrible recoil, and that for the acquisition of a few ingenious mechanisms, and some encouragements to the laziness of the physical, the acquisition of instruments or apparatus that economise the effort of living, we have renounced the reality of the inner life."<sup>5</sup>

Taken superficially, the Mother here seems to sound a note that disparages all material progress, like the ascetics of old. But she makes her position clear. "When I speak to you about the inner life, I am far from being opposed to all the modern inventions,—far from it. But to what an extent have these inventions made us artificial and stupid! How much we have lost the sense of true beauty, how we encumber ourselves with useless things! Perhaps the time is come when...with all that this knowledge of Matter has brought us, we shall be able to give to our spiritual progress a more solid base; fortified by what we have learnt of the secrets of material Nature, we shall be able now to join the two extremes and rediscover the Supreme Reality in the heart of the atom."<sup>6</sup>

### Personal Contact with the Buddha

At the outset it might be of interest to make a brief reference to the Mother's direct, personal contact with the Buddha.

One may recall the Communication which she received from him and which she has recorded in her *Prières et Méditations*.<sup>7</sup> This was in Tokyo; perhaps it came because of the Buddhist *milieu*, which must have turned her thoughts towards Sakyamuni. "I know and love you," he says, "as you knew and loved me before. I have appeared clearly before your eyes, so that you may not doubt my words in the least..."

Once again—this was much later, in Pondicherry—she recognised as "entirely authentic", one among the many statues of the Buddha shown in a cinema film. "There was several others which represented at least some of the other personalities of the Buddha." This was but natural, for the Buddha has been seen by his devotees in many forms; but the Mother recognised them all.<sup>8</sup>

### Personal Interest in the Discipline

One can easily surmise the interest taken by the Mother in the psychological discipline prescribed by the Buddha and the attention she paid to it in practice, from an anecdote she has related in one of her Talks.<sup>9</sup> Buddha has said that there is a much greater joy in overcoming a desire than in satisfying it. She was at one time making

the experiment, to verify the truth of this claim.

“There was someone” (a lady who was presumably no other than herself) “who had been invited,—this was in Paris—to a first night...of a comic opera.... The subject was nice, the piece was nice, and the music was not unpleasant. And as this was the first performance, this person [the Mother remains anonymous throughout this story] had been invited to the box of the Minister of Fine Arts, who always has a box on the first night in all the theatre halls of the Government. It so happened that this Minister of Fine Arts was a simple old good-natured man from the country, who had not lived very much in Paris. He was quite new to his Ministry, and had really a child’s delight in seeing new things. But he was a man of good manners, and since he had invited a lady, he placed her in front and he sat at the back. But he was very unhappy because he could not see everything. He was leaning forward like this, trying to see something without showing that too much.

“Now, the lady in front noticed this.... She had been enjoying the show very much, but she could see how unhappy the poor Minister was at not being able to see. Then, as if doing nothing and thinking of something else, she pushed her chair and moved back a little, so far indeed that he moved forward and he saw the whole show. Well, this person, when she moved back and gave up all desire to see the show was filled with a sense of inner joy... and a sort of peace satisfied with having done something for somebody instead of satisfying oneself, to such an extent that the evening was infinitely more pleasant than if she had listened to the performance on the stage.... And it was just at the time when this person had been studying the Buddhist discipline, and it was in compliance with the saying of the Buddha that she tried the experiment.”

The details leave one in no doubt as to who “this person” was.

### A Great Buddhist Luminary

The Mother knew Mme. Alexandra David-Neel very well. She describes her as a “great Buddhist luminary”. We have two stories about her which again throw an interesting light on the Buddhist discipline.

The first story is like this. “When she came to India, she went to see some of the great sages or gurus. I shall not tell you the names, but she went to one who looked at her and said, because she had been speaking about yoga and personal effort and all that,—he looked at her and said, ‘Are you indifferent to criticism?’ And she replied with the classic sentence, ‘Does one pay attention to the barkings of a dog?’ But, she added, when she told me the story, and with a good deal of humour, ‘it was lucky he did not ask me if I was indifferent to compliments; for that is much more difficult.’”<sup>10</sup> We shall hear more about this aspect of the Buddhist teaching.

The other story is about a lady the Mother does not name and so calls Madame Z, a lady whom she describes as a “famous Buddhist” and who is almost certainly the same person as we have met just now.

This lady was on her way to Lhasa, through the forests of Indo-China, accompanied by local people who were terribly in dread of the man-eating tigers which infested the forests. The lady was accustomed to meditate at a fixed hour every day. When the hour came, she told her companions that they might proceed and she would catch them up after her meditation was over. The men protested vehemently, saying, "There is Mr. Tiger in the forest and this is just the time when he comes in search of his dinner." The lady was not to be dissuaded, and she sat down quietly under a tree and began to meditate. Her companions had left.

"After a little while, she had the impression of a somewhat unpleasant presence. She opened her eyes to see what it was. And three or four steps away, in front of her, there was Mr. Tiger, with eyes full of greed. The good Buddhist said to herself, 'Good, if this is the way I am going to attain Nirvana, it is all right. I have only to prepare myself for leaving the body, in the right way, in the right spirit.' And without moving, without even a shudder, she closed her eyes and went into meditation again, a meditation a little more profound, a little more intense, detaching herself completely from the illusion of this world, ready to pass into Nirvana. Five minutes passed, and ten minutes and then half an hour. Nothing happened. Now, as it was time for the meditation to be over, she opened her eyes. And there was no tiger.

"Doubtless, on seeing a body that was so immobile, it had thought it was unfit to be eaten, for tigers... do not attack and eat a dead body." I dare not say, the Mother adds with her accustomed humour, that the tiger had been much impressed by the meditation, for "I do not think that tigers are very sensitive to meditation."<sup>11</sup> Nor would the Mother obviously recommend a tiger's belly as the best passage to Nirvana. But the story illustrates her admiration for the true Buddhist's zeal for meditation.

We shall see, as we come to the details of the Buddhist discipline, what part meditation plays in it.

SANAT K. BANERJI

(To be continued)

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# THE MOTHER'S BIRTH CENTENARY, 1878-1978 (21st FEBRUARY)

## THE MOTHER'S LIFE—SALIENT FACTS

- (1) The Mother was born in Paris in 1878 in an influential family. Her father was a banker and her brother became a governor.
- (2) As a child She was highly introspective, clear-minded and firm in will and conscious of a mission in life.
- (3) At 13 years of age She had, for almost a whole year, a most wonderful spiritual experience repeated every night—an experience of a high spiritual status rendering help to men, women and children, bringing to them through spiritual contact hope, joy, health and general well-being.
- (4) During the early years of this century she mastered occultism—the science and art of the subtle truths of life and existence—under a Polish teacher in Algeria.
- (5) Around 1912 She led in Paris a group of spiritual seekers and revealed to them profound spiritual insights as to the growth and fulfilment of individual and social living. She had at this time a clear and conscious perception of the aim of an integral transformation of life and the spiritual processes involved in it.
- (6) At the same time She had a persistent longing for a visit to India and a further and higher pursuit of spiritual life.
- (7) She arrived in India in 1914 at the age of 36 and on meeting Sri Aurobindo spontaneously saw and felt in Him a demonstrative assurance that the aim of the integral divine transformation of life was a complete possibility and that Her life's work lay here beside Him. And the same She pursued in her embodied form incessantly (with an interruption during the years of World War I) up till the age of 96 and built up Sri Aurobindo's spiritual work from the very beginning to an international status in Sadhana, in education and in the construction of an international township. In the literary way, She organised the *Arya*, which brought forth Sri Aurobindo's main works, and She made possible all other later publications, including Her own writings. We have to remember also Her capacities and creations in painting and music.
- (8) In Sadhana, the work consisted in giving continual individual attention and help to seekers to grow in consecration, selflessness, harmony, peace and the realisation of soul and God. Objectively it was to recreate the entire contemporary cultural life on the spiritual basis. We owe to her the Sri Aurobindo Ashram with its large community of about 2,000 persons and a vast set-up of varied departments with wide international contacts.
- (9) In education, the work consisted in organising a proper environment, creating a new atmosphere and providing for each child the individual attention

necessary for promoting in him the inmost spiritual fact of his personality rather than stuffing him externally with information and stifling the inner fact which brings unity, harmony and creativity to life. The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education with its facilities from the kindergarten to post-graduate research is the ostensible result.

- (10) The international township of Auroville was the last thing to be undertaken. The aim was to concretise human unity beyond ordinary barriers of nationality, race, language, religion etc. on a true spiritual basis. And in this too a promising good start was made.
- (11) The Ashram life and its promotion have been the basic work all along and there are thousands today who rejoice over the inspiring contact they have had from the Mother. The educational work was taken in hand in 1943 and Auroville was inaugurated in 1968.
- (12) All the three undertakings, being basically spiritual, are essentially very up-hill tasks, which have had constantly to fight against the downhill movements of normal human nature.
- (13) Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were most realistic in their approach and entirely aware of a continuing and a mounting action needed to overcome the hard resistances of life and circumstances, even when they pressed for an early decisive result. Sri Aurobindo worked long for His individual *siddhi*, which came about in 1926, to start His spiritual work in right earnest. Much longer and more strenuous was the next phase of work that was crowned with the Supramental Manifestation in 1956 and created the necessary condition for the transformation of the physical, which engaged the Mother for a long time and continues to be the further quest of the spiritual work here.
- (14) Sri Aurobindo's continued spiritual action in pursuit of the aim of integral transformation of life was vouched for by the Mother repeatedly after His passing in 1950. The same must be presumed of the Mother after She left Her body in 1973. And there is testimony enough, inner and outer, that they both continue to look after their work and the sadhaks have thus every reason to be happy in their pursuit. An energetic and a persistent pursuit of the high ideal under the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother carries its own immediate satisfaction and the assurance of a full ultimate result.

INDRA SEN

## UDAR REMEMBERS

(XI)

“His heights break off too low to reach the skies,  
His mass is buried in the animal mire.”

*Savitri*, Book 3 Canto 4

THE Mother once said to me, “You know, Udar, all my life I have tried to take someone, someone special, of course, and have worked on him or her to raise the person to the skies. I have not yet succeeded but I will go on trying.”

I give this remembrance without comment as some of those who may read it might form their own comments. I leave it at that. The most I can say is that if by a great stretch of fancy I could consider myself one of those on whom She worked I can stand as another failure.

Now I come to the opposite side. There was once someone very close to the Mother who had been a very sweet person at one time but had become, for some reason, unbearably difficult. Unbearable to any of us, but the Mother did bear everything; and to us who saw this, it was extremely distressing. Then I broke down. I could not take it any more. I felt that somehow or other I must take a drastic step to save the Mother from the pain She had to endure. I did not care for the consequences to myself. The Mother came to know of my desperate decision and took me up about it. She did not scold me at all; rather She understood the motive behind it. But She showed me how foolish was my idea. She asked me if I did not know how sweet the person had been before and then the change had come. She told me why there had been the change. It was because the person became possessed by an Asura, not just any Asura but the most powerful one, whom the Mother called “Le Seigneur des Nations” (“The Lord of the Nations”). It was that Asura’s mission to destroy the world. I asked the Mother how She could tolerate such an Asura in the Ashram. Surely She had the power to drive him away? The Mother said that he was in the Ashram because She wanted it so. In this way She could save the world, by taking the suffering on Herself. That was a great sacrifice of Hers for the world but She did not want to speak about it. Now only can I tell of it. Then the Mother went on to explain that if one killed the possessed person, one would only kill the body of a being who was really very sweet. One could not touch the Asura at all. All one would succeed in doing would be to spoil some other sweet innocent person as the Asura would promptly go on to possess him or her. And finally the Mother explained that the Asura would continue to remain in the Ashram till ultimately he was destroyed or dissolved or perhaps converted. This has happened to some of the other very powerful Asuras.

I come now to another story of the Asuras. It was during the Second World War. I must first explain what the Mother said about it all. It was not in the least a war between nations as we all felt. It was a war between the forces of Light and the

forces of Darkness, between the Gods and the Asuras. The latter were out to destroy the world, led by the same "Seigneur des Nations". And in that war some of the nations were on one side and some on the other without perhaps being aware of the real powers behind them. The Axis countries led by Hitler and Nazi Germany were the instruments of the Asura. The Allies led by England were with the Gods, perhaps without being aware of it.

This war was a very crucial one. If the powers of Darkness were to win, the whole progress of the world in its evolutionary ascent would be put back for a very long time. And so it was most necessary that the forces of Light should win. That is why Sri Aurobindo and the Mother took so much interest in the way the war was moving and They had to be kept informed of the developments from day to day.

