

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JANUARY 1978

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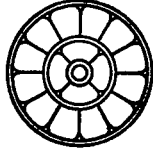
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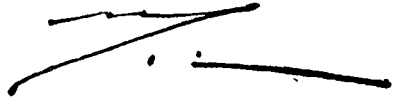


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXX

No. I

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

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## THE MOTHER'S GAYATRI

THE most sacred Mantra of the Rigveda (III.62.10), the Gayatri of Rishi Vishwamitra directs us to the Solar Godhead of Truth—Surya-Savitri:

*Tat savitur vareṇyam  
bhargo devasya dhīmahi  
dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt.*

Let us meditate  
on that most excellent light  
of the divine Savitri  
that it may impel our minds.

It is hardly possible for the Mother to have come across this great formula of Yogic progress in Paris in 1911. But just at that time, she gave a speech to a Women's Association. It makes a study of the anatomy of thought and explains how thinking can be controlled and turned into a perfect servant. Her speech ends with the exhortation:

“My wish is that we may take the resolution to elevate ourselves daily in all sincerity and goodwill, in an ardent aspiration towards the Sun of Truth, the Supreme Light, the intelligent source of life of the universe, so that it may penetrate us entirely and illumine with its great brilliance our mind and heart, all our thoughts and all our actions.”<sup>1</sup>

Here is indeed a spontaneous reflection of the master Mantra—rather a recurrence of it from the same depths that it originally surged up from. But what is even more striking is that the Mother's version anticipates in living essence the new Gayatri which Sri Aurobindo has been inspired to give us, crystallising the aspiration for the direct descent of the Supermind into our earthly being:

*Tat savitur varam rūpam  
jyotiḥ parasya dhīmahi  
yanmah satyena dīpayet.*

Let us meditate  
on the most auspicious form of Savitri,  
on the Light of the Supreme  
which shall illumine us with the Truth.

AMAL KIRAN

<sup>1</sup> *Words of Long Ago*, p. 291.

# WHAT IS THE INTEGRAL YOGA?

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON APRIL 28, 1929

*It has been said that in order to progress in Yoga one must offer up everything to the Divine, even every little thing that one has or does in life. What is precisely the meaning of this ?*

YOGA means union with the Divine, and the union is effected through offering—it is founded on the offering of yourself to the Divine. In the beginning you start by making this offering in a general way, as though once for all you say, “I am the servant of the Divine; my life is given absolutely to the Divine; all my efforts are for the realisation of the Divine Life.” But that is only the first step; for this is not sufficient. When the resolution has been taken, when you have decided that the whole of your life shall be given to the Divine, you have still at every moment to remember it and carry it out in all the details of your existence. You must feel at every step that you belong to the Divine; you must have the constant experience that, in whatever you think or do, it is always the Divine Consciousness that is acting through you. You have no longer anything that you can call your own; you feel everything as coming from the Divine, and you have to offer it back to its source. When you can realise that, then even the smallest thing to which you do not usually pay much attention or care, ceases to be trivial and insignificant; it becomes full of meaning and it opens up a vast horizon beyond.

This is how you have to do to carry out your general offering in detailed offerings. Live constantly in the presence of the Divine; live in the feeling that it is this presence which moves you and is doing everything you do. Offer all your movements to it, not only every mental action, every thought and feeling but even the most ordinary and external actions such as eating; when you eat, you must feel that it is the Divine who is eating through you. When you can thus gather all your movements into the One Life, then you have in you unity instead of division. No longer is one part of your nature given to the Divine, while the rest remains in its ordinary ways, engrossed in ordinary things; your entire life is taken up, an integral transformation is gradually realised in you.

In the Integral Yoga, the integral life down even to the smallest detail has to be transformed, to be divinised. There is nothing here that is insignificant, nothing that is indifferent. You cannot say, “When I am meditating, reading philosophy or listening to these conversations I will be in this condition of an opening towards the Light and call for it, but when I go out to walk or see friends I can allow myself to forget all about it.” To persist in this attitude means that you will remain untransformed and never have the true union; always you will be divided; you will have at best only glimpses of this greater life. For although certain experiences and realisations may come to you in meditation or in your inner consciousness, your body and your outer life will remain unchanged. An inner illumination that does not take any note of the body and outer life, is of no great use, for it leaves the world as it is.

This is what has continually happened till now. Even those who had a very great and powerful realisation withdrew from the world to live undisturbed in inner quiet and peace; the world was left to its ways, and misery and stupidity, Death and Ignorance continued, unaffected, their reign on this material plane of existence. For those who thus withdraw, it may be pleasant to escape from this turmoil, to run away from the difficulty and to find for themselves a happy condition elsewhere; but they leave the world and life uncorrected and untransformed; and their own outer consciousness too they leave unchanged and their bodies are unregenerate as ever. Coming back to the physical world, they are likely to be worse there than even ordinary people; for they have lost the mastery over material things, and their dealing with physical life is likely to be slovenly and helpless in its movements and at the the mercy of every passing force.

An ideal of this kind may be good for those who want it, but it is not our Yoga. For we want the Divine conquest of this world, the conquest of all its movements and the realisation of the Divine here. But if we want the Divine to reign here we must give all we have and are and do here to the Divine. It will not do to think that anything is unimportant or that the external life and its necessities are no part of the Divine Life. If we do, we shall remain where we have always been and there will be no conquest of the external world; nothing abiding there will have been done.

*When we are concentrated in mental movements or intellectual pursuits, why do we sometimes forget or lose touch with the Divine ?*

You lose it because your consciousness is still divided. The Divine has not settled into your mind; you are not wholly consecrated to the Divine Life. Otherwise you could concentrate to any extent upon such things and still you would have the sense of being helped and supported by the Divine.

In all pursuits, intellectual or active, your one motto should be, "Remember and Offer." Let whatever you do be done as an offering to the Divine. And this too will be an excellent discipline for you; it will prevent you from doing many foolish and useless things.

*Often in the beginning of the action this can be done; but as one gets engrossed in the work, one forgets. How is one to remember ?*

The condition to be aimed at, the real achievement of Yoga, the final perfection and attainment, for which all else is only a preparation, is a consciousness in which it is impossible to do anything without the Divine; for then, if you are without the Divine, the very source of your action disappears; knowledge, power, all are gone. But so long as you feel that the powers you use are your own, you will not miss the Divine support.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note.—The last phrase may prove ambiguous, if not carefully read.

# EVOLUTION

## FROM TWO TALKS OF THE MOTHER

### I

#### The Occult View of Man's Evolution

TRADITIONS—which of course are only oral traditions and from the scientific point of view quite questionable, but which are based on individual memories—say that the first man or the first human pair or the first human individuals were materialised in accordance with an occult method, something like the one Sri Aurobindo foretells for the future supramental process; that is, that beings belonging to higher worlds have, by a process of concentration and materialisation, built or formed for themselves bodies of physical matter. It probably wasn't the lower species which progressively produced a body which became the first human body.

According to spiritual and occult knowledge, consciousness precedes form; consciousness by self-concentration produces its form; whereas, according to the materialist idea, it is form which precedes consciousness and makes it possible for consciousness to manifest. For those who have some knowledge of the invisible worlds and a direct perception of the play of forces, there is no possible doubt: it is *necessarily* consciousness which produces a form in order to manifest. Now, the way things are arranged on earth, it is quite certainly a consciousness of a higher order which penetrates a form and helps to transform it, so that this form may become—either immediately or through successive generations—capable of manifesting that consciousness. For those who have the inner vision and knowledge, this is absolutely beyond doubt. It is impossible for it to be otherwise. But those who start from the other end, from below, will not admit it—but all the same it is not for ignorance to dictate knowledge to wisdom! And yet, this is what it does at present. As it is easier to doubt than to know, the human mind is accustomed to doubt everything; that is its first movement, and of course that is why it knows nothing.