The news was broadcast daily by radio but there was no radio-set in the Ashram at that time. We had one at the house where I and my family were living at that time, the one near the Parc à Charbon, and every night Pavitra and Pavita would come to our house for the 9.30 p.m. news broadcast and Pavita would take it down in shorthand and later transcribe her notes and send them to Sri Aurobindo. This went on for quite a long time and then when we had to go to Delhi and give up the house, the radio-set was installed in Pavitra's room and Sri Aurobindo continued to receive the daily reports. Still later, a set was installed nearer His room with a loud speaker in His room itself so that He might hear the broadcasts directly.

Then the war took a very serious turn. France collapsed and was under occupation and Hitler began to prepare an all-out attempt to invade England and occupy her also. The position was really desperate. It was then that Churchill made his great speech. Later we came to know that this speech was inspired directly by Sri Aurobindo, as He had earlier indicated what kind of declaration Churchill should make and Churchill made a declaration on the very same lines. Churchill said that the British would fight the Nazis on the beaches, in the fields, in the streets: "We will never surrender." But, it seems, one part of his speech was omitted in the broadcast. He had added, "But God knows with what." England really had nothing with which to fight except her indomitable will. Her plight was truly hopeless. Then one night that great Asura came to the Mother and began to boast and to crow, "What will happen now to your great instrument, England? She is finished. She will be crushed beneath my heel. You will see. It is all over!" The Mother replied, "It is not all over. I still have a trick up my sleeve." "And what is that?" demanded the Asura. The Mother replied, "You will see how I will make your instruments begin to fight among themselves and they will destroy each other."

The Mother recounted all this to us the very next morning. And some time later we learnt that Hitler, for some reason that no one yet has been able to discover, had decided to call off his invasion of England and turn all his forces to invade and attack his own ally, Russia. It was this change of plan that brought about his end, just as the Mother had said, and it was the turning-point of the whole war, which eventually resulted in a victory for the Divine.

# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

*(This series starting now is an autobiographical sketch by an inmate of the Ashram. He gives in it the details of the way he has pursued his Sadhana, under the Mother's and the Master's guidance, putting some of the ideas and principles of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga into his life and day-to-day activities with some tangible results. In the Integral Yoga nothing is gained till all is gained. Hence the writer thinks that what he has gained so far is just the beginning of a great end. He does not want his name to be disclosed.)*

## CHAPTER I

### SADHANA—A CALL TO BATTLE

“THIS yoga is a spiritual battle; its very attempt raises all sorts of adverse forces and one must be ready to face difficulties, sufferings, reverses of all sorts in a calm unflinching spirit.” —Sri Aurobindo

The very name of the present chapter indicates what we seek to show here, *i. e.* the Mother's working in the subtleties and intricacies of our nature.

Prior to 1950 I was well on the road to success but my battles were mostly on the surface and my success therein took the form of deep trance—a most pleasant and much longed-for state. Had my being accepted it as the highest peak, perhaps I should have passed for a saint but proved definitely unfit to be reckoned as a sadhak of the Integral Yoga. All the dirt and refuse of past births that lay accumulated in me would have remained in the abysmal vaults of my subconscious.

When the Mother's force turned my sadhana from the mental plane downward into the nether regions, I came to know a little about the profounder elements of this Yoga. Let the reader judge for himself why it is said that, where other yogas end, the Integral Yoga begins and why the Master insists upon the pre-condition that the lower parts must consent to change because without that this yoga cannot be done. Here my attempt is to give a precise picture of how sadhana was brought down into the physical and into the subconscious and why I was thrown into a veritable furnace.

In 1951 I found I could station my consciousness at the crown of the head without much effort. But the peculiarity was that almost every time the action began in the legs and gradually its pressure rose upward, possessing the whole of the upper part, making me still and motionless. At first even the mere breath seemed to disturb the silence, but gradually it grew so feeble that I lost all awareness of it. A faint sense of “I”—a point-consciousness remained at the crown of the head. There, at the summit, I sat like a king unmindful of everything—of where I was and what I was. This gave me the first taste of the Higher Life.

During this period I saw the Lord Buddha four or five times, in a very luminous form in different poses. I felt surprised that even after two thousand years the

Buddha could be seen so vividly. One day I saw him close to my eyes. Slowly his luminous figure drew still nearer and then entered my body. For a few moments I found myself lost in him.

Once at the dead of night, while awake, I saw with full vision a lance being hurled at me. I saw it coming towards me from a few yards off. And then it pierced my left eye. When another was hurled I saw the Buddha, the Compassionate, giving his protection with his right hand stretched out.

A seeker of truth wants to remain loyal to the one he has chosen as the ruler of his destiny. At the time I hardly looked at any god with worshipping eyes. Perhaps with the intention of remaining loyal only to the Mother, a prayer rose of itself, "If I am to be saved, may I be saved by the Mother alone." From then till 1958 I never again saw the Buddha. It was only in 1959, while in Sanchi (M.P.), that I saw him giving his blessings when I stood before his statue.

As a result of the lance piercing the left eye I lost its sight altogether. But when the Mother came to know of the loss I recovered completely.

Heaven knows why the forces were up against my eyesight. In 1934 they gave me untold trouble. But for the Mother's grace I should have lost the sight of both my eyes. For more than ten years my eyes were so weak that I could hardly read or write even for half an hour. In 1960 when I was in the Lake Estate and doing pruning, eyes upward, a branch of a tree broke and fell just below the lower lid of one eye pricking the sensitive part of the socket and letting out blood. Here also the Mother's Grace came to my rescue. If it had hit me half an inch above, it would have destroyed my eye forever.

After the passing of the Master I had a number of fine experiences. I shall mention a few.

One day at 11 a.m., just after sending a letter to the Mother, I was about to sit down to my lunch. But I felt inclined to lie down for a while. All of a sudden my consciousness began to rise higher and higher into the sky. The body lay inert. Thus passed the whole afternoon. In the evening while in an arm-chair I saw a shadowy figure grinding its teeth at a distance. But the conquering spirit in me became awakened. I covered my body with the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's photographs and then told this monster in a challenging tone, "Do whatever you like, you can't do any harm to me." I requested a friend of mine to utter the name of the Mother in my ears. A little afterwards I saw a circle of Light around my chair. This helped me to remain fully withdrawn. When in the Playground the Mother was informed of my state she said, "Don't disturb him; he is fully conscious." At about 9 p.m. she sent some water with Udar, which looked white like watery milk as I drank it, though what was sent was pure water.

Next day again my consciousness went out of the body and began soaring up. It was perhaps my subtle body shooting up to measureless heights beyond the earthly atmosphere. It is difficult to describe such airy experiences. (I had had similar experiences of floating in the air several times before 1939 when powerful descents had

occurred.) The moment the upward movement came to a halt, my consciousness began to drop more sharply than when it was ascending.

When it entered the earth-belt it refused to come down and enter the body. Just at that crucial moment I visioned the Mother in her usual form in a gown, all white. But for her timely intervention it would have been all over with me. Had the connecting life-line been broken, the soul could not have returned to the body. Does it not show that all our problems are before her? She came to my help without my call and in the nick of time.<sup>1</sup>

From that moment it became difficult for me to keep my consciousness centred in the terrestrial plane. Again and again it tended to rise up. For more than a week I had not a wink of sleep. Whenever I closed my eyes the mind wanted to soar high. But hours of continued ascent caused severe pain and burning all over the body; not only did the body shrink from the higher pressure but it also greatly feared to admit that action into itself.

Once while outwardly unconscious, I felt something moving upward with great speed through the spine. It could rise only up to the neck when my eyes opened.<sup>2</sup>

During those days the Mother used to come for our Pranam four times a week. As the pressure was beyond my capacity to assimilate I sought the Mother's protection and went to the Pranam with a bunch of Protection Flowers hidden in my pocket. For more than a minute she kept looking at my eyes, flooding me with her divine smile. I still remember the graciousness she poured into me then. After my turn, I stood with my eyes fixed on her and drinking in the sweetness of her presence. I had had no such experience before of her love and sweetness.

With the return of the normal state of consciousness I had for a year a constant light of living faith in the heart.

All these experiences relate to this period. Now for the last one which changed the whole course of my sadhana. In deep meditation I saw a pit—a bottomless void with impregnable darkness before my eyes. It gave a tremor to my whole being. A prayer voiced forth, "If there is the least bit of sincerity in me, I pray that the Mother's force may guide me in doing her will." Then there rose a strength to take a plunge. I dived deeper and deeper, all the while led by a fine thread of light. After considerable time the light disappeared and my journey to the inner recesses came to an abrupt end. How little I knew at that time that it was an invitation to a rain-like series of dangers and disasters.

*(To be continued)*

<sup>1</sup> "If you keep the wideness and calm and also the love for the Mother in the heart, then all is safe—for it means the double foundation of the yoga."—Sri Aurobindo

<sup>2</sup> In the life of Sri Ramakrishna we come across the following:

"I shall tell you when that mysterious power rises up through the spinal column .. The scriptures speak of its having five kinds of motion. .ant-like, frog-like, serpentine motion, bird-like motion and monkey-like motion "

## COMMERCIALISM IN YOGA

YOGA has been defined from time immemorial as Union with the Divine, union individual, universal and transcendental or all the three together. There are Yogas like Hatha Yoga meant only for the good maintenance and strengthening of the body but they hardly deserve the appellation of Yoga; they are not Yoga proper but only an apology for Yoga.

Yoga has always been an esoteric science based on the highest personal experience and then transmitted to the disciples or recorded for posterity. There were ashrams in ancient times and there are ashrams in our own times scattered throughout the length and breadth of India where disciples gather round the Guru who houses, feeds and clothes them and imparts spiritual instructions to each according to his or her nature and receptivity. So Yoga was never sold for money, power, name, fame or any other consideration. It was a sacred task given to the Guru by God to lead men to the only secure path of freedom from which all anger, desire, greed, fear and all other complexes of egoistic life were eliminated for enjoyment of the ultimate bliss and consciousness of Sachchidananda. This was the agelong ideal and it bore fruit in producing from time to time individuals of the highest purity, power and perfection in this misery-stricken world of ours. We have had a galaxy of saints and sages who have illumined the darkness of the ages to lead humanity to its destined goal of union with the Divine who alone is the origin, base and continent of the whole of existence, animate and inanimate. "Existence is One: sages call It by various names."

The old order is fast changing. We have now any number of Yoga Institutes advertised in papers where yoga knowledge is sold for money as if yoga were a subject which can be learned and mastered in course of a few months or years as in the case of academic studies. It is curious that people having any knowledge of Yoga Shastras should connive at and even encourage or themselves engage in this trend of commercialisation of Yoga, a hallowed science. It leads to no good but only caters to the pecuniary profit of the teachers and a few of their accomplices, and breeds only possessive and acquisitive habits in their followers who gain nothing truly spiritual by such learning. Yoga proper not only delivers us from all bondages, attachments and fears but brings supreme peace, knowledge, power, love and bliss to all those who are sincere and earnest in their search for the supreme good of life, namely, union with the Divine. Do the commercial Yoga Institutes produce such results?

JIBENDRA



# THE WORDS OF POETRY

(Continued from the issue of May 1977)

3

THE words of prose, even at their best, are transmissive : they draw attention less to themselves, whether singly or in an *ensemble*, than to that which communicates across them. But, if the words of poetry perform a different function, let us not commit the mistake of imagining that they do it by subduing to themselves what makes a communication across their independent existence. That would give rise to sheer verbosity, an excess of sound over sense. The true performance of the poetic word is just to be inseparable from its substance. If you alter the word, the substance ceases to be the same. What a world of difference if Wordsworth came rewritten with the terminal "lie" disturbed:

Love had he found in huts where poor men sleep—

or Sri Aurobindo were cut off from the final "bliss" and converted into:

Bear; thou shalt find at last thy road to joy.

Even to substitute "rest" for "lie", and "path" or "way" for "road", would mean utter loss. The word of poetry is not transmissive, it is—if we may coin an epithet—incarnative.

There, too, however, we must discriminate. Poetic incarnateness is itself of three varieties. The first takes place when language rises from its most primitive stage to a more conscious grade. A man's chuckling, whining, shouting or else imitating Nature's noises to express himself: that is language at its most primitive—a voice of raw feeling or crude sensation. At a slightly higher level we have some stir of thought, but it is tied down to the arranging of sensations and feelings, and the language is still rather awkward and incomplete—helped out by gesture and look. It is not yet a skilful and self-supporting medium. But we have a foreshadowing of the poetic level, for significant onomatopoeia is frequent. And, out of the tremors and quivers of sensation and the thrilled answers of emotion, words can now be vividly born for thought to arrange them. Sri Aurobindo has cited the Sanskrit word *vrika*, signifying "tearer", for the wolf, as an excellent example of subtly significant speech put by sensation and emotion at the disposal of thought. The English word "wolf" is also of the same kind, though here what is conveyed is a blend of frightening noise and ravenous swallowing. Raised to a degree of greater psychological refinement, language at this level can yield on a collective scale whole lines that make use of such words or their more cunning analogues to constitute a complete unit of expressive poetry.

We have Tennyson's

The mellow ouzel fluting in the elm

as an exquisite music snatched from the natural world. Nature and a touch of some mystery behind it come together on a haunting sound-ripple in Seumas O'Sullivan's

And many rivers murmuring in the dark.

An evocation of a supernatural being is Sri Aurobindo's powerful picture—in a narrative written in 1899—of one of the Serpent-guardians of the Underworld as Hinduism has imagined it:

Magic Carcotaca all flecked with fire.

A more elaborate triumph in the same genre is the sense Sri Aurobindo creates in us of that Underworld itself, "Hopeless Patala" where,

in vague sands  
And indeterminable strange rocks and caverns  
That into silent blackness huge recede,  
Dwell the great serpent and his hosts, writhed forms,  
Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues  
Coiling in a half darkness. Shapes he saw,  
And heard the hiss and knew the lambent light  
Loathsome, but passed compelling his strong soul.

Such speech is surely incarnative, for substance and word have grown one; yet the incarnative function is limited. The poetic perfection is of the surface, whether the surface be of Nature or Supernature. The gross body, *sthula sharira*—to employ an Upanishadic description—of the poetic movement is made soul-active, the subtle body, *sukshma sharira*, is still not called into play, much less the causal or archetypal body, *karana sharira*, which is the inmost and highest truth to be manifested in the incarnative dynamism.

But before the subtle and the causal incarnativeness can come, there intervenes in the process of language what I have labelled as the transmissive use. Here the thinking mind disengages itself from emotion and sensation and works in the interests of its own acute or rarefied or far-ranging powers. At first it is—to take again a term from Indian philosophical psychology—the *sakshi Purusha*, the watching or witness Self; then comes the *anumanta*-power of just saying "Yes" or "No" to the Nature-flux, *Prakriti*, of the speech of sensation and emotion, but by its support or lack of support it gives the flux on the whole a deliberate turn serving its own characteristic purposes. Afterwards there is a greater more detailed lordship, leading to a creativeness exercised from a free domain above and beyond sensation and emotion: the *Purusha* becomes the *Ishwara*, the Godlike Self, and orders his own representative language. But there is a certain aloofness from words, a being outside

them—and somehow the finest potentialities of them are untapped. Words tend to be counters, any word can be made to mean anything provided all agree upon the usage. The closeness between sound and experience, between tone and consciousness, is diminished. Abstract language, though highly efficient in its freedom and analytic exactitude, is the result. But the intellect, in its *Ishwara*-poise, can also stretch its hand, as it were, to guide the word-flow instead of ruling that flow by its lordly eye. Then we get some warmth of pressure, some feel of nearness, and the thought-speech becomes prose as an art

A few instances may be offered. The master of words handling them not quite from afar but by a dexterous contact is T.H. Huxley clarifying in one of his “lay sermons” a certain side of universal fact, a side most likely to impress a hard-headed scientist in his moments of enlightened analysis:

“The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance.”

The word-master not only leaning near and manipulating his counters but also warming them with the contact of his own mind is the writer of this eloquent excerpt from the *Education of Henry Adams* (Chapter 28):

“Power is poison. Its effects on Presidents had always been tragic, chiefly as an almost insane excitement at first, and a worse reaction afterwards; but also because no mind is so well balanced as to bear the strain of seizing unlimited force without habit or knowledge of it; and finding it disputed with him by hungry packs of wolves and hounds whose lives depend on snatching the carrion.”

The wielder of mastery over words, gone further than warming them and grown successful by a hold on their potentialities to kindle them into disclosing secrets of our being with a measured yet moving light, is Robert Green Ingersoll who, atheist though he is by intellectual persuasion, can nonetheless articulate—as *At the Bier of a Friend* shows—an eternal aspiration of man’s heart:

“We have our dream. The idea of immortality, that like a sea has ebbed and flowed in the human heart, beating with its countless waves against the sands and rocks of time and fate, was not born of any creed, nor of any book, nor of any religion. It was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow beneath the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness, as long as love kisses the lips of death.”

As a whole this is true to the *dharma* (innate law) of prose—it is thought set forth in sequences of progression, employing imagery to render itself clearer, but in places the non-ideative which the ideas are trying to shadow forth pierces through and the rhythmic imagination of poetry takes intermittent charge and at the end stands out boldly in a perfectly phrased and effectively modulated iambic pentameter with a reversed third foot achieving appropriate emphasis and poignancy:

As lóng/as lóve/kísses/the líps/of déath.

This pentameter may well exemplify in one kind what we have termed the subtle body of poetic incarnateness, which can be achieved only after the transmissive mode of prose literature has been made sovereignly available in the poet's consciousness during the act of creation. Ideas and a strong controlled precision in transmitting them must grow natural to one before one can pass beyond them to a power of more than gross incarnateness. Now capable of all thought, words again are no longer counters or even marionettes moved splendidly from outside, but living bodies: the substance gets identified with them. There is not the primitive identification but a superior one. To adopt Aurobindonian nomenclature, we have not the soul's blind absorption into Nature but the bright fusing of the inner with the outer, the golden descent of the higher into the lower, a transformation of Nature by the soul and Spirit. Once more we have "sensation" or "emotion", but it is filled with nuances beyond the crude touch, the raw appeal, of things—or rather the touch or the appeal of things is not found just vibrantly surface-new by an inner seeing and hearing: the inner itself is seen and heard and the experience of it merged with the sensation-quality, the emotion-aspect of language.

## 4

If we wish to exemplify at more length the incarnateness through the subtle body, we cannot do better than start with the sestet of a sonnet of Rupert Brooke's, which, when detached from the much inferior octave, can stand as an independent piece at once of Nature-evocation and of visionary symbolism:

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter  
 And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,  
     Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance  
 And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white  
     Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,  
 A width, a shining peace, under the night.

A more explicit emblematic expression, the metaphor more directly taxed for psychological suggestion, we meet in a few words of Eliot's which vivify an adventure of the soul, dangerous and arduous, through a glimpse of exotic geography opening up some strange inner world of pilgrim vision and priestly aspiration:

Across a whole Thibet of broken stones  
 That lie fang-up, a lifetime's march...

Perhaps a more helpful citation would be one that allows a thematic comparison in general with some of those we have listed for gross incarnateness. Over against "Magic Carcotaca" and "Hopeless Patala" from Sri Aurobindo's *Love and Death* we

may put a few lines from his *Savitri*, holding again a vision of Supernature. A perverse paradoxical religion in the worlds of anti-divinity behind the veil is pictorially interpreted:

A dragon power of reptile energies  
 And strange epiphanies of grovelling Force  
 And serpent grandeurs couching in the mire  
 Drew adoration to a gleam of slime.

An inlet to a black void at the back of evolutionary Nature comes fraught with its suggestion of an abysmal Enigma:

Weird ran the road which, like fear hastening  
 Towards that of which it has most terror, passed  
 Phantasmal between pillared conscious rocks  
 Sombre and high, gates brooding, whose stone thoughts  
 Lost their huge sense beyond in giant night.

It is not easy always to discern where the subtle body ends and the causal or archetypal, which discloses concretely the very source of all magic and mystery, begins. From inevitable imaginative description to inevitable imaginative interpretation or suggestion goes the poetic word from the *sthula sharira* to the *sukshma*: one may succeed in demarcating the two, though at times there is overlapping. But the borders between the interpretative or suggestive on the one side and the revelatory on the other are often shifting or fluctuant. In the last two quotations the causal appears to peep out through the subtle at one or two spots. Similar is the case of a pair of stanzas from John A. Chadwick. No difficulty in distinguishing them from a short poem by C. Day Lewis on a subject we have already illustrated with three passages: the Swan. Day Lewis achieves what a critic has designated as "a memorable and clearly realized experience through . . . one of the most conventional articles of the poet's repertory":

Behold the swan  
 Riding at her image, anchored there  
 Complacent, a water-lily upon  
 The ornamental water:  
 Queen of the mute October air  
 She broods in that unbroken  
 Reverie of reed and water.

This is the *sthula sharira* in an elegant posture of sensation and emotion responsive with poetic inwardness to the surface of things. Unquestionably different from it in incarnative shape is Chadwick's

Across unmoving lake  
 A mirror theme  
 Of swans with white wings take  
 Their endless dream.

Poise-perfect is the set  
 Of lunar-bright  
 Pinions of trance where silence met  
 Unveering light.

Sri Aurobindo's comment on the stanzas runs: "Exceedingly beautiful, full of light and colour and suggestive image." Have we here the acme of the *sukshma sharira* sheer and clear or is there a blend of the *karana* with it or does the pure *karana* confront us?

Beyond any misgiving, however, in spite of the descriptive and suggestive modes taken up into them, are nine verses that stood together in an old version of *Savitri*. We may assert the full feel of the causal poetic body when we receive through them the first light of dawn with an effect upon the most inward eye:

The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still.  
 Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.  
 A slow miraculous gesture dimly came,  
 The insistent thrill of a transfiguring touch  
 Persuaded the inert black quietude  
 And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.  
 A wandering hand of pale enchanted light  
 That glowed along a fading moment's brink  
 Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge  
 A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.

What is it that divides this passage from Brooke's sestet? Broadly one may observe. "Something in the manner of the sight, the mode of the rhythm. In Brooke the sight draws natural phenomena more or less as they are—at least through most of the lines—into an inner significance. Except for the tinge of humanising nouns like 'laughter' and 'gesture', these phenomena remain themselves in the first two sentences but are so arranged as to conjure up an extraordinary sense: only in the third sentence is there a sudden quickening of sight into insight—and the inner significance, the extraordinary sense, deals directly with them. In Sri Aurobindo the insight is all the time working in the sight: every movement is inwardly meaningful while being outwardly descriptive. And there is a tone which is addressed to the Upanishadic 'Ear behind the ear': a vast sound-wave rises and falls with an impulsion that mingles the controlled resonance of connotative language with an unfathomable harmony of

the Unknown. Such a harmony always accompanies poetic speech, but mostly it enwraps this speech like an aura: here it precipitates in the speech and pervades it."

Perhaps no comment could more elucidate the quality of these nine verses than the answer Sri Aurobindo himself gave to a critic's question apropos of the technique. The critic had asked: "Are there not too many double adjectives? Would it not be an improvement if some variety were introduced and a less obvious method followed?" Sri Aurobindo wrote back:

"If a slow wealth-burdened movement is the right thing, as it certainly is here in my judgment, the necessary means have to be used to bring it about—and the double adjective is admirably suited for the purpose. Do not forget that *Savitri* is spiritual poetry cast into a symbolic figure. Done on this rule, it is really a new attempt and cannot be hampered by old ideas of technique except when they are assimilable ... The attempt at mystic spiritual poetry of the kind I am at demands above all a spiritual objectivity, an intense psycho-physical concreteness. According to certain canons, epithets should be used sparingly, free use of them is rhetorical, an 'obvious' device, a crowding of images is bad taste, there should be subtlety of art not displayed but severely concealed....Very good for a certain standard of poetry, not so good or not good at all for others. Shakespeare kicks over these traces at every step, Aeschylus freely and frequently, Milton wherever he chooses. Such lines as

In hideous ruin and combustion, down  
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
In adamantine chains and penal fire

or

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast  
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains  
In cradle of the rude imperious surge—

(note two double adjectives in three lines in the last)—are not subtle or restrained or careful to conceal their elements of powerful technique, they show rather a vivid richness or vehemence, forcing language to its utmost power of expression. That has to be done still more in this kind of mystic poetry. I cannot bring out the spiritual objectivity if I have to be miserly about epithets, images, or deny myself the use of all available resources of sound-significance. The double epithets are indispensable here and in the exact order in which they are arranged by me. The rich burdened movement might be secured by other means, but a rich burdened movement of any kind is not my primary object, it is desirable only because it is needed to express the spirit of the action here; and the double epithets are wanted because they are the best, not only one way of securing it. The 'gesture' must be 'slow miraculous'—if it is merely miraculous or merely slow, that does not create a picture of the thing as it is, but of something

quite abstract and ordinary or concrete and ordinary—it is the combination that renders the exact nature of the mystic movement, with the ‘dimly came’ completing it, so that ‘gesture’ is not here a metaphor but a thing actually done. Equally a ‘pale light’ or an ‘enchanted light’ may be very pretty, but it is only the combination that renders the luminosity which is that of the hand acting tentatively in the darkness. That darkness itself is described as a quietude which gives it a subjective spiritual character and brings out the thing symbolised, but the double epithet ‘inert black’ gives it the needed concreteness so that the quietude ceases to be something abstract and becomes something concrete, objective but still spiritually subjective. Every word must be the right word, with the right atmosphere, the right relation to all the other words, just as every sound in its place and the whole sound together must bring out the imponderable significance which is beyond verbal expression....”