Conception precedes manifestation and expression, that is quite certain. And all those who have had a direct contact with the past have the memory of a kind of human prototype, far superior to mankind at present, who came on earth as an example and a promise of what humanity will be when it reaches its acme.

(*Silence*)

There is in life a certain tendency to imitate, a sort of effort to copy "something". One can find very striking examples of this in animal life—it even begins already in plant life, but in animal life it is very striking. One could give numerous examples. And so, in that sense, one might very well conceive of a sort of effort of animal life



to attempt to copy, to imitate, to create some resemblance to this ideal type which would be manifested on earth by occult means, and it was probably through successive attempts, by a more and more successful effort that the first human types were produced.

11 December 1957

2

### The Involutionary and the Evolutionary Being

*Aren't the incidents of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana true ?*

True, in what sense? Whether it all really happened on earth like that? Hanuman and the monkeys and the...? (*Laughter*) I can't tell. I have the feeling that it is symbolic; that, for instance, when one speaks of Hanuman, this represents the evolutionary man, and Rama is the involutionary being, the one who comes from above. But...

*What is meant by the involutionary and the evolutionary being ?*

The evolutionary being is the one that's the continuation of the animals, and the other is a being from higher worlds who, when the earth was formed, materialised itself upon earth—it does not come from below, it has come from above. But in the evolutionary being there is that central light which is the origin of the psychic being and which will develop into the psychic being, and when the psychic being is full-formed, there is a moment when it can unite with a being from above which can incarnate in it. So this being from above which descends into a psychic being is an involutionary being—a being of the Overmind plane or from elsewhere. That's all?

*You did not finish telling us about Rama and Hanuman. (Laughter)*

I did not finish? But yes, I said...Oh! because he asked what difference there was between an involutionary and an evolutionary being. But that's enough as it is. Once you know that, you have the key to the whole story.

21 May 1958

## SOME LITERARY NOTES FROM SRI AUROBINDO

*What is the general sense and especially the meaning of the word "ground" in these two lines from your poem, In the Moonlight?—*

*Are Nature's bye-laws merely meant to ground*

*A grandiose freedom building peace by strife ?*

*Does "ground" mean "crush" ?*

"Ground" means here not to crush, but to make a ground or foundation for the freedom. What Science calls laws of Nature are not the absolute or principal laws of existence, but only minor rules meant to build up a material basis for the life of the Spirit in the body. On that has to be erected in the end, not a rule of material Law, but an immortal Liberty—not law of Nature, but freedom of the Spirit. The strife of forces which is regulated by these minor laws of Nature is only the battle through which man has to win the peace of Spirit. This is the sense.

? .2.1929

\*

*(To Arjava)*

The one stumbling block in the way of perfect poetic expression for you now is the difficulty in combining clear directness and lucidity with your turn for a richly packed and imaged thought. There is a tendency sometimes to put too many images together, shooting them into each other in a way which is not always easy to carry off—even the greatest masters of poetic style have sometimes stumbled in this kind of effort. And generally there is a tendency to pack the thought and clip the expression to the utmost and sometimes this goes to an excess of compression which makes it a little difficult to seize at once the significance. When you do combine the lucidity with the pressed thought, the result is often very fine.

20-5-1931

\*

*Can we send to A.E. the letter you have written about his poetry and about his views on spiritual poetry ?*

I don't think I can consent to sending the letter to A.E.—unasked-for criticism is the last thing I would dream of sending to someone personally unknown to me—especially to a man of A.E.'s standing and value. Besides, I can express casual *dicta* of that kind to you or Dilip or Arjava, because our minds are in sufficiently close communication to throw out an isolated point without balancing it by the other things that would have to be said if I were writing for a distant mind or for the public. My re-

marks, even about his rhythm, are quite incomplete and based on an uncertain remembrance—I read his poems hastily in a volume brought from a library and kept only for a short time—and it was at least seven or eight years ago—more, for I must have been writing the ‘Future Poetry’ at the time. For that reason, too, I would rather like to have a more leisurely glance at your selections, if you can spare them for some time.

?-2-1932

\*

*In the last line but one of your letter you say: “Both lines from Virgil have the quality you speak.” I think the necessary “of” has been blown off by “the wind of your own speed” in writing. The same “terrific speed” is responsible for “repetition” in a letter to Arjuna and for other such lovable curiosities.*

Dealing with correspondence now occupies anything from five to seven hours a day—except a few rare slack days—so you can understand that I have no time for accuracy. You must supply the gaps left by pen-slips for yourself.

?-2-1932

\*

*Now two lines of mine run:  
On withering sorrow and frigid sleep  
Our banners of song-beauty leap ..  
How do you like the second line ?*

Surely it was not like this in the previous version. It struck me then as having magic in the expression, here it sounds commonplace.

22-6-1932

(The previous version of line 2 was:  
The banners of our beauty leap...)

\*

*Line 1 in the couplet—  
Our tones of fathomless joy instil  
A taste of the Ineffable—  
I want to alter thus:  
With tones of fathomless joy we instil.*

If you alter in that way, the whole beauty is gone. When a perfect inspiration

comes, to alter it is a crime and usually carries its own punishment.

The alteration you propose makes a deep and solemn psychic truth turn at once into an intellectual statement.

22.6.1932

\*

The first verse is very good; but I don't know whether "We venture to reclaim" [line 3] would not sound in many ears too colloquially familiar, as in "I venture to object". These locutions are dangerous things—those I mean which are capable of suggesting such familiarity. There are lines in the Victorian poets which have become to the present-day mind almost comic from this cause.

22.6.1932

\*

*What about these lines of Keats ?  
... solitary thinkings such as dodge  
Conception to the very bourne of heaven...  
Are they not from rather high "overhead" ?*

Estimate in April 1932: "The substance may be Overmind, but the rhythm is ordinary and the expression intellectual and imaginative."

Estimate on March 23, 1935: "Higher Mind combined with Illumined."

\*

It is as I thought. Certainly 'a few corrections' is absolutely inadequate. Jaswant has a 'poetic faculty', but without mastery of metrical form and perfection of language the poetic faculty can't tell. Your changes make all the difference between a promising failure and a brilliant success. Even a few changes can often make that difference, but these are more than a few.

7.12.1935

\*

*That incorrigible Nirod has a chronic habit of misquoting me. He garbles my words, misreads my corrections, attributes to me opinions I am quite innocent of! A few weeks back he coolly told me that I had definitely declared that Milton had written his "Paradise Lost" from the Overmind! Of late he was showing signs of improving—but just last night he attributed to me that impossible Latinism, "gaudumus" (instead of "gaudeamus"—"Let us rejoice")!*

*Mehercule! what's to be done with that fellow?*

He ought to be sentenced to penal servitude—let us say, condemned to produce at least 14 lines of overhead poetry without the means to do it and then abused for not doing it. It is the only proper and sufficient inconsequent punishment for such inconsequence.

24.5.1937

\*

*Here are two sentences from The Riddle of This World (Calcutta, 1933, pp.102-103):*  
*For to the original being of light on the verge of the descent the one thing unknown was the depths of the abyss, the possibilities of the Divine in the Ignorance and Inconscience. On the other side from the Divine Oneness a vast acquiescence, compassionate, consenting, helpful, a supreme knowledge that this thing must be, that having appeared it must be worked out, that its appearance is in a certain sense part of an incalculable infinite wisdom, that if the plunge into Night was inevitable the emergence into a new unprecedented Day was also a certitude, and that only so could a certain manifestation of the Supreme Truth be effected—by a working out with its phenomenal opposites as the starting-point of the evolution, as the condition laid down for a transforming emergence.*

*There is no explicit principal verb in the second sentence. Don't you think such a verb is preferable to having merely a verb understood?*

No, an explicit verb would weaken the dignity of the turn.

7.8.1933

\*

In English when a man says "What do you mean by that?", as you wrote it, the sentence is a remonstrance—it amounts to saying "What do you mean by making such a remark?" or to saying "Your remark about my not having a quiet basis is wrong and unjust."

6.4.1939

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

JULY 18, 1940

S: Tomorrow Germany is to attack England.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, tomorrow night and finish it in a week. On the 26th the preparation and on the 27th the triumphal entry into Berlin.

P: But there is no sign yet anywhere of the attack. Nolini was saying that just as Napoleon was scratching his head at Boulogne thinking how to invade England, Hitler also must be doing that. *(laughter)*

SRI AUROBINDO: During the reign of King Harold the last invader crossed over to England.

*(Pause)*

N: Haque has paid high tribute to Bose.

SRI AUROBINDO *(laughing)*: Yes. With tears in his eyes he had to arrest him.

P: What has he said?

N: Bose is the most lovable person in Bengal politics, reputable, admired, revered, etc.

P: He is trying to humour him to have a smooth time when he is out.

SRI AUROBINDO: I think everything was ready to remove the monument when Bose started the agitation. All the parties were agreed, Europeans and others to have it removed.

P: He found out an easy way of combining the Hindus and the Muslims. Now the women are also starting satyagraha on the men.

SRI AUROBINDO: On the men? What for?

N: For equal rights. *(laughter)* Hamida Begum says this in some conference of women.

SRI AUROBINDO: No cooking, no conjugal rights and no house-keeping? Is that the programme?

S: That is secret yet. They don't let out the strategical move.

N: That's all they can do.

SRI AUROBINDO: All? That is a great deal.

P: Men will start cooking.

SRI AUROBINDO: But they may upset the whole thing. An irruption of women suffragists may invade and upset everything. (*laughter*) But after they get their rights, they should combine and fight Hitler because wherever he goes, he deprives women of their rights.

P: The Fascist slogan is back to the family.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the Fascist and Nazi and now the French slogan—*Famille*. Women will have no other duties except the house-hold one.

#### EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*in a grave tone*): We have lost 87 crores of rupees due to the collapse of the Bank of France. (*Seeing us all agape*) That is why we are dismissing many servants. (*laughter*)

P: I was thinking why it was 87.

SRI AUROBINDO: And neither has the Bank of France collapsed. Today Dyuman heard people talking in the Bazaar—"Ashram, Ashram!" When he enquired what it was about, he came to know that this was the news they were discussing. It is the Bazaar radio!

S: They have very big ideas about our wealth and think we are very rich.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the underground of our new Secretariat is supposed to contain an immense mass of gold, and formerly some British police thought it was a fortress we were building!

JULY 19, 1940

P: Hitler has called the Reichstag and is delivering a speech.

SRI AUROBINDO: Instead of a triumphal entry, a triumphal speech?

P: He is going to offer peace to Britain.

SRI AUROBINDO: He knows Britain won't accept. Why then does he offer it?

S: To keep a historical record that he was a peace-loving man. (*laughter*) He is creating a new world-order and becoming a protector of small nations, taking them under his protection without any loss of their honour and prestige.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are rather being kicked into the new world-order.

S: Anyhow our India is joining the international federation. The Women's Mission is going to China. The Nehru family will be represented.

SRI AUROBINDO: Without the Nehru family there can't be anything international. (*laughter*)

S: Vijaylakshmi is the President.

SRI AUROBINDO: They can send Nehru as the head of the delegation. (*laughter*)

S: No, Begum Hamida won't like a mere man being put at the head of the ladies.

SRI AUROBINDO: Which was Hamida in yesterday's photo?

S: The one on the right. On the left was Amrita Kaur. She doesn't look so terrible.

SRI AUROBINDO: As in her speech? No, she looks quite matronly and amiable. Whose Begum is she? Or who is her Nawab?

P: I think an I.C.S. man called Hamid.

SRI AUROBINDO: And she is Hamida? Just as Hindu women have Devi after their names.

(Then followed a talk about censorship, that all letters were now being censored.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Even insured letters are being censored. It is better that it is being done by some special body instead of the police. By the way, is Jaswant in prison now?

P: Yes, in B class, very happy, gets books to read and is carefully looked after, he writes.

SRI AUROBINDO: By the Imperial Government? (*laughter*)

P: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then they haven't started killing the Communists yet? It is lucky he is in prison, otherwise he would have sent all sorts of Communist pamphlets here. For how long has he been sentenced?

P: It is under the Defence of India Act. Simply interned.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is till the duration of the war? That means from 5 months to 50 years. (*laughter*) Some people say that the war will last 50 years.

S & P: Then Churchill and Hitler will be no more.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it will be a normal condition of life. From this occasional bombing and no serious damage, it is not unnatural to suppose that the war will last 50 years.

P: I don't think the present R.A.F. bombing of Germany will affect Germany materially very much.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it can destroy the industrial cities then it will.

#### EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: The original date to attack England seems to have been last Monday. So they have changed the date now.

P: Oh, was the talk in Turkey about that?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, Hitler's dates about Paris and other countries came to be true.

P: That shows they were all planned in cooperation with the people inside.

S: There is a Peshawar prophecy that Hitler's decline will begin from the 27th July and he will try to commit suicide on the 9th of August.

SRI AUROBINDO: For the failure of entry into England in triumphal march?

S: But such an easy misfortune is not for him; he won't die like that.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh!



N: We will be quite satisfied with that.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, we are not vindictive. Is that the war contribution from Peshawar?

S: Yes.

N: Franco is declaring for Gibraltar.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, this is the first time he has spoken about it publicly. (*Then addressing P*) You have seen some Japanese commercial man's proposal?

P: No.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has gone to Europe, to Italy, on some mission or trade purpose. He is said to be an important man. He says Germany and Italy should make an axis with Japan. They will be exhausted after the war and lose all spring for action. Japan and these countries may help one other by trade agreements between East and West. Here an implication seems to be that Japan would represent the East and that the whole East would be left under Japanese influence.

(After some time P brought in the subject of Art.)

P: Sammer has a queer idea. He says nowhere in Europe and India was there any popular art. Only in Russia now it has come. Communism has brought in popular art, he says.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the stock-in-trade agreement of all communists.

P: I was staggered. He has no knowledge of Indian history. I told him even today there is a village in Pondicherry where potteries are being made and the village goes by that name. These carvings on the wooden seat of the Mother which is such a fine piece of art was done by an ordinary workman. Mother herself was pleased with it.

NIRODBARAN

# THE DEMAND OF THE MOTHER

## An Exacting Demand

“How many will live for me? How many will die for me?” This was the demand that Sri Aurobindo put in the mouth of the Mother seventy years ago.<sup>1</sup> The demand was made of those who claimed to be patriots and aspired that India should become free. Now that India is politically free and aspires, with the rest of the world, to a New Life, now that “the gates of the Supramental world have been thrown open and the Supramental Consciousness, Light and Force are flooding the earth,”<sup>2</sup> the Divine Mother Incarnate makes certain demands of her children, that the New Life become a reality. Her demands are no less exacting than that old one.