An interesting point for comparison with the Brooke-estet is provided by the occurrence of a few common words in the two quotations. Sri Aurobindo has spoken of his “gesture” being so supported by the rest of the line as to be no mere metaphor but a thing actually done. In Brooke we have “Frost, with a gesture...” It is vivid but still merely metaphorical. Similarly he has “lit by the rich skies”, but it works a different charm altogether from the objective-subjective presence of void Nature and vague Supernature in

The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still.

Finally, take the neo-romantic “wandering loveliness” generalising “the waves that dance”. Although it felicitously widens out the meaning, there is nothing in it of the revelation prepared of the gold-panelled opalescent-hinged gate of dreams by

A wandering hand of pale enchanted light.

Sri Aurobindo has not just seen a divine power behind the dawn-moment: he has brought it right into the speech echoing the break of day and he has done it with an accurate word-scheme and a precise rhythm-design—the latter perhaps even more crucial than the former, for in it the very life-throb of the hidden reality is reproduced, setting up vibrations in our deepest aesthetic self and awakening in us an empathic response to the intuitive art.

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA



## PONDICHERY REVISITED

### I

ONCE again in this strange magical land!  
Silent, empty, dream-filled roads—  
Drowsy blue mists at the approach of evening—  
Deep dark-velvet skies—starry abodes!

White stone-houses, low, flat-roofed—  
Hint of flowers, soul-fragrant air—  
Continuous roar of the distant sea—  
A feeling of Protection, an everpresent Care

Enveloping this whole town of bliss—  
An unbelievable different world!  
The feel of a "Presence" at the turn of a head—  
Within and without, a wondrous Peace unfurled!

17-3-1977

### 2

These quaint white-stoned courtyards gleaming in the sun,  
Is it in reality I see once more?  
Calm clouds sailing in Spirit-sapphire space,  
The lulling swish of palms on the distant shore?

As I pass on my way, in the quiet of the streets,  
With houses basking in the still, hot air,  
The deep-green trees as from eternity  
Rain blessings on our hearts laid bare.

An unbelievable different world,  
Awaiting rebirth, a breathlessness,  
A constant inward expectancy,  
Yet untensed, without stress!

23-3-1977

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

## MORNING DEW

COME, touch my soul when, as now, it's waiting,  
Embrace me with the light I need,  
That touch of spark-igniting power that is yours.  
Come in the moment when the magic is descending,  
When the sun makes light of the misty hour  
And the gossamer web is spun across the heart—  
When expectation is at a peak  
And the cells are fashioning the enthusiast,  
It is best for us to meet  
In the morning hour of strong hope  
When possibilities feel the gladiator's strength.  
Come look, the palms have started their amorous dance,  
I think they are in love with the wind,  
The star-flowers have opened their blooms  
And the squirrels are mad with joy.  
The winged minstrels are tuning  
Their throats everywhere  
And honey is warm on my lips.

Come, before the banalities begin  
And the small-talkers seal my ears to song.  
It's hard to hold the spell  
When the day swells with ordinary things;  
The marketeers call selling their wares,  
The workers start to come—  
Let us not meet on peripheral planes,  
Come when my garden is fresh with dew,  
When the day is pure.

GEORGETTE COTY

## A SHEAF OF SYMBOLS

*(Continued from the issue of May 1977)*

### 11

METHINKS, one morning (some Suprabhāta sure),  
My milkmaid always turning up at six  
Will find my door closed, and knock and knock,  
And bawl out "Dada, Dada!" to no avail!...  
Then, pressing her beating heart with both her hands,  
She'll call out neighbours, and share her misgivings dark;  
And they will come with implementing tools  
And force the door open—and greet stark sight  
Of 'Duncan' lying in majestic full-repose!...

And then there will be bustling to and fro,  
And the coroner will pass his grim verdict,  
And the elders will be busy with bamboo-sticks  
(While youngsters fish about for odds and ends):  
And tie him fast to bier lest he come back  
And tax and vex them with his exactitude,  
And soon a small procession of hardly six  
Will make for the brink of young Saraswati-stream  
Where, piling up a pyre, they will lay the bier thereon,  
And, flashing a stick, will yell out loud and clear:  
"To Fire be consigned the veriest self of Fire!"  
And a spirit ever-hovering will echo back from cliffs: "YES, FIRE!"

### 12

Newer and newer Problem-Predicaments  
Crop up daily—nay, almost from hour to hour—  
And stare me in the face with sphinx-like gaze:  
Hardly do I set the ghost of one to rest  
When another pops up its inglorious mask,  
Laughing in sleeves, like the swindler-chique of Three  
Who fleeced the pious one of his fair-got Kid  
And feasted in merriment at the gullible's cost.

Who is it, yea, who plays this darksome game?—  
The Eternal Enemy or the Antagonist-self?

Who plays his thousand tricks on one and all,  
 And specially on the self-righteous chosen ones—  
 On Dhruva, Prahlad, Nala and all the rest?

And how did they get out of their scrapes, I ask,  
 At the distant end of tribulations sore?  
 Was it their Patience and Persistence mere,  
 Was it sheer force of Sincerity and Faith,  
 O was it the Intervention of Grace Divine  
 Terminating the Gajagraha Tug<sup>1</sup> at Moment Ripe?...  
 "I cannot understand, I love," rings one:  
 So mine but to love the Feet at Core of Heart—and adore their Impress  
 there!

CHIMANBHAI

<sup>1</sup> The tussle between the elephant and the tortoise in ancient legend.

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## PURUSHA

O LITTLE One no bigger  
 than my thumb, they say,  
 You sleep behind my heart  
 from life to life until  
 in one my longing for  
 Your love grown desperate  
 past bearing, bears You:

Soundlessly You surge  
 awake to meet the world  
 and clasp it close in love,  
 O little One embracing  
 all, containing all,  
 grown greater far than heart  
 or thumb or world and I.

SEYRIL

# THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

## CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of May 1977)

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

WE have yet to consider the role of Iago and his intrigue, to which Bradley ascribes a major place in the tragedy. Granted that there are forces in life moving to cancel the relationship between him and the Moor, we may still ask why a man like Iago should be drawn into the tragedy as a key figure. One observation bears reflection. We notice some marked similarities between Othello and Iago. Both men are fearless. Both take joy in a sense of power, self-control, execution of will. Both have an artistic tendency—Othello for poetic language and romantic images, Iago for clever plots leading to tragedy in life. Furthermore, the two possess certain character traits which are not merely different but diametrically opposed to each other. Othello is intensely passionate, sensual and emotional. Iago is passionless, cold, without sympathy or affection or feeling, lacking even strong desires. Othello's mind is simple, open, trusting and frank. He lacks insight into human nature. He has a romantic view of life—men, love, war—an attitude affirming the value of life. Iago has a developed intelligence without the corresponding support of emotion. He is clever, deceitful, secretive and perverse. His insight is subtle and keen. His view of life is cynical. He questions the value of good, virtue, love, etc. Othello is extremely self-confident. He has the mellowness which comes with great achievement and recognition. Iago asserts superiority but is driven by a damaged pride and self-esteem. In summary, the similarity in their characters is the basis for an extreme contrast. Iago, who is limited, destructive and evil, appears as the very negation of Othello who is expansive, creative and good-hearted.

The relationship between Othello and Iago is highly significant. It is as though life has presented Othello with a man who embodies all the elements he lacks in himself and which must be gained or mastered in order to continue living. Othello has created a romantic world in life around himself and Desdemona. It is idealistic in the sense of being far above the drab and pettiness of normal human existence and their own human natures. Desdemona responds to his world with a mental idealism. Both lack a realistic comprehension of themselves, each other and the world around. Life presents them with the realities they overlook. Neither one recognises the challenge or possesses the necessary capacity to meet it. What Othello needs to support his romantic idealism is Iago's intelligence and knowledge of human nature.

The role of Iago can be closely likened to that of the evil persona in yoga, for all principles of yoga have their versions in life. When man makes a yogic effort to

exceed himself and do spiritual work, it happens that another being comes "which is just the contradiction of the thing he centrally represents in the work.... Its business seems to be to oppose, to create stumblings and wrong conditions, in a word, to set before him the whole problem of the work he has started to do."<sup>34</sup> In this case the work was Othello's attempt to live a romantic dream and, indeed, we may say he succeeded in some measure if only for a moment, but it could not last because the intensity of the experience was too much for his being to sustain. Furthermore, it was established on a basic ignorance of life and civilised man. Life hastened to present him with the realities he had overlooked in the form of Iago. To quote F. R. Leavis, "Iago's power... is that he represents something in Othello."<sup>35</sup>

Iago is similarly related to Desdemona. She takes positive action in life based on mental decisions which have negative results because her mind is fixed and limited. She fails to consider the effect of her action on her father, the social consciousness of Venice or her own nature. The same quality of mind is there in Iago but as its negative complement. Destruction is the aim rather than an unintended result. But he too shows traces of her limitation and lack of insight. He fails to consider Emilia's love for Desdemona and he never reflects on the fatal consequences which he inevitably brings down on himself. Hers is the joy of an idealistic pursuit regardless of the result. His is the joy of intrigue and exertion of will.

Two more things need be said of Iago. First, he is the primary agent for the expression of the life forces already identified. These forces flow through the channel of his negative personality. His "good fortune", as Bradley calls it, *i.e.* the ease with which his intrigues succeed, is a further expression of these forces. The predominance of strength is on the side of the established social order. Neither Othello nor Desdemona possesses the power to successfully oppose it.

Secondly, even though Iago is an instrument of these forces, his own end follows the rules of life. Bradley notes that Iago's egoism is not absolute, that "traces of conscience, shame and humanity, though faint, are discernible."<sup>36</sup> Bradley cites Iago's admiration of the "beauty" in Cassio's life, his momentary doubt whether Cassio must die, his avoidance of Desdemona during the intrigue, and his discomfiture-*cum*-indignation at Emilia's exposure of his villainy. These traces of conscience or morality are sufficient to assure Iago's eventual fall. Had he been totally sincere to the evil course he took without any hesitation or remorse, it is likely he would have succeeded without being discovered. In the end he is betrayed by the thing he tried to destroy, the power of love, Emilia's love for Desdemona.

Thus far we have made frequent mention of Desdemona's subconscious reaction against her conscious choice of Othello. This can be most clearly seen in her presistent—almost compulsive—defense of Cassio to Othello. In the heat of his anger she continues to pursue the very topic which has enraged him. Consciously she is unaware, but subconsciously there is a strong will to end the relationship. Cassio represents all that her normal Venetian nature can appreciate. She tells Cassio:

For thy solicitor shall rather die  
Than give thy cause away. (III.iii.27)

We admire the goodness of her heart but wonder that she could be so insensitive in speaking to Othello of "the love I bear to Cassio". When she asks the clown where Cassio is lodged, she uses "lies" instead of "lodges". The clown makes a jest of her usage. The same word is used by Othello and Iago shortly after—"Lie with her. Lie on her: We say lie on her—" in reference to the suspected illicit love of Desdemona and Cassio. Even on her deathbed, Desdemona is only conscious of loving Cassio:

But with such general warranty of heaven  
As I might love; (V.ii.60)

But yet that love has been her undoing and could not have been so had it not been supported by another motive unknown to her, the drive of her lower nature to cancel the relationship forged by her mind and heart.