The reason is—and she has never hidden the fact—that to bring in the New Life and create a New World in place of the one in which we live is a difficult task; it demands an effort and a sincerity of aspiration not less ardent and arduous than any so far undertaken by man. The conditions demanded of the individual aspirant who shows the way to the collectivity are “probably much more difficult” than in the disciplines imposed by the other systems of yoga. The difficulty is both psychological and material.<sup>3</sup> She has explained the reasons for the difficulty; but we shall not enlarge on them here.

Our purpose is to set out briefly what are the things we might try in order to help.

## Two Crucial Points

One of the most important things, perhaps the most important of all, is “if we can remember...that we are in an exceptional hour, an epoch that is *unique*, that we have this immense good fortune, this inestimable privilege of being present at the birth of a new world.... So the most important thing seems to be to remember this fact even when you do not have the tangible experience, have the certitude and the faith, remember it always, remind yourself of it constantly, go to sleep with this idea, wake up with this perception; do all that you do with this great truth, as a background, like a constant support, that you are present at the birth of a new world: We can participate in it; we can become this new world.”<sup>4</sup>

Along with this, one can help the progress of the collectivity by broadcasting the new message of hope. That things are not as they should be, that the world is in disorder and chaos, that there is no end to suffering—this is fairly well-known all over the world: “it appears to be a thing so often said over and over again. But that we can come out of it by means of a total realisation, a total transformation, a new light that will put some order and harmony into things is the message of hope that has to be brought. It is this that is the truth; it is dynamic; it is a new life that has to be built. And then, all these difficulties that seemed so insurmountable,—Oh, they fall away of themselves. When we can live in the light and the joy, shall we cling to the darkness and the suffering?”<sup>5</sup>

### The Impersonal Outlook

The very first necessity, in order to carry out these behests, is that we get rid of the semi-somnolence in which we live most of the time. "You have to be entirely vigilant, wholly awake. And instead of interesting yourself in the small inner psychological phenomena, which are antiquated enough—they belong to all that human history which has lost its novelty in any case—it would be better to give more attention to things that are more general, more subtle, more impersonal and will put you in presence of new discoveries of a quite special interest. Open the eyes of the subtle intelligence, and without preference or prejudice, egoism or attachment, look at what is happening."<sup>6</sup>

The Mother explains elsewhere what exactly she means by the "shifting of interest", shall we say, from the little matters of personal concern to something larger and wider. She says: "If instead of being hypnotised by your little difficulties, your small inconveniences, your petty discomforts, your big defects, if instead of being hypnotised by all that, you tried to see the counterpart, to what extent the Force is more powerful, the Grace is more active, the Help is more tangible,—in a word, if you were a little less egoistic and concentrated on yourselves and if you had a slightly wider vision in which you could include things that do not concern you personally,—perhaps your view of the problem would change."<sup>7</sup>

We do not see "the new discoveries" simply because we are so accustomed to take things for granted, because our view of things is so superficial. "But the constant miracle of the intervention of Forces which change the circumstances and characters, and have a highly generalised effect we do not call a miracle, because we see nothing but just the appearances and all that appears to you quite natural. But, to tell the truth, if you gave a thought to the smallest things that happen you would be obliged to say that it is miraculous.... Simply the habit of taking a purely superficial view."<sup>8</sup>

### The Lines of Endeavour

How shall we get out of this superficial view?

The Mother had been harping on this theme in all her teaching. In one of the last interviews she granted to some disciples, she summarised the method in a few words. "Naturally," she said, "by widening and enlightening your consciousness. But how to do it? Your consciousness,...widen and enlighten it? If you could find, each one of you, your psychic and unite yourself with it, all the problems would be solved.... In short, you have to become conscious instruments...conscious...conscious of the Divine. Ordinarily, that takes a whole life-time, or sometimes, for some people, several lives. Here, in the present conditions, you can do it...in a few months. For those who are...who have an ardent aspiration, in a few MONTHS.... They can do it."<sup>9</sup>

Lest there should be a possible misunderstanding, it might be well to add a little commentary to this brief statement, in the light of what the Mother had said to the

children in one of her early Talks.

“You see, there are two lines that are quite different. They can join together, because one can make everything join together. One is: a perpetual choice,...not to do strictly anything except what can help you on the spiritual path, and with a concentration of will and aspiration that does not allow any wandering about on the path, any going to right and left unnecessarily.... The other way is that of a development as complete, as integral as possible, of all the human faculties, of all one’s possibilities. One spreads oneself out like a fan, as widely as possible, in every direction, and fills one’s consciousness with all the human possibilities, knows the world and life and men and their work as it is now, and makes for oneself a vast and rich base for the future ascent.

“Generally, it is this that is expected of children, except...in cases that are wholly rare, exceptional, of children who carry in them a psychic being that has already had all the experiences before taking on a body this time.... But those are cases of one in millions. Otherwise, so long as one is very young, it is good to develop oneself, open out as much as one can in every direction, bring out of oneself all the potentialities one has, and make of them things that are expressed, conscious, active, so as to have a sufficiently solid foundation for the ascent. Otherwise, it is somewhat poor”<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the ideal might be to proceed on the two lines simultaneously, as has been the object held in view in the Ashram and its system of education.

### Physical Culture

In this context, the body and its culture acquire a supreme importance.

The human body, as it is now, “is still very heavy. And it is matter itself that must change in order that the Supramental may manifest.”<sup>11</sup> Can we do anything to hasten the change? Perhaps we can help.

The Mother has always been insisting that the disciples take proper care of their body, maintain it in good condition always. With the coming of the children to the Ashram, there has been a growing emphasis on physical education. We are aware of the special Messages from the Mother addressed to those who participate in the physical culture activities; there she seeks to bring out the close connection between these activities and the progress towards the material transformation. Here in brief is the rationale of the process, in its initial stages.

The body as it is at present is “a very inadequate expression of the Self, and a shadow, a shadow, something imprecise and obscure in comparison with the light and the precision of the Eternal Self. .. Every time the soul incarnates in a new body, it comes with the intention of having a new experience that will help its own development and make its personality more perfect.... Its descent into a body is necessarily a descent into an obscurity, ignorance and inconscience. And for a long time it has to work simply to bring a little consciousness into the body’s matter, before it can use it for having the experience that it has come down for. So, if by a rational, clear-seeing

method we cultivate the body, we help its growth, its progress and its enlightenment.

“Physical culture consists in infusing consciousness into the cells of the body; one knows it or one does not know, but this is a fact. When we concentrate in order to make our muscles act in accordance with our will, when we make an effort to make our limbs supple and give them an agility or strength, a resistance or a plasticity which they do not have naturally, we infuse into the cells of the body a consciousness which was not there at all; and in this way we make it an instrument that is homogeneous, receptive and progressive in its action. This is the capital importance of developing the physique.

“Naturally, this is not the only thing that brings consciousness into the body. But this is a thing that acts in an exceptional and wholly generalised manner. I have told you several times already that the artist infuses a very great consciousness into his hands, the intellectual into his brain. But that is local, so to say; whilst the culture of the physique is a generalised action. And when you see to what extent the body can be perfected, you understand to what extent that can be useful to the action of the psychic being that has come into this matter, when it is in possession of an organised, harmonised instrument, full of strength, suppleness, possibilities. That helps its work considerably.”<sup>12</sup>

### The Demand and the Prize

We may conclude with the Mother that “any discipline, no matter what it be, that one follows rigorously, sincerely, voluntarily, is a considerable help for the earthly life reaching more rapidly its goal and preparing itself to receive the new life and hastening the arrival of this new life and the contact with the Supramental Reality.”<sup>13</sup>

The Mother’s constant injunction stands, here as always: “Be sincere, and you will be helped.”<sup>14</sup>

There are no limits to the possibilities now. “Every sincere aspiration and all total consecration will have a response.... In fact, all that is ready, whoever or whatever it be, to receive even a particle or a particular aspect of the Supramental Consciousness and Light must receive it *automatically*.... The more the consecration is total and the aspiration intense, the more is the result likely to be integral and intense.”<sup>15</sup>

The Mother makes her demand well worth the prize.