Besides her defence of Cassio, there is one other incident which seals her fate and in it can be seen a representation of her entire relationship with Othello. It is the dropping of the handkerchief given to her by Othello when they eloped. We noted earlier Brabantio's claim that Othello has captivated his daughter by means of charms and witchcraft, but we find the idea absurd and along with the Duke we demand better proof than surmise. Yet in his speech before the Senate, Othello tells how he "often did beguile her of her tears" in weaving his fantastic stories of cannibals and "men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders". But the truth of Brabantio's suspicions is confirmed only much later when Othello relates the history of the handkerchief. It was given to his mother by an Egyptian charmer, the purport of whose speech Othello reports:

'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father  
Entirely to her love, but if she lost it  
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye  
Should hold her loath'd. (III.iv.59)

It was sewn by a sibyl from hollowed worms and

there's magic in the web of it... (III.iv.69)

All this can be taken as Othello's imagination or witchcraft but it has a more profound basis. The power with which Othello woos and possesses Desdemona has the nature of the handkerchief. It is a power and charm from the vital world. This power expresses itself through Othello's character as the colour, grandeur, and wonder of his life and personality. His romantic nature supports and thrives on it. He projects an image

which is almost superhuman, but the force is the vital force of life. Contrast this with Iago who works "by wit, not witchcraft".

Earlier we saw that Desdemona's response and attraction to Othello was predominantly mental idealism with the heart's consent. The two are separated by the wide gap between mind and vital being. They are bound to each other at different points with little common ground. It is a tenuous hold which cannot withstand the pressure of life. Furthermore, the giving of the handkerchief represents an attempt to bind Desdemona's mental commitment with a vital force. The introduction of the vital elements undermines and cancels functioning at the higher level. When Desdemona hears the story of the handkerchief her response is:

Then would to God that I had never seen it! (III.iv.76)

We come to the scene in which the handkerchief drops. Desdemona offers to bandage Othello's head with it but he pushes it away and it falls. The act is by joint initiative and omission. It is a subconscious recognition by both that the relationship is over. On her part it is a rejection of the vital force which binds her, a repulsion from the vital-physical relationship with Othello. On his part, there is a subtle awareness of her repulsion. When they meet again this awareness has become conscious. He wants to look into her eyes and confirm his suspicion. She also is more conscious of the repulsion, "What horrible fancy is this?" (IV.ii.26) For the first time she sees and feels his capacity for violent passions and she is frightened. The next moment she thinks of her father and regrets having deserted him: "Why, I have lost him." Othello is in a violent rage. Her response is both a question to him and a realisation of the error in her action. "Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed?" The answer comes to her fully just before dying.

Oth: "Think on thy sins."

Desda: "They are loves I bear to you."

Oth: "Ay, and for that thou diest." (V.ii.39)

As Othello and Iago plot murder, Lodovico arrives from Venice. Desdemona pleads on Cassio's behalf "for the love I bear to Cassio" while Othello reads a letter from the Senate, "This fail you not to do, as you will—." It is the sanction of the social consciousness for what follows. Alone with Emilia, suddenly Lodovico comes to Desdemona's mind. "This Lodovico is a proper man...He speaks well." This is a man her whole nature, her father and the society can accept. She feels her end is near but does not blame Othello, for the decision to marry was hers, "Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve,—" and the decision to cancel the marriage is also her own.

Desdemona's death follows shortly. As we asked why Iago should have become an instrument for her destruction, we may wonder why Emilia, who bore her a deep loyalty and affection, could not have come a moment earlier and saved her. The answer



is that Emilia's goodness and love are not supported by the strength of purity. Her consciousness is too low to save Desdemona's perfection. In fact it is she who gives the handkerchief to Iago. All she can do is yell bravely at Othello after the fact and expose her husband's villainy. A parallel role is played by Macduff in *Macbeth* and Kent in *King Lear*. Each time the loyal friend is unable to prevent tragedy.

In the last scenes, the complex field of forces works itself out. Othello prefaces his murder of Desdemona with attempts to reaffirm his heroic self-image. He refers to his act as a holy sacrifice of love to save Desdemona from further sin:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul—  
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!  
It is the cause. (V.ii.1)

Yet his vital passion breaks through the poetic cover and reveals the true nature of his act. "Out, strumpet.... Down, strumpet" are cries of pride and anger.

In her last words Desdemona proclaims that she is "falsely murder'd" and dies "a guiltless death"; then she accepts full responsibility for her fate and confirms the purity of her heart and mind:

Nobody; I myself. Farewell:  
Commend me to my kind lord: O, farewell! (V.ii.124)

Many readers may find it hard to reconcile the fact that Othello's rage should still continue after these words and her death.

She's, like a liar, gone to burning hell. (V.ii.129)

She turn'd to folly, and she was a whore. (V.ii.131)

Clearly, his power is not that of love seeking to save her soul. If it were, he would immediately recognise Desdemona's innocence from her parting words. The heart is capable of such instant recognition and reversal of its emotion. Mind also is capable if it does not cling to its own understanding. But the vital man acts by a power that possesses and controls him. When it reaches a peak of intensity, he becomes blind. Only after the force of passion is spent can understanding come. Othello ignores Emilia's words. Even after Montano and the others enter and Emilia exposes Iago, he stands dumbly in confusion. When finally understanding begins to dawn on him, he cries, "O! O! O!" and falls on the bed. Still passion reasserts itself: "O, she was foul!" and "she with Cassio hath the act of shame a thousand times committed."

When finally the truth is evident even to Othello, it is not love nor grief that expresses itself but still more anger. This time it is directed at Iago:

Are there no stones in heaven  
But what serve for the thunder?—Precious villain! (V.ii.234)

Then Othello stabs him.

In his final speeches the passion subsides and for a moment he openly expresses his pitiful human condition:

Whip me, ye devils,  
From the possession of this heavenly sight!  
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!  
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!  
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!  
Oh! Oh! Oh! (V.ii.277)

It is the cry of a man, not a demi-god. Then as his last act he attempts to recreate his romantic image and to die with it. But what he says is a sad contrast to the heroic story he told Desdemona in her father's house. Now he is a man who has done some service to the State, who loved passionately and was carried away by passion to destroy the greatest treasure he ever had.

(*To be continued*)

GARRY JACOBS

#### NOTES

<sup>34</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 1660.

<sup>35</sup> F. R. Leavis, *Casebook on Othello*, p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 191

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## GOLDEN EPIPHANY

In a beginningless Epiphany  
Where all is God  
We roam and spin for ever  
Bathing in delightful light  
In sight of our glorious Lord,  
To gain the touch of the divine Mother in our breast.  
A fathomless mightiness broods in our midst  
To unlock the closed doors  
Of the veiled deity  
And welcome the One  
As our worshipped angel  
And our adored and beloved guide within.  
We forget to weep and moan.  
The glorious era has come.

AMIYANGSHU

# FOOTNOTES TO THE FUTURE

2 (Continued)

## PURUSHOTTAMA YOGA

2

INTEGRAL yoga is a triple union with the Divine—a union individual, universal and transcendental, all three together. The psychic opening puts us primarily into connection with the individual Divine; it is especially the source of love and devotion. The spiritual opening puts us into direct relation with the universal Divine and creates in us the divine consciousness and a new birth of the spirit. “For the heart opens to the psychic being and the mind-centres open to the higher consciousness and the nexus between the psychic being and the higher consciousness is the principal means of the Siddhi.”<sup>10</sup> The psychic transformation is not a radical transformation of the basic elements of our instrumental nature, not even a transcendence of its inherent limitations. There is therefore needed the intervention of a higher spiritual transformation. The inward psychic movement must be completed by an opening upward to a supreme spiritual status. The consciousness of the aspirant must ascend above the human mind into the Overmind and receive from it the transmuting light and force peculiar to it. This ascent does not take place if the aspirant remains satisfied with the experiences of the Spirit in the terms of his human mind. It is only when his psychic being aspires for the realisation of the higher ranges of existence beyond Mind that the lid of the mind is rent through and his consciousness soars into the Infinite. Consequent upon this ascent, there descends into him a new consciousness that has itself the nature of infinity. This is the second of the three great changes, which unites the manifested existence with what is above it.

It is always possible in *sādhanā* to be liberated into the absolute of what one's inmost being sincerely aspires for: one can be liberated into an absolute of silence, of peace or of bliss. There is another, a more comprehensive, an all-inclusive realisation, the *svarājya siddhi*. This is the spiritual self-rule—the rule of Spirit over the empire of individual existence. It is in this *siddhi* that one enjoys a perfect spiritual wholeness within oneself and realises a complete union with the Divine at all levels of one's phenomenal and spiritual existence. But here the individual has not yet been able to integrate himself in his nature and consciousness with other individuals and with the rest of the universe. There is a *siddhi* which is truly universal and is inclusive of all individuals, the *sāmrajya siddhi*, wherein the individual not only feels himself identified with every other individual but realises the unifying truth of the nature and consciousness of all others working through him. The individual in this state of realisation includes within his consciousness the entire universe of individuals—individuals, aggregates and collectivities, racial, religious, social, psychological, etc.—and also the Universal. Now progressively a higher Light and Power, a Knowledge and Force take

<sup>10</sup> *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 24, p. 1167.

possession of the mind, the vital and even the physical consciousness of the individual and transform them into wide, plastic and luminous elements of his existence; immortality becomes a normal self-awareness, omniscience of the Divine Being the governing law and His omnipresence concrete and constant. The process becomes irreversible, complete and integral only when the Overmind consciousness descends into the mental, vital and physical—into all the elements of the lower hemisphere—and takes possession of them all. This transforms the individual into a dynamic and conscious channel of the Divine, vibrant with His creative energy, resplendent with His light, at once individual and universal. This may be termed *virāt siddhi*.

But even this cannot transform the whole human nature into the Supernature. For the power of the Overmind is more subjective than objective. It can change our view and experience of the objective world, but is incapable of changing the nature of the world as such. The Overmind experience does not deliver the individual from the lower vital and physical movements; it indeed changes them and prepares them for the reception of a greater Truth. The light and power of the Overmind get diminished and diluted by the lower energies of human nature, and even otherwise they are not the highest powers of the Spirit. This is so because they are still under the continued influence of the Mind which makes the *sādhaka* divided into two parts of being, the spiritual within and the natural without. Although all within is luminous, the outer nature still remains the field of an apparent incoherence, division and disorder. Even if an ordered dynamism is achieved in one's external nature, it can only be a continuation of the ego-action but not accepted by the inner being; the outer dynamism will not be expressive of the inner spiritual realisation. The expression of the Light within will always be marked with the imperfection of the outer instruments. It will be like "a King with incapable ministers, a Knowledge expressed in the values of the Ignorance. Only the descent of the Supermind with its perfect unity of Truth-Knowledge and Truth-Will can establish in the outer as in the inner existence the harmony of the Spirit; for it alone can turn the values of the Ignorance entirely into the values of Knowledge."<sup>11</sup>

There is thus yet another and still higher, deeper and wider realisation, the supreme *siddhi*, which includes and transcends the world of diversity while supporting its multiple play. The governing principle of this realisation is the *cit-tapas* or *vijñāna*—the supramental Truth-Consciousness, which acts in the phenomenal world in its full force without suffering any diminution or dilution and brings about a radical and integral transformation. It is the supreme creative power of the Creator which alone is capable of transmuting and transforming the entire earth-nature into its own substance; its Will carries in it 'the fiat and fire of the Absolute'. Its transforming force not only transfuses every form and level of consciousness lower than itself, widens, deepens and illumines them, but in fact formulates them and supports them in their evolution and integrates them into a single orchestral unity. It is a consciousness that has the key to the functioning of all the forms of consciousness lower than itself;

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. 18, p. 230.

rather, it is a consciousness that contains their essence, nay, that has become these different modes for the purpose of its multiple play and has the power to integrate their workings into a higher symphony and prepare and use them in the manifestation of the next higher consciousness, power and light. It annihilates and dissolves the sway of the Inconscience over the physical and transforms it into a vibrant dynamo of luminous energies. As a result the *sādhaka* enters into a growing participation in the higher and becomes a conscious collaborator of the Divine in all His workings. This may be described as the *mahāsamrāṭ siddhi*, the divine world-empire—the Divine's own empire of Truth-substance here upon earth, the Truth-empire of the infinite: the *satya-siddhi* or the *puruṣottama siddhi*.

It is at this level that physical transformation becomes a cooperative concomitant of integral evolution, although transformation is always an accompanying necessity of every conceivable change that takes place in the evolutionary process. The supramental, being the supreme creative consciousness-force of the Divine, is most transformative and integrative in its action at all the levels of individual and cosmic existence. Its plenary and multiple action brings about a radical change in the very structure and constitution of the mental-vital-physical and makes the triple complex an effective medium and mould for the increasing manifestation of the Infinite, the Eternal and the Absolute—for an endless manifestation of the infinite splendour of Sachchidananda.

The Upanishads speak of the different sheaths or modes of manifestation of Brahman. The *annamāya koṣa* or Matter is one such mode which is so structured that it overtly manifests one aspect of Brahman, particularly its individual aspect. The other modes conceal the varied truth of the Divine's becoming. In the integration of all these through the ascending and expanding consciousness of the individual with the descending powers of the superconscient, by the psychic being, lies the way to the life divine upon earth. If all the modes of Reality have to be integrated into an upward spiral of evolution keeping the physical as the vesture of individuation, then it is the supramental that holds the key to such a transformation.

It is the Divine, the Purushottama, who is the alpha and omega of infinite existence and of all existences, that undertakes this great work—the work of creation, manifestation, integration and transformation. It is Truth-Consciousness, the consciousness-force of the Divine, the Supreme Shakti that brings about this triple transformation—psychic, spiritual and supramental—and recasts the material-physical into the very tabernacle of God. Such is the scope of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, the *Puruṣottama Yoga*, the Yoga of Triple Transformation or the Yoga of Physical Immortality.

The first condition or process of this Yoga is to make a firm and final decision to surrender with all the strength into God's hands, the *saṅkalpa* of *ātmasarpaṇa*:

*machchittah sarvadurgāṇi matprasādāt tariṣyasi*

“By giving thyself up in heart and mind to Me, thou shalt cross over all

difficulties and perils by My Grace".<sup>12</sup>

The next is to stand apart from the *ādhār* and witness the working of the divine power in us, which needs sincerity and faith. To do this we must know ourselves as the Purusha who merely watches, "consents to do God's work, holds up the Adhar and enjoys the fruits that God gives. The work itself is done by God as Shakti, by Kali, and is offered up by her as a *Yajña* to Sri Krishna"<sup>13</sup>. We are only the *yajamāna* who witnesses and presides over the sacrifice done and who tastes its results. The renunciation of the idea of ourselves as the doers, *kartṛtva-abhimāna*, is a necessary step before we can go to the third process when we begin to perceive all things as God himself. It is only then that we shall see the Self in all existing things and all existing things in the Self, *ātmānam sarvabhūteṣu sarvabhūtāni chātmani*; we shall be aware of all things as Brahman, *sarvam khalvidam brahma*. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, "the crowning realisation of this yoga is when you become aware of the whole world as the expression, play or Lila of an infinite divine personality, when you see in all, not the impersonal *sad-ātman* which is the basis of manifest existence,—although you do not lose that knowledge,—but Sri Krishna who at once is, bases and transcends all manifest and unmanifest existence, *avyakto vyaktāt paraḥ*. For behind the *sad-ātman* is the silence of the *asat* which the Buddhist Nihilists realised as the *śūnyam* and beyond that silence is the *parātpara puruṣa* (*puruṣo vareṇya ādityavarṇa tamasaḥ parastāt*). It is He who has made this world out of his being and is immanent in and sustains it as the Infinite-finite Ishwara, *ananta* and *sānta*, Shiva and Narayana, Sri Krishna the *līlāmaya* who draws all of us to him by his love, compels all of us by his masteries and plays his eternal play of joy and strength and beauty in the manifold world. The world is only a play of his being, knowledge and delight, *sat*, *chit* and *ānanda*. Matter itself, you will one day realise, is not material, it is not substance but form of consciousness, *guṇa*, the result of quality of being perceived by sense-knowledge. Solidity itself is only a combination of the *guṇas*, *samhati* and *dhṛti*, cohesion and permanence, a state of conscious being, nothing else. Matter, life, mind and what is beyond mind, it is all Sri Krishna the *ananta-guṇa* Brahman playing in the world as the Sachchidananda"<sup>14</sup>.

Life then becomes a centre of radiation of a divine state of consciousness and the world appears an ocean of eternal truth, beauty, goodness and bliss. In this stage the individual becomes one with the Purusha, *tri-guṇātīta*, beyond the three *guṇas*, and Prakṛiti itself will be free from their bondage. Sattwa itself disappears into pure *prakāśa* and  *jyoti*, infinite self-existing illumination, Rajas into pure *tapas*, an ocean of divine force, and Tamass into pure *sama* or *śānti*, an ineffable rest and peace. And our instrumental personality will no longer be ours but God's—a centre of being, knowledge and bliss through which He works in the Adhar. For this great liberation we should be without any longing for things, free from dualities and com-

<sup>12</sup> *The Gita*, Sri Aurobindo's translation.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol 16, p. 415.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 416-17.

pletely egoless; for these are the chief enemies of self-surrender. Let us not forget that this Yoga is not for ourselves. The many joys and powers of any particular *siddhi*, though they are part of our Yoga, are certainly not its object. The Integral Yogi has no claim upon God and is prepared to forego even the joy of God's presence if that be His will. Once the *saṅkalpa* is made, all these processes are worked out by God's Shakti, by the Mother herself. All that is required of us is the *anumati*, conscious consent, and *smṛti* or *nitya smaraṇa*, the continual remembrance of God in all things and happenings. Indian spiritual tradition speaks of four things that are necessary for *siddhi*. They are *śāstra*, *utsāha*, *guru* and *kāla*—scripture, enthusiasm, master and time. Our scripture is the path which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have pointed out, the enthusiasm needed is this *anumati* and *nitya smaraṇa*—the conscious choice of their sunlit path and the constant feeling of their living and dynamic Presence within us. And how very blessed are we that the very Divine has been our Guru in Two Bodies to accelerate the work. For the rest, let us not forget, this is the Hour of God; aeons of progress could be realised within the short span of a few years, even within a couple of moments.

Did not Sri Aurobindo declare: "That God himself is the Guru, you will find when knowledge comes to you; you will see how every little circumstance within you and without you has been subtly planned and brought about by infinite wisdom to carry out the natural process of the yoga, how the internal and external movements are arranged and brought together to work on each other, so as to work out the imperfection and work in the perfection. An almighty love and wisdom are at work for your uplifting. Therefore never be troubled by the time that is being taken, even if it seems very long, but when imperfections and obstructions arise, be *apramatta*, *dhīra*, have the *utsāha*, and leave God to do the rest. Time is necessary. It is a tremendous work that is being done in you, the alteration of your whole human nature into a divine nature, the crowding of centuries of evolution into a few years."<sup>15</sup>

Some of the other paths seem to offer more immediate results or at any rate, by enjoining definite *kriyās*, give us the satisfaction of a marked progress. "Those are human methods," Sri Aurobindo is emphatic, "not the way that the infinite hakti works, which moves silently, sometimes imperceptibly to its goal, advances here, seems to pause there, then mightily and triumphantly reveals the grandiose thing that it has done. Artificial paths are like canals hewn by the intelligence of man; you travel easily, safely, surely, but from one given place to another. This path is the broad and trackless ocean by which you can travel widely to all parts of the world and are admitted to the freedom of the infinite. All that you need are the ship, the steering-wheel, the compass, the motive-power and a skilful captain. Your ship is *Brahmavidyā*, faith is your steering-wheel, self-surrender your compass, the motive-power is She who makes, directs and destroys the worlds at God's command and God himself is your captain."<sup>16</sup>

The goal before us is not to speculate about the nature and different aspects of

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, pp 426-27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, p 427.

the Supreme Being, but to experience them. The call upon us is to grow into the consciousness and nature of the Divine, to dwell in him and with him and be a channel of his infinite Power, Light, Knowledge and Bliss, and an instrument of his works and to act in the world 'as dynamos of that divine electricity' and transform it into the luminous figure of his endless splendour. Such is Sri Aurobindo's enunciation, such his declaration: "Churches, Orders, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have busied themselves with intellectual creeds, dogmas, rites and institutions, with *ācārasuddhi* and *darśana*, as if these could save mankind, and have neglected the one thing needful, the power and purification of the soul. We must go back to the one thing needful, take up again Christ's gospel of the purity and perfection of mankind, Mahomed's gospel of perfect submission, self-surrender and servitude to God, Chaitanya's gospel of the perfect love and joy of God in man, Ramakrishna's gospel of the unity of all religions and the divinity of God in man, and, gathering all these streams into one mighty river, one purifying and redeeming Ganges, pour it over the death-in-life of a materialistic humanity as Bhagiratha led down the Ganges and flooded with it the ashes of his fathers, so that there may be a resurrection of the soul in mankind and the Satyayuga for a while return to the world. Nor is this the whole object of the Lila or the Yoga; the reason for which the Avatars descend is to raise up man again and again, developing in him a higher and ever higher humanity, a greater and yet greater development of divine being, bringing more and more of heaven again and again upon the earth until our toil is done, our work accomplished and Sachchidananda fulfilled in all even here, even in this material universe. Small is his work, even if he succeeds, who labours for his salvation or the salvation of a few; infinitely great is his, even if he fail or succeed only partially or for a season, who lives only to bring about peace of soul, joy, purity and perfection among all mankind."<sup>17</sup>

All this is difficult for the rational mind to comprehend or to accept or swallow. But a sincere and open heart, a loving and consecrated soul can realise the truth of it all. Let us always remember the Mother's loving assurance:

"Be simple,  
Be happy,  
Remain quiet,  
Do your work as well as you can,  
Keep yourself always open towards me.  
This is all that is asked from you."

Our work, as such, becomes simple; it is not to try to understand the supreme mystery of existence, much less to explain it. Our work is just to love the Mother, to constantly surrender ourselves to Her, to aspire for Her Grace and reject all that comes in our way of consecration to Her. And She will do everything for us.

V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, p. 430.



## THE GRIM ADVENTURE OF COLONEL PONSONBY

*Most of the vast literature about the battle of Waterloo on June 15, 1815, is involved with the grand strategy and tactics of the great generals who met there. But in their armies were many men with hair-raising tales to tell of heroism, brutality—and even chivalry. One of the most incredible stories was that of Colonel the Honorable Frederick Ponsonby who commanded the 12th Light Dragoons on Wellington's far left flank. It is best told in a letter to his mother written soon after the battle by an old family friend, a poet named Samuel Rogers, and by an extract from another officer's memoirs written many years later.*

### I

Dear Lady Bessborough,

You have often wished for some written account of the adventures & sufferings of your son, Col. Ponsonby, in the field of Waterloo.—The modesty of his nature is however no small obstacle in the way.—Will the following imperfect sketch serve in any degree, till you can procure something better?—The battle was alluded to one morning in the library at Althorp; & his answers to many of the questions which were put to him are here thrown together as nearly as we could remember in his own words.—

“The clouds broke at noon; & the sun shone out a little just as the battle began. The armies were drawn up front to front; their distance from each other varying from eight to twelve hundred yards. A small valley lay between them, in which the videttes [cavalry scouts] might be seen conversing.—I was stationed with my regiment of cavalry, about 300 strong at the extreme of our left wing & ordered to act discretionally.

“At one o'clock, observing as we thought, some unsteadiness in a column of French Infantry fifty by twenty or thereabout, which were advancing with an irregular fire, we resolved to charge them.—As we descended, we received from part of our own line on the right, a fire much more destructive than theirs; theirs having begun long before it could take effect, & slackening as we drew nearer. When we were within fifty paces of each other, they turned; & much excution was done among them, as we were followed by some Belgians who had seen our success. But we had no sooner passed thro' them, than we were ourselves attacked, before we could form, by about 300 Polish Lancers, who had hastened to their relief, the French Artillery pouring in among us a heavy fire of grape, though, for one of our men, they killed three of their own.—In the *mélée* I was almost instantly disabled in both my arms, losing first my sword, & then my rein, & followed by a few of my men, who were presently cut down, no quarter being asked or given, I was carried along by my horse, till receiving a blow on my head by a sabre, I fell senseless on my face to the ground.

“Recovering, I raised myself a little to look round, being at that time in a condition to get up and run away; when a Lancer, passing by, cried out “*Tu n'es pas mort, coquin!*” & struck his lance thro' my back. My head dropped, the blood gushed

into my mouth, a difficulty of breathing came on, & I thought all was over.

“Not long afterwards, (it was then impossible to measure time, but I must have fallen in less than 10 minutes after the onset) a *Tirailleur* [French infantryman] stopped to plunder me, threatening my life—I directed him to a small side pocket in which he found three Dollars, all I had; but he continued to threaten & I said he might search me. Thus he did immediately, unloosing my stock, & tearing open my waistcoat, & leaving me in a very uneasy posture.