SANAT K. BANERJI

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# THE TRUE TEILHARD AND THE ESSENTIAL SRI AUROBINDO

## SOME GUIDE-LINES FOR THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

TEILHARD de Chardin, throughout his life, stood at a critical crossroads and made moves in different directions at different times and held a complex vision from which it is not easy to arrive at a focus on fundamentals. He<sup>1</sup> declared that he had been “born with a ‘naturally pantheist’ soul”; but, brought up a Roman Catholic and trained to be a priest, he had a habitual reaction of vehement anti-pantheism. By profession and mental affinity he was a scientist drawn towards a secular humanist world-view based on the theory of evolution, from which the only religion that could be derived was the sense of an infinite and unitary universe moving forward with the drive of an immanent cosmic consciousness or world-soul. But his religious upbringing and discipline would not allow him to take physical reality as the changing and developing body of such a pantheos.

As a member of the Society of Jesus his aim was to “baptize” pantheism and humanism, whereas his innate temperament and modern turn of mind insisted on pantheizing traditional Christianity and making it conform to the demands of what he termed “ultra-physics”. His continual problem was: how to reconcile Christianity’s transcendent personal God—“God Above”, as he named Him—with the universal divinity posited by pantheism and the immanent “ultra-human”—“God Ahead”—that he considered to be implied by evolutionary humanism?

Taking pantheism and evolutionary humanism to be exclusive of the transcendent personal God, he was at a loss to effect their harmonization. Yet, being equally drawn to both the sides, he could not help showing, at various places of his writings, diverse stresses and penchants, so that we are faced with conflicting statements which no interpreter of him has been able to overlook. His fellow-religionist admirers attempt to assimilate him into the tradition of the Church which suppressed him all through his life as dangerously heterodox if not perniciously heretical. Teilhard himself gives them a handle for this interpretation since he was always eager to be a part of the historic Church. What they forget is his ineradicable conviction that Teilhardism was the real essence of Christianity and that the Church, not he, needed to be “converted” or “transformed”. On March 21, 1941 he<sup>2</sup> wrote from Peking to Lucille Swan: “According to my own principles I cannot fight against Christianity; I can only work inside it, by trying to transform and ‘convert’ it...I know that the tide is rising, which supports me.”

In the light of this attitude we must strive to disentangle the basic Teilhard from

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Henri de Lubac’s *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 155. The quotation is from Teilhard’s *My Universe* (1918).

<sup>2</sup> *Letters to Two Friends 1926-1952* (Collins, The Fontana Library, Theology and Philosophy, London, 1972), p. 155.

his own indecisions and ambivalences as well as from the facile one-sidedness of his co-religionist admirers. In particular, we need to set forth his concept of the cosmic Christ in all its far-reaching revolutionary implications and free it from two restrictive connections he gave to it. First, the conventional notion of cosmicality which goes with all ideas of Godhead and with which Teilhard often tried to identify it in order to link to St. Paul and St. John the “‘new’ Christianity”<sup>1</sup> he was fighting for. Secondly, the irrational idea that the cosmic Christ was necessarily a consequence and extension of the historic Jesus rather than the historic Jesus being a concentrated manifestation of the cosmic Christ.

As might be expected of so complex and tension-fraught a thinker, Teilhard himself comes to our help here. Piet Smulders<sup>2</sup>, a fellow-Jesuit, notes a “typical exaggeration” on Teilhard’s part: “the primacy of Christ over the whole of creation, hitherto thought of in an exclusively juridical and extrinsic fashion, can only become reality in an evolutionist notion of the world. As if St. Paul and the Fathers of the Church and indeed even the numerous contemporary theologians who highlight the cosmic role of Christ, had need of the evolutionist thesis!” This surprised exclamation from a most sympathetic commentator is enough to prove that the cosmicality of Christ *à la* Teilhard can never be equated to the cosmic role attributed to Christ by any other Catholic theological thinker past or present. If, according to Teilhard, Christ’s cosmicality can become a reality only when modern evolutionism is accepted, it is impossible for his cosmic Christ to figure in whatever St. Paul or contemporary religion posits in non-scientific terms. By insisting on evolutionism, Teilhard makes himself irrevocably unorthodox.

As for the historic Jesus in this context, his being subsequent and subordinate to the cosmic Christ cannot be denied the moment we correctly grasp Teilhard’s identification of the latter with what he has made famous as Omega. Omega is the supreme focus of unity which draws the evolving world, through more and more complex organizations of structure and increasingly centred interiorizations of consciousness, towards a final collective unanimity of reflective beings. Teilhard arrives at the vision of Omega by his “ultra-physics” and then argues that at the human level of evolution Omega may be expected to communicate with us by means of religious messages and, for full effect, incarnate the divine Super-Person in humanity. Such a special act would give a great push to the work of world-unification, the gathering together of personal centres by a Super-Centre. The incarnate divinity is thus a step and a stage in the progressive history of a universal Soul of Evolution. And Teilhard, when he aligns his “ultra-physics” with his Christianity, speaks up for that religion on the strength of its close correspondence with his scientific vision. “What gives Christianity its peculiar effectiveness and sets it in a particular key,” he<sup>3</sup> informs us, “is the funda-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *The Design of Teilhard de Chardin: An Essay in Theological Reflection* (The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1967), p. 306, note 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1972), p. 136.

mental idea that the supreme focus of unity is not only reflected in each element of consciousness it attracts, but also, in order to produce final unification, has had to 'materialize' itself in the form of an element of consciousness (the Christic, historical 'I'). In order to act effectively, the Centre of centres reflected itself on the world in the form of a centre (Jesus Christ)." Obviously, if the cosmic Christ is Omega, he must precede and prepare the appearance of Jesus. What that appearance, with its life and death and resurrection and "glorified body", may be thought to bring about is a more dominant, a more triumphant role played in the future by Christ-Omega.

How exactly should we characterize what Teilhard<sup>1</sup> considered his whole life's concern, "this half-scientific, half-religious faith", involving "a mutual form of love, based on the consciousness of a common Something (or rather Somebody) into which all together we converge"? He was frequently at pains to distinguish his faith from a "false pantheism" and to designate it as a "true pantheism". He could never get away from the pantheist nomenclature. The old Christian terms—"immanence" and "omnipresence"—did not satisfy him: they signified only God's Will sustaining the universe He had created as well as possessing the power to intervene in the universal process—both the sustenance and the intervention coming from a Being who is other than the world He has created not out of Himself but out of nothing. Concerning his "gospel"—"the feeling that the whole world is permeated by a creative love"—he<sup>2</sup> wrote: "This is, of course, essentially the Christian attitude, but made richer by a confluence with the best and subtle essence of what is hidden behind the various pantheisms." To Teilhard there is a truth of indispensable value, beyond Christian "immanence" and "omnipresence", in the pantheist experience. This truth, purified of a distortion he saw in that experience, he sought to catch in his cosmic Christ. "The 'universalised' Christ, "he<sup>3</sup> declared, "takes over, correcting and completing them, the energies that undoubtedly lie hidden in modern forms of pantheism.... If Christianity is to keep its place at the head of mankind, it must make itself explicitly recognisable as a sort of 'pan-Christism'...."