“But he was no sooner gone than an officer, bringing up some troops to which probably the *Tirailleur* belonged & happening to halt where I lay, stooped down, & addressed me, saying he feared I was badly wounded. I answered that I was, & expressed a wish to be removed into the rear. He said it was against their orders to remove even their own men; but that if they gained the day (& he understood that the Duke of Wellington was killed, & that six of our Battalions had surrendered) every attention in his power should be shown me.—I complained of thirst, & he held his brandy bottle to my lips, directing one of the soldiers to lay me straight on my side, & place a knapsack under my head. He then passed on into the action; soon perhaps to want tho’ not to receive the same assistance; & I shall never know to whose generosity I was indebted as I believe for my life. Of what rank he was I cannot say. He wore a greatcoat.—

“By & bye another *Tirailleur* came up; a fine young man full of ardour. He knelt down & fired over me, loading & firing many times, & conversing with me very gaily all the time.—At last he ran off saying ‘*Vous serez bien aise d’apprendre que nous allons nous retirer. Bonjour, mon ami!*’

“It was dusk when two squadrons of Prussian cavalry each of them two deep, came across the valley, & passed over me in full trot, lifting me from the ground & tumbling me about cruelly.—The clatter of their approach, & the apprehensions they excited, may be imagined—a gun taking that direction must have destroyed me.

“The battle was now at an end, or removed to a distance. The shouts, the imprecations, the outcries of ‘*Vive l’Empereur!*’, the discharges of musketry & cannon were over; & the groans of the wounded all around me became every moment more & more audible.—I thought the night would never end.—

“Much about this time I found a soldier of the Royals lying across my legs. He had probably crawled thither in his agony; & his weight, his convulsive motions, his groans, & the air issuing thro’ a wound in his side, distressed me greatly; the last circumstance most of all, as I had a wound of the same nature myself.

“It was not a dark night; & the Prussians were wandering about to plunder; the scene in Ferdinand Count Fathom came into my mind; tho’ no women appeared. Several stragglers looked at me as they passed by, one after another; & at last, one of them stopped to examine me. I told him as well as I could, for I spoke German very imperfectly, that I was a British officer, & had been plundered already.—He did not desist however, & pulled me about roughly.—

“An hour before midnight I saw a man in an English uniform walking towards

me. He was, I suspect on the same errand & he came & looked in my face. I spoke instantly; telling him who I was & assuring him of a reward, if he would remain by me. He said he belonged to the 40th & had missed his Regiment. He released me from the dying soldier, & being unarmed, took up a sword from the ground & stood over me, pacing backwards & forwards.

“Day broke; & about 6 in the morning, some English were seen at a distance, & he ran to them.—A messenger being sent off to Harvey a cart came for me & I was placed in it, & carried to the village of Waterloo, a mile & a half off; & laid in the bed from which Gordon [an aide of Wellington’s], as I understood afterwards had been just before carried out. I had received seven wounds. A surgeon slept in my room, & I was saved by excessive bleeding ....”

## 2

The sequel to Ponsonby’s amazing story appeared in 1863 in the memoirs of Captain R.H. Gronow, who had been a young officer in the British Guards at Waterloo. He recalled an incident which took place a dozen years after the battle.

“The Baron de Laussat, formerly deputy for his department, the Basses Pyrenées, and a gentleman universally respected and beloved by all who knew him, was [at Waterloo] a major in the dragoons of the Imperial Guard. After he had quitted the army he travelled in the East for some years, and on his return, when at Malta, was introduced to Sir F. Ponsonby, then a Major-General and Governor of the island. In the course of conversation, the battle of Waterloo was discussed; and on Ponsonby recounting his many narrow escapes, and the kind treatment he had received from the French officer, M. de Laussat said, ‘Was he not in such-and-such a uniform?’ ‘He was,’ said Sir F. ‘And did he not say so-and-so to you, and was not the cloak of such-and-such a colour?’ ‘I remember it perfectly,’ was the answer. Several other details were entered into, which I now forget, but which left no doubt upon Ponsonby’s mind that he saw before him the man to whom he owed his life. ‘I was with the famous Colonel Sourd,’ added Laussat, ‘and I only knew that I had rendered what assistance I could to an English officer of rank, who seemed in a very hopeless state; and I am delighted to think that my care was not bestowed in vain.’”

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# SULTANI

## A SHORT STORY TRANSLATED BY V. CHIDANANDAM FROM THE TELUGU OF V. SIVARAMA SASTRY

### Translator's Note

*(Veluri Sivarama Sastry (1892-1967), a born poet and a literary genius, shot into fame even in his teens as a Satavadhani.*

*A Satavadhani in Andhra Pradesh composes extempore poems in Telugu and Sanskrit on a hundred subjects given at random, and each poem in a given metre. The poet starts with the first line of the first poem, then gives the first line of the second poem and so on to a hundred persons. He has to remember all the hundred subjects in the correct sequence. He comes back to the first subject and gives the second line, then to the second subject and gives the second line, etc. In this manner, after all the four lines or more of all the poems are completed, the poet repeats in full one by one, in the correct order all the hundred poems. These poems include a sprinkling of poetic puzzles. In the puzzles (Samasya) is given a poem's last line, which is often absurd and ludicrous nonsense, and the poet is required to give the first lines as in the case of the other poems, and complete the poem making beautiful sense out of the nonsense. Thus a Satavadhani has a genius for composing poems impromptu and also an extraordinary power of concentration and memory.)*

*Though Sivarama Sastry won laurels as a Satavadhani in his teens he soon became dissatisfied with this exercise. He preferred other fields. He composed original long poems, dramas, novelettes, novels, short stories, essays in literary criticism, philosophical essays, etc. He was an ardent student of Sri Aurobindo's thought and wrote a number of essays in Telugu on the Integral Yoga.*

*He learned Gujarati, Bengali, Hindi and English and translated into Telugu Mahatma Gandhi's Experiments with Truth, Tagore's poems and Sarat Chandra Chatterji's stories. Critics have praised the first as an example of perfect Telugu prose style.*

*Many of his short stories are very popular. Sultani is one of his best. Sivarama Sastry spent nearly three decades as a Vanaprastha, in an idyllic garden on the outskirts of a village. He was a keen observer not only of nature but also of the human scene. The characters, the events, and the scenario of Sultani are mostly from village life. Sultani was dramatized and put on the boards many times. It was often put on the air. It was staged on the inaugural day of the World Telugu Conference held in Hyderabad on the Ugadi Day of 1975.*

I

“Sultani!”

Before the full name was uttered, there appeared on Sultani's lips a sugar-sweet smile, and on her brow a pretty frown like a bean-flower. She came near Santayya

who called her thus and begged him, "Sir, I am your slave, I shall bow to your feet, please call me by my real name."

On her begging him in this manner, Santayya said in a somewhat gentle tone, "Your real name all have forgotten. But today, you appear to be somehow different. What is that jacket under the arm? And that saree on your shoulder? Something seems to have happened." So saying he looked at her searchingly.

On her hands and cheeks there were red swellings and on her forehead a bloody patch as if a red *mankena* flower had been pasted on it. Seeing this, Santayya's eyes filled with tears.

Santa came from inside the house, saw her and exclaimed, "What has happened? Sultani, speak out."

Sultani at once turned to her. "Mother! I will stay in your house."

"Good. Do so," said Santa.

Without waiting to hear this reply, Sultani went to the mango plant under which she used to clean the kitchen utensils, put the saree and the jacket on the plant and began to clean the utensils. Santa, laughing within herself and mumbling "*Maya* of the second marriage", went inside the house. Santayya sat down in the mango grove and tended his kitchen garden.

Sultani, having finished the cleaning and mopped the house and done others' work too, came to the doorway and sat down.

When you cannot pass time, even if you sit doing nothing you feel restless.

Pota, the servant, who came to take leave of the master, seeing Sultani sitting and doing nothing said to her, "Would you stay here alone? Won't you go home?" Sultani did not answer. Pota came in front of her and observed her.

That day it was not the same face that was seen every day with eager delight by everyone. Pota could not bear to see the fire in her eyes. Turning back and standing near her, he said, "Today will you leave Sultan or what?"

Sultani kept silent.

There was some sound under the mango trees. Pota was startled and he saw Santayya coming to the doorway.

Veera came slowly from the cattle-shed.

Santayya: "All right, you both go, have your food and come."

Both the servants went home.

As soon as Santayya entered the house Santa said, "You must not have her in our house."

Santayya frowned and said, "You tell me that I must not have her in the house, only because you want to be the one to keep her here. Don't I know how much you love her?"

Santa: "What's that? I will also not allow her to be here."

Sultani sat all ears, to listen to the talk inside the house.

Sultan came slowly from behind like a cat-catcher. He looked carefully both within and without the house, and sprang in front of Sultani. Sultani took two

paces back and sat down.

Sultan: "I behaved like a fool. You beat me too, here, and here on both sides of my face."

Sultani lowered her neck.

Sultan: "Don't shame me. Don't tell the master. Think well and quickly heed my word. Now get up, up. It won't look nice if the master sees us."

Sultani tilted her neck. Sultan's collyrium-painted eyes, that would make black lotuses squint, gazed into Sultani's eyes. Her eyes closed wearily, slowly. In a minute she opened them. Standing up, Sultan began to dance before her in a peculiar manner. Santayya and Santa could see from the house this strange dance outside.

Sultani got up.

Sultan went to the mango plant, brought the jacket and the saree and said, "Come, let us go."

Sultani: "Get along. You go in front. Now don't open your mouth." She pointed to the way home.

Without saying a word Sultan went to the gate and looked in the direction of the house.

Santa came from inside the house to see what was happening.

Sultani: "Mother, give me leave, I will go home."

Santa: "What's this, Sultani? It has become a goats' quarrel!"

Sultani: "Mother! It is nothing. I shall go home."

Without expecting a reply Sultani went away.

## 2

It was a hutment-colony. All around were huts of Erukalas<sup>1</sup> Dommaras,<sup>2</sup> Washermen and Barbers. In the centre of the colony was a big Neem tree of the Village Goddess. Under the tree was Sultani's hut.

The sun was about to set. The Erukala women were giving their children lessons in sooth-saying, the Dommara women were singing. Presiding deities of cleanliness, the washerwomen were entering the village carrying their loads of washed and pressed linen. Bullocks, bulls and boars were coming and going.

Sultan was sitting under the Neem tree weaving a basket with palm-cane. Close by sat Guru Chintayya absorbed in singing Siddappa Tattvas.<sup>3</sup>

Sultani was intently listening to the *tattvas*. Harijan Malla, weaver Ramulu, barber Manga, washerwoman Pulli and others were in the audience. A peacock carrying in its plumage all the stars—the jewels on the bodies of the clouds in the night—was dancing in front of Sultani.

Sultan, having made it up with Sultani, celebrated the occasion by drinking toddy. He was making it a gala day, holding court and at the same time weaving

<sup>1,2</sup> Scheduled tribes      <sup>3</sup> Philosophical poems

his basket. A washerman, a weaver and a barber brought their quarrels and the complaints of the villagers before him and recommended suitable punishment in each case. Sultan brought about compromises in some cases, and dispensed justice in others and sent them all away.

As Sultani was going to the village pond with a pot on one shoulder, Sultan's eyes followed her neck and her back, as far as they could see. Coming from a clean-swept lane Sultan's sister Jogi approached him prying on all sides. Sultan greeted her, but she went inside the hut, and after searching every corner came out. Sultan spread a palm-leaf mat on the ground and asked her to sit down. Jogi sat and said: "Sultani is making all your money vanish. You don't know it."

Sultan: "Che! Che! it's a lie. Who told you?"

"She kept ten sovereigns with Santayya, it seems. As Santayya was telling this to the village munsif, your brother-in-law heard it."

"True?"

"True."

"If what you say is true, on Sankranti Day I will play dice with my brother-in-law and give you one sovereign."

"Ah! Much you'll give! From yesterday's five rupees did she allow me to touch a paisa?"

"Not so this time. I am not your brother if I don't give you a sovereign "

"Place your hand in mine."

Sultan was about to place his hand in hers when he tottered a little and fell down. Getting up he said, "Now it is time for her to come from the pond. You go away slowly. No, sit down. No, you go. No...."

Sultani stepped in as Jogi was about to leave. Like a spitfire she approached her and said, "I told you not to come here. Why then have you come?"

Saying, "All right, I won't come," Jogi was about to go. Sultan, becoming a little emboldened, said, "What if she comes? Should she not come?"

Sultani: "No, she shouldn't come; no, a hundred times no."

"She will come, a hundred times she will."

"If she comes, I'll set fire to your hut and go away. My master told me that he would give me food and clothing. Do you know it? Tell me whether she will come here or stop coming. If she comes I'll break this pot here, and down this way I'll go to the master's house. Tell me straight."

Sultan became red in the face, like the red earth on which he was sitting.

"Go, get away! Talking high and mighty, saying you will stay in the master's house! We'll see how long they will feed you."

"Leave alone my going. Is it necessary that Jogi should come here? My money seems to be neither for me nor for you. Cannot we stop this?"

"It is not for both of us, nor for Jogi. It is only for Santayya. You are also for Santayya."