The falsehood that, in Teilhard's eyes, sullied pantheism was the absence he read in the latter of (1) a personal God transcendent of the cosmos and (2) an eternally subsisting individual element along with the All. The pantheist truth that filled a yawning gap in Christianity was a God intrinsic to the universe and co-extensive with it and inwardly energizing all evolution. This truth and its centrality to his life-work is perhaps best expressed in a letter of June 24, 1934:<sup>4</sup> "What increasingly dominates my interest and my inner preoccupations . . . is the effort to establish within myself, and to diffuse around me, a new religion (let's call it an improved Christianity, if you like) whose personal God is no longer the great 'neolithic' landowner of times gone by, but the Soul of the world—as demanded by the cultural and religious stage we have now reached.... My road ahead seems clearly marked out; it is a matter not of superimpo-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Two Friends*, p. 145.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> *Science and Christ* (Collins, London, 1966), p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to Léontine Zanta* (Collins, London, 1969), pp. 114-115.



sing Christ on the world, but of 'panchristising' the universe. The delicate point.. is that, if you follow this path, you are led not only to widening your views, but to turning your perspectives upside down; evil (no longer punishment for a fault, but 'sign and effect' of progress) and matter (no longer a guilty and lower element, but 'the stuff of the Spirit') assume a meaning diametrically opposed to the meaning *Customarily* viewed as Christian. Christ emerges from the transformation incredibly enlarged... But is this Christ really the Christ of the Gospel? And if not, on what henceforward do we base what we are trying to build?... One thing reassures me; it is that, in me, the increase of light goes hand in hand with love, and with renouncement of myself in the Greater than me. This could not deceive."

Although his evolutionary pan-Christism opened for man's destiny "a new compartment or rather an additional dimension..., of which *there is no explicit mention in the gospel*",<sup>1</sup> Teilhard felt that the spirit in which he was discovering "true pantheism" in terms of Christ was the spirit of the Gospel (love and self-renouncement in the Greater than one). There was also his conviction that, no matter what new shade he introduced into St. Paul, he was yet following "his line".<sup>2</sup> Hence his belief that Christianity could still serve and that in "the Christian stem...the sap of the religion of tomorrow is forming".<sup>3</sup> But neither his own innate pantheist turn to feel the world as divine in its depths and matter as "the stuff of the Spirit" nor the modern sense of a single colossal cosmic process inwardly moved to evolve "a kind of 'God of ahead' (in extension of the Human)"<sup>4</sup> could be quite satisfied with Christian-sounding confessions of faith. On the other side, no Christian mind could find satisfaction in certain directions of Teilhard's thought and expression. Two remarks of Henri de Lubac are typical. "He tried to show in our Lord Jesus Christ 'the synthesis of the created Universe and its Creator: did he not sometimes seem to establish this synthesis at a too accessible level and thus, in spite of the qualifications and corrections we have noted, and against his unmistakable intention, to some degree naturalize Christ?'"<sup>5</sup> "We believe, as Père Rabut does, that the elliptical form and the emphasis of some of Père Teilhard's expressions would seem to suggest a sort of natural identity of Christ and the Universe."<sup>6</sup> Teilhard's tendency to cosmicalize Christ and Christify the universe while holding fast to a transcendent personal God could have found proper play only if he had built from his half-scientific half-religious faith an evolutionary Christ-coloured version of what he repeatedly misunderstood and condemned: the ancient Indian Vedanta, especially as disclosed in the Bhagavad Gita. This scripture combines a transcendent Person, a dynamic Pantheos and a supreme Incarnation as well as a human soulhood which is an eternal portion of the Divine Nature and called towards the Personal Divinity through an extreme of love and of self-renouncement in a Greater than it at the same time that the human realizes its essential oneness with

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 142

<sup>2</sup> See de Lubac's *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning* (A Mentor-Omega Book, The New American Library, New York, 1967), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters to Two Friends*, p. 58.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, p. 262.    *Ibid*, p. 139.

the Divine, its inherent sameness of substance as the Absolute.

However, even as an evolutionary Vedantic Christianity, the Teilhardian *weltanschauung*, because of a number of shortcomings caused by its failure to rise to the full implications of blending modern evolutionism and the Gita's synthesis, cannot be the religion of tomorrow, the spirituality of the future. This spirituality is best recognized in the vision and work of Teilhard's contemporary, Sri Aurobindo, with whom he has often been compared but who goes far beyond him in mystical insight and experience no less than in bringing out the deepest significance of progressive evolutionism.

Sri Aurobindo's mystical insight and experience centre in what he calls the Supermind. The Supermind is not merely a magnified mind nor is it simply any faculty which is above mind. It is a specific supra-intellectual light—a hitherto unexplored dimension of the Divine Consciousness. It is a supreme dynamism which is originally creative and ultimately transformative of the space-time cosmos. It not only holds the perfect truth of all that evolves here—mind, life-force and body organized around an individual soul passing progressively from grade to grade of evolutionary existence through a series of rebirths: it also has the power to manifest that truth in all these terms here upon earth. And it manifests that truth not by a superimposition of the divine upon the earthly but by developing it as the very nature of those terms. For it is not just a realm of perfection high above, like the Platonic Ideas: it is simultaneously the perfection hidden below in what Plato labelled as the flux of phenomena and in what Sri Aurobindo names the Inconscience, an apparent negation of everything divine, where yet the full divinity lies “involved” as a prelude to its being “evolved” individually and collectively. Perfection is thus the inherent destiny of all evolving forces—a total fulfilment in the space-time cosmos itself by means of a push from the “involved” Supermind and a pull plus pressure from the Supermind eternally free in its transcendent status, which is personal God as well as All-Self.

Thus Sri Aurobindo drives towards consummating in the most integral sense both the Vedantic discovery, “All here is Brahman”, and the perfectionist dream of modern science—a totally realised existence, both individual and collective, in the field of matter.

In this context arises, as between Teilhard and Sri Aurobindo, the issue which Dr. Beatrice Bruteau has discussed in a penetrative article, “Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin on the Problem of Action”.<sup>1</sup> She begins by stating the issue: “By the *problem of action* I mean the problem of justifying human efforts to improve the spatio-temporal environment and of motivating men to make such efforts.” Whatever practical attention Hinduism and Christianity may have given to the world in relation to God, the eyes of both were ultimately fixed on the Beyond: “the paradigm of holiness...was the world-renouncing monk.” Aware of the conflict between God and the world in their respective religious backgrounds, Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard set about resolving the conflict by “extending to the world the value traditionally accord-

<sup>1</sup> *International Philosophical Quarterly* (Fordham University, New York), June 1972, pp.193-204.

ed to God”—while never permitting “the value of the Transcendent to suffer the least diminishment” by “their efforts to enhance the importance of the finite world”. Each of them relates this world, with its imperfections, to the Absolute by means of “the perspective of evolution”, the modern world-picture

Teilhard, Bruteau tells us, visualizes evolutionary fulfilment in a sort of “super-organism” where the sovereign Centre which he calls Christ-Omega constitutes the converging point for a multitude of personal centres enjoying a “differentiating union” of love with it. When the peak of development is attained, there will be a breakthrough outside Time and Space by the very excess of unification and co-reflection of the numerous personal consciousnesses. There will be a final “critical point” of evolution at which mankind, its convergence complete, will detach itself from this planet and join the transcendent Christ-Omega. Bruteau well remarks: “At this point we may feel that somehow we have come full circle and that the finite, material, spatio-temporal world, whose value we were trying to justify, has quietly slipped through our fingers, leaving us with our supreme value again attached only to the spiritual realm.”