"Nonsense! If money is kept with Santayya, it is absolutely safe."

"If so, how much have you kept with him?"

"Something. When I left my former husband he gave me that money. You have no business to talk about it."

"He is a rascal. Do not mention his name before me. The moment you came to me, that money was mine. Get me my money. Give it to me. Give! Give!"

"No, I won't, I won't."

Sultan threw away the basket he was weaving, took a long cane and with it thrashed her. Her skin was flayed the length of the cane. The pot on her shoulder fell down and broke into a thousand pieces. Sultani dropped on the ground.

Jogi whispered, "Roguish pretence!"

"Not with me, this play-acting." So saying he thrashed Sultani right and left.

Jogi slowly crept away.

He moved Sultani. She was like a log. He became pale. All gathered. Each one said something. Quickly Sultan ran inside the hut and hid himself under a cot. More people gathered, but they did not know what to do.

Paramananda, Sultani's former husband, was among the crowd. He brought a small pot of water, and poured water in her mouth. He wiped her perspiration and fanned her with a cloth. He ordered all the people to leave. Gradually, one by one, all went away. Sultan who was hiding inside with a sharp knife under his arm was prying all about.

After some time, Sultani raised her head. In front of her was her former husband!

"Che! Che! Get away! Get away soon! Otherwise you will die! Go! Go!"

Having said this, she fell back on the ground.

Then came the village officers. They caught hold of Sultan and put him to the instrument of torture.

### 3

When Sultani regained consciousness, she found herself in front of Santayya's house. The branches of the banyan tree were fanning her. Birds were greeting the young Sun with their trumpet songs. The woodpeckers with their scarlet plumage on their heads like red-turbaned policemen were looking all around from the top branches.

Sultani, catching hold of an aerial root of the banyan, pulled herself up and sat down. Santayya came and stood before her.

"Master, my salutations to you. You alone are my father and mother." Saying this she stood up, folded her hands and bowed to him. Santayya turned his face aside. Sultani, going near the door-step, cried aloud, "Mother, please give the utensils. I'll clean them and only then go."

Santa came from within the house, saw Sultani and stood aghast. "Last night you were not conscious. Your body is full of wounds. From where does the strength surge within you to do any work?"



“Mother, how to get on if I don’t work?”

“I’ll take up your work for today. You may go home.”

“Please give me the utensils. I will clean them.”

We do not know what Santa thought, but turning her head away she went in, fetched and placed the utensils in front of Sultani. Sultani picked them up and went to the mango plant. She took the water previously stored in a pot and cleaned them all with pitiful cries of pain now and then. A cup fell from her hands. Her head reeled. She reclined against the mango plant.

After a while, she looked at her body all over. Tears ran down her cheeks. With a great effort she restrained herself from crying aloud. As Santayya came to the doorstep, Sultani with the utensils in her hand came in front of him. Santayya saw marks of lashes on her gold-complexioned body. His eyes filled with tears. Sultani’s eyes too. Both of them stood there awhile without speaking to each other.

“Sultani! I will treat you like my mother. I will give you food and clothes. Please stay in our house and spend your time thinking of God.”

“Good Sir, God has not descended into my head as yet. Sultan alone is my God. But I beg of you one thing.”

On hearing these words Santayya with some detachment and some attachment asked, “What is that request?”

“The money that I have kept with you, please don’t give to Sultan even if I die. This is my only wish.”

Santayya kept silent. Santa came and said, “Don’t keep the sovereigns with you. Give them to her. If Sultan alone is her God, she must make an offering of them to him only. If the money is with you, there will be murders on account of it.”

Sultani observed Santa carefully. Then turning to Santayya she said, “Master, if so, I should undergo all the suffering myself. Please give them to me.”

“All right. Think well and tell me again. I will give them to you.”

Having placed all the utensils in their respective places and slowly done all the work in the house, she approached Santayya and said, “Master, hereafter, I shall remain at your feet.”

“Will you leave Sultan?”

“Yes, I will leave him, I will leave him.”

“Good. All right, then, stay here.”

As Santayya was saying this, Santa came and said, “You can see your God tonight, but now take your food here and stay till sun-down.”

Sultani bowed to her and said, “I will do so, mother.”

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As the sun was setting, the headman of the village came to Santayya from the munsif.

Even as he was approaching him, the headman said, “Sir! last night that fellow

Sultan hid a sharp knife under his arm. No one saw it then. It was seen only in the morning. The munsif wanted me to tell you this, and also to tell you to come."

As Santayya heard these words he looked at Sultani's face. There was not the slightest difference either in her face or in her eyes.

"All right, I am coming," said Santayya. The headman, pointing the way with his baton, walked ahead. Santayya went to the village office and entered the hall. In front of him was Sultan in the torture instrument. Looking at him was Paramananda and by Paramananda's side the blind Gurava with a lash in his hand.

## 4

If anything special occurs in a village there will be a social gathering where all attend without any invitation. First comes one Ellayya and then another Pullayya and they stand around and look on. Then one Ellamma and another Pullamma. Afterwards, one by one, all come, and then goats and sheep, cows and buffaloes come, and then it is all a Big Conference. There is nobody to invite one and nobody to give a send-off—it is *Svarāj*! The time and place are universal. It is somewhat of a *goondā rāj*. One shouts, "Beat him up!", another adds, "Stab him." With that, there occurs a *melée*, all shouting, "Beat! beat! stab! stab!", it is as if a honey-comb is shaken. One man says, "What a pity!", a second one exclaims, "Leave him, poor fellow." Then, all together in chorus shout, "Leave him! Leave him!"

The Sun God made his exit from this conference without the knowledge of anybody. Who knows whether it is his goodness or his cowardice? Darkness wove around the place like the plait of a woman.

The munsif got up and looking at the audience said, "This fellow beat up Sultani, therefore he too gets the same punishment. You, blind Gurava, take him inside the room, close the bamboo curtain, and give him twenty lashes. Take care! Being blind, you may beat up the walls."

Gurava standing up, rolling his eye-balls, and adjusting his lash, replied, "Sir, if all have eyes on their faces, Gurava has them on his hands."

Paramananda and Nanda led Sultan inside the room.

All the spectators shouted, "Serves him right!" Some began to depart. The beasts too departed, some this side, some that side. As the children were being squeezed in the crowd, the elders caught hold of their hands and dragged them along, away from the scene.

In this tumult, Sultani, without being seen by anybody, moved the curtain a little and entered the room. Seeing Sultani there, Sultan wept aloud.

Gurava: "Was it not like this when you beat her up?"

Sultani, raising her right palm and placing the forefinger of her left hand on her lips, warned Sultan with her eyes. Sultan, understanding the situation, kept quiet. Gurava thundered, "Stretch out your hands." Sultani pushed Sultan to the corner, stretched out her right hand and jabbed Sultan with the finger of her left hand.

Sultan understood and said, "Yes, I will stretch out my hand."

"Where?" asked Gurava.

Immediately, Sultan put Sultan's hand into Gurava's. Gurava felt it all over, and walked a few steps behind. Raising his hands, he prayed to God.

In a trice, Sultani pushed Sultan to a corner and held up her hand. The lashes fell upon it in quick succession with a resounding noise. Who saw in that darkness whether red blood came out of Sultani or red passion? Did Sultan who was near see it?

Gurava, having finished his duty, removed the curtain. Sultani pushed Sultan to the front. As Gurava walked ahead, Sultan followed him.

The munsif ordered, "Disperse, all of you!" Like bumblebees singing, all of them went their ways. Sultan, looking at the curtain, went slowly forward. Behind him Santayya.

Sultan was walking, all the while looking behind him.

Santayya: "It is me, there is none else here."

Sultan could not restrain himself from crying out. He sobbed and sobbed and burst into cries.

Santayya: "What a pity! The lashes perhaps hurt you very much!"

Sultan: "No, Sir, it was Sultani who received those lashes."

And he began to cry and cry.

Santayya was stunned. Sultan revealed everything. Santayya, lifting his forefinger to his lips, stood motionless and speechless. After a little while he asked Sultan to fetch Sultani. Sultan hesitated a little to go. Santayya was displeased. He said, "I will myself go and fetch her."

Santa who was listening to all this conversation cried aloud, "Sultani has come here." Santayya went in quickly, behind him Sultan and behind him slowly Paramananda.

5

Before the lamp hanging in the doorway stood Sultani. Santayya looked at the *Jada Tejas*, the physical light in the lamp, then at the *Chetana Tejas*, the Light of the Spirit, in Sultani's face. Twice or thrice he looked now at the lamp and now at Sultani. Sultani hid her hand under her cloth.

Sultan, taking slow steps, came in front of Sultani. Behind him Paramananda.

Said Santayya to Santa, "Have you seen what has happened today? Has Sultani told you?"

Santa: "Are you glad that you have got Sultan, her God, beaten up?"

"You good-for-nothing! You are always hasty! Today, it was Sultani who got the lashes instead of Sultan."

Santa's eyes were fixed in concentration.

Sultani turned back and saw: in the distance were Sultan and Paramananda. She again turned her face forward. There was no change in it. By this time,

Santa became her normal self and asked, "What is that, Sultani?"

"Remove the cloth and show me your hand," said Santayya.

Sultani did not show her hand.

"Sultani!" cried Santayya, "I know, I have seen from the beginning that there is a fire, a *Tejas*, within you. You have come down here to exhaust your *karma*. From now on, you shall be with us in our house. I will treat you like my mother. Spend your time here thinking of God."

Santa came near Sultani and said, "Sultani, where is your hand? Show it to me!"

As Sultani was thinking of something she did not hear the words of either Santa or Santayya. Then, raising her head and looking around, she saw them before her. She immediately prostrated herself to them.

Blood was trickling from her hand.

Sultani fainted. Santayya brought some water and sprinkled it on her face. He bandaged her wounds. Santa stood fanning her. Sultan came near and said, "Mother, you should not fan her. I shall do it."

Paramananda came near and said, "Rascal, you have come once again to beat her up?"

Sultan glared at him. Paramananda gritted his teeth.

Sultani got up. She threatened both with her forefinger. Like two frightened bullocks, they stood apart. Seeing Santayya she said, "Sir, I have a request."

"What is the request?"

"Sir, do you have my sovereigns now with you here?"

"Yes, they are now here with me."

"When I was with Paramananda, I earned those sovereigns with the sweat of my brow. They belong to him. Please give them to him, Sir."

"All right."

"If I stay in your house, I shall be a burden to you also. It is true."

Santa: "No."

Sultani did not hear Santa's words. Seeing Santayya she said, "Sir, in the morning, I told you that God had not descended into my head till then. Now I can say that God came down into my head before I received the lashes."

A smile appeared on Santayya's lips. Santa became pale and was looking on. Sultan and Paramananda were wonderstruck.

"I am made this way. For a friend I will gladly give away my life. I have not yet obtained that kind of friend. Hereafter for me it will not be necessary, either."

Sultan and Paramananda hung their heads.

"Dear Sir, separating the bitter elements in friendship and rejecting them, one should obtain and retain only the nectar of friendship. I shall not be a burden to you. I too shall not carry any burden any more. I shall be a beggar begging alms. I shall be a slave of the Lord of Tirupati. From now on, my friendship will be only with the God of the thousand names. So all of you please give me leave."

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Ma Ke Geet Gae Ja** (Sing Thou Songs of The Mother)—Hindi. *Published by Har Krishan Singh*, 16, Rue Saint Louis, Pondicherry-1. Price Rs. 2.90.

*Ma Ke Geet Gae Ja* is a collection of Hindi songs and a couple of poems by Har Krishan Singh. There are two delightful Urdu songs also at the end of the book. His translation of *Savitri* quotations in easy Hindi is praiseworthy.

Har Krishan Singh is well-known to the readers of *Mother India* as a poet in English. This collection of his songs will be welcomed by Hindi readers for their deep devotion and sincerity. They show such a smooth flow of simple words in easy rhythm and rhyme that they bring the poet into light as having free inspiration and remarkable skill in handling Hindi metre with pleasing facility.

The songs depict the yearning of the soul for the Divine Mother and issue straight from the heart. Here the poet's sadhana has outlet in the form of devotional songs that have power and appeal. As a matter of fact they are all an offering and a prayer to the Mother.

It seems that the poet has been particular in using simple language as we ordinarily speak it, with a pleasing touch of easy Urdu words.

These songs will inspire those who have a longing for the Divine Grace. They are so simple and full of deep devotional yearning that they touch the heart of anyone who goes through them.

I hope that this collection will delight the readers and help them to enhance and fortify their faith, their clinging and their dedication to the Mother.

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Savita Aurora

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