Bruteau rightly traces Teilhard’s self-contradiction to his failure to be thorough in putting God at the heart of the universe. Because he still held that “the world travails, not to bring forth from within itself some supreme reality, but to find its consummation through a union with a pre-existent Being”, he was “obliged in the end to abandon the world of space, time, and matter for another world beyond”. Sri Aurobindo’s position is in contrast to this. “He announced from the outset that the Absolute is transcendent, cosmic, and individual. The evolving temporal world is essentially nothing but the Absolute itself. So is every individual.” Sri Aurobindo understood the true condition required for evolutionary fulfilment. “The world and the individual must be divine by right of nature; the evolving world must have all divine values involved in it awaiting unfoldment; evolution, both cosmic and individual, must infallibly attain its goal of perfect manifestation of the Godhead by continuous development . . . ; and this manifestation, when complete, must include, not only the expansion of human consciousness to the awesome level of the supramental, but the impassibility, elevation, and immortality of the human body.” Bruteau sums up: “If we are to hold all that we know of reality, and all that we can surmise, invent, or dream of reality, together in *one*, all of it having the maximum of meaning and value that we can find for it, then the way pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, or something very like it, would seem to be the only way.”

According to Bruteau, while Teilhard’s vision of the world evolving towards a single collective state of “super-humanity” with a “super-consciousness” does undoubtedly contain powerful sources of motivation for action in the world, especially for those who share his theological presuppositions, it does not thoroughly succeed in justifying the world and satisfactorily solving the problem of action in the space-time framework. Sri Aurobindo’s vision, rooted not in Omega but in the Supermind, does so.

Only four further observations we may offer apropos of Bruteau’s essay. As in

most other respects, Teilhard is double-voiced even about what the world travails for. He could not help feeling that a super-humanity with a super-consciousness expressing itself in a super-organism is in fact some supreme reality which the world would be evolving from within itself. No doubt, something more is there, a pre-existent Being; but is not the same Being brought forth gradually in the evolutionary process? What Teilhard<sup>1</sup> says about Omega is: "While being the last term of its series, it is also *outside all series*" In noting the underlined facet of Omega, that in which it is seen as already present or emerged, we must not overlook its "evolutive facet",<sup>2</sup> in which we see "that it emerges from the rise of consciousness"<sup>3</sup> and "is discovered to us at the end of the whole processus, inasmuch as in it the movement of synthesis culminates".<sup>4</sup> Omega's two-facetedness is also brought home in religious language. "God, the eternal being-in-itself, is, one might say, everywhere in process of formation for us."<sup>5</sup> These are words of Teilhard's at almost the start of his career. They are echoed in his old age: "God for himself ever complete and yet for us ever and endlessly being born."<sup>6</sup> The full implication of such statements should take Teilhard alongside Sri Aurobindo, and here and there we do find him talking of "another mankind" that "must inevitably emerge"<sup>7</sup> and establish on earth a sovereignty of universal love. De Lubac<sup>8</sup> is puzzled and wonders whether "even in such rare passages" Teilhard, "without making it quite clear", was not speaking of the end of the world, a supernatural terminus. But these passages have no reference to any eschatological breakthrough into a Beyond.

And what clinches their this-worldliness is a merger of two important expressions. De Lubac has often insisted that the "ultra-human" of Teilhard's evolutionary perspective coincides with the "trans-human" of his eschatology, so that the final "critical threshold" marks an extra-cosmic movement. But here Teilhard does not merely mention "an ultra-human synthesis":<sup>9</sup> he also goes on to characterize this "further degree of organization and therefore of consciousness and therefore of freedom"<sup>10</sup> as the actualized "possibility" and "potentiality" of "a further trans-human synthesis of organic matter".<sup>11</sup> The "trans-human", like the "ultra-human", is now an earthly vision. Nor is this fusion of the two terms the aberrancy of a single occasion. Elsewhere too Teilhard fuses them, as, for instance, when he poses "the problem of knowing whether, and up to what point, it is physically (planetarily) possible for man to trans- or ultra-hominize himself".<sup>12</sup> However, the grip of the traditional Christian hope proves too strong for Teilhard in the main and cuts short his Aurobindonian tendency, the true trend of his evolutionist religion.

<sup>1</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man* (Collins, London, 1960), p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>5</sup> *Hymn of the Universe* (Collins, Fontana Books, London, 1971), p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Le cœur de la Matière*, quoted in Emile Rideau's *Teilhard de Chardin: A Guide to His Thought* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 502.

<sup>7</sup> *Activation of Energy* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 74

<sup>8</sup> *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin*, p. 358, note 67

<sup>9</sup> *Activation of Energy*, p. 69 <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68 <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

Our second observation concerns a gap in Teilhard's view of the evolutionary process. Like Sri Aurobindo he evaluates evolution in terms of growth of consciousness. And he is particular about the ultimate value of the personal. Evolution aims at the production of persons, reflective intensely interiorized selves. Again, it is because the further line of evolution passes through the personal human that Teilhard envisages the fullness of evolutionary achievement as a centring of personal consciousnesses on a supreme Person. But what is the medium through which the personal human comes into its own? Each of us, in Teilhard's thought, has an individual "soul" but he has no answer to the question: how has the soul-individuality come up? He does not subscribe to the orthodox theory that each soul is newly created by God at the birth of a body. He<sup>1</sup> says of the man deeply convinced of the evolutionary viewpoint: "Body and soul, he is the product of a huge creative work with which the totality of things has collaborated from the beginning". And he also believes that the personal<sup>2</sup> consciousnesses can leave their bodily vehicles when the latter dissolve: they detach themselves and collect around the pre-existent Omega. Bruteau quotes him as declaring: "All around us, 'souls' break away, carrying upwards their incommunicable load of consciousness." But, if the soul can survive physical death and has not been Christianly new-created at physical birth, how can it not have a pre-existence of its own as the ground of its individual personality? And, if it pre-exists, must we not posit a series of births for it, contributing to its development? It would be logical to assent to Sri Aurobindo's argument:<sup>3</sup> "...if there is an evolution of consciousness in an evolutionary body and a soul inhabiting the body, a real and conscious individual, then it is evident that it is the progressive experience of that soul in Nature which takes the form of this evolution: rebirth is self-evidently a necessary part, the sole possible machinery, of such an evolution."

Thirdly, we may probe the content of Omega Point. Teilhard has written, as we have seen, of "God, the eternal being-in-itself, ..everywhere in process of formation for us". But what do we actually have at the climax of Teilhardian evolution? When Omega serves as the supreme evolutionary Pole, it is figured as an infinite divine reality, to be approached through an inward resonance to the All and an outward pooling of progressive enterprises. But, when evolving humanity reaches Omega Point, can we say that its maturation is equal to the cosmic "Within" coming into its own and revealing its transcendence? There is only a certain expansion of consciousness in the human degree. Teilhard calls it a "planetization" of "co-reflection": all reflective units of the earth cohere and there emerges a single human consciousness thinking collectively on a planetary scale. What we may call in Indian nomenclature the Vishva Manava, the World-Man, in complete unitary and multiple thought-expression, is evolved. To dub this earthly "totalization" of

<sup>1</sup> *The Vision of the Past* (Collins, London, 1966), p. 137

<sup>2</sup> *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> *The Life Divine* (The Sri Aurobindo Library, The Greystone Press, New York, 1949), pp 680-

Mental Mankind the cosmic consciousness, the realization of the All, the God Ahead joining with the God Above—as Teilhard does—would be an exaggeration. No supreme divine reality is here. However magnified into something “super” or “ultra”, as compared with the present reflective rather than co-reflective condition that is ours, we are still in the sphere of the “human, all too human”. To take this race-wide state of harmonious religion and research and relationship to be the term of evolution is logically inconsistent with the original vision of Omega.

Hence the fulfilled humanity it will constitute—glorious though it might be—would be far indeed from that complete divinisation of mind, life and body, which Sri Aurobindo names “Supramental Transformation”.

Even the cosmic consciousness, the realisation of the All, the God Ahead joining with the God Above—even Omega figured as an infinite divine reality would not be able to effectuate that transformation; for, it would not answer to the Aurobindo-man Supermind. Bruteau, for all the comparable factors she may discern in the two, never identifies them, but less knowledgeable commentators might easily do so. They would be committing a capital mistake. The Teilhardian Omega would only bring about in a Christianised evolutionary mode an approximation to the manifold Theophany invoked by the Gita. And the Gita does no more than magnificently prepare the ground for Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga.

Our last query *vis-à-vis* Teilhardism is: can there be at all a term to evolution? Is not “God...for us ever and endlessly being born”? Omega Point, whether viewed as an earthly transformation in its own right or as a passing of the ultra-human into the trans-human outside space-time, negates this concept of Teilhard himself. But, unlike the grandiose dead-stop that is Omega Point, the Supramental Transformation is not the end of evolutionary history. In accord with the modern perspective, though in a much more profound sense than any that the scientific world-picture carries, Sri Aurobindo looks forward to a continuing progression. Following upon Supramentalisation there will be the embodiment of a still deeper aspect of Divine Existence—what Sri Aurobindo, employing the ancient Indian terminology, would call the Bliss-state, the Ananda-aspect, of the Absolute, which is behind the supramental Truth-consciousness, the Vijnana-aspect. Behind the Bliss-state there will be something else—and so on, as it should be when we are dealing with the Absolute and His manifestation. For, to use Meredith’s phrase,

His touch is infinite and lends  
A yonder to all ends.

K. D. SETHNA

## UDAR REMEMBERS

### XVII

ONE day, in the morning, after Balcony Darshan when Mother would give some of us a flower each and talk at times, there was a mention of Sri Aurobindo's poem "A God's Labour". Mother said that when She first read the poem She went at once to Sri Aurobindo and said to Him, "Lord, what have you done. In this poem of yours, you have exposed my secrets to the whole world." Sri Aurobindo just gave a loving smile, Mother added.

This poem is truly a poem about The Mother.

Then Chinmayi asked me if I had read the poem myself. I said I most certainly had. She then asked me if I knew it by heart. I replied that I had not committed it to memory but could do so easily. She then continued and asked how long it would take me to do this and if I could get it by heart before lunch. We used to have our lunch with Mother and so I had to be back again there by midday. So there were five to six hours in which to commit to memory the thirty-one verses, each of four lines. I felt I could do it and said so. Chinmayi was surprised and turning to Mother she said, "Look, Mother, Udar says he can learn the poem by heart between now and lunch-time. Can he do it?" Mother asked me, "Can you?" "I feel that I can," I replied. Mother then said, "Very good! Go learn it by heart and then you will recite it to me." Oh, was I overjoyed! To have Mother Herself listen to my recital of a poem by Sri Aurobindo about Her! What more could I want?

I went home and locked myself in my room so as not to be disturbed—and I began to learn the thirty-one verses by heart. It was not difficult. I did it well in time and repeated it several times to myself to be word-perfect. At lunch-time, Mother asked me if I was ready to recite the poem by heart. And I did without a single fault or even any hesitation. Then I knew that in setting this task before me, She had given me Her Grace and the capacity to do it, and so I was able to do it so well. This is Her way of working. We must be ready to take up anything She says we could do and, however difficult it is, She will give us the capacity to do it.

This is one of my most pleasant memories and I share it with others now. Whenever I recite "A God's Labour", I still see Mother listening to me, so attentively. "Victoire à La Douce Mère."

UDAR

# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of December 1977)

## CHAPTER III

### IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF DESIRES

3

Desire is a child-heart's cry craving for bliss.

*Savitri*, II.10

THE Shastras are one in proclaiming that until the subtle knots of the heart are rent asunder the inner glory cannot shine. Says the Veda, "The soul must disengage itself from the body." What constitutes these knots and how can one cut them? Sri Aurobindo has dealt with the subject in great detail, and in a methodical and scientific way. But where is the patience on our part to put all his teaching into practice?

The question uppermost in my mind those days was: "How am I to tame the vital?" Here the following lines of the Mother have an educational value.

"The vital being in us is the seat of impulses and desires, of enthusiasm and violence, of dynamic energy and desperate depression, of passion and revolt. It can set in motion everything, build up and realise, it can also destroy and mar everything. It seems to be, in the human being, the most difficult part to train. It is a long labour requiring great patience, and it demands a perfect sincerity, for without sincerity one will deceive oneself from the very first step, and all endeavour for progress will go in vain."<sup>1</sup>

Again, on the very first page of *Words of the Mother* (Third Series) there occurs:

"The ordinary life is a round of various desires and greeds. As long as one is preoccupied with them, there can be no lasting progress. A way out of the round must be discovered. Take, for an instance, that commonest preoccupation of ordinary life—the constant thinking by people of what they will eat and when they will eat and whether they are eating enough. To conquer the greed for food an equanimity in the being must be developed such that you are perfectly indifferent towards food. If food is given to you, you eat it; if not, it does not worry you in the least; above all, you do not keep thinking about food.... Get the idea of food out of your consciousness."

It took me more than a decade to learn this elementary lesson of Yoga. However much I tried, I could not drive out "food-desire" from my consciousness. It might appear silly that one professing to seek the Divine should harbour so much attachment to food. I am bound to become the laughing-stock of all. But to rise in the

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, April 1964, p. 21



estimation of others I should not conceal the hard facts of sadhana. Those who have not felt the severity of the struggle will not be able to realise how difficult it is to bring about an inner change. One has to be chiselled out of a rock.

Before 1939 there was no separate cooking in the Ashram and we were satisfied with what was served in the Dining Room. Our needs were few. The two rupees that the Mother gave us as pocket money per month seemed to be more than enough. An anna-worth of sugar—weighing one pound—sufficed for a month. I didn't know what to do with the balance.

When children entered into the life of the Ashram, they could not be forced to live on the Ashram diet. Thus started separate cooking. And we also fell into line with them.

The Master does not, however, find anything wrong in allowing the palate to be aware of something pleasant. "Only, one must have no desire or hankering for it."<sup>1</sup> So simple, yet so difficult!

The avidity of my palate kept gradually growing and it always looked for a surprise dish. At the very sight of the Ashram food the mind rebelled. I began to chasten it by repeating various maxims<sup>2</sup> so as to desist from running after the satisfaction of the senses.

At the most these efforts averted loss of temper but not the inner agitation—I found that the more I tried to get rid of thoughts of food, the more did my consciousness become engrossed in them.

From a child I was greatly fond of sweets. In Calcutta I spoke to the greedy part of myself, "Eat as much as you like now but do not trouble me when I take to sadhana." Even after hundreds of satisfactions the palate would never say, "No more." The craving grew more and more for newer sorts. But whenever a desired food presented itself, even a few morsels, then it palled on me. That was the saving feature.

Forcible suppression leads us nowhere. To me it has proved disastrous. Once came a present of sweets which I made up my mind not to take. At once my tongue felt a wrench. This weakness of mine was a shock to my mind. Thoughts of food would pursue me even in my dreams—just as I was going to touch it, it was whisked off.

It is easy to force oneself into the denial of a luxury. But what about the inner hankering?

In 1958 when tremendous pressure weighed upon me, the desire for delicacies became my dominant thought. It seemed that my whole system had gone dry. The greatest blunder of my life was that instead of looking up to the Mother's Grace<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Bases of Yoga*, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> মন কব না স্বেৰ আশ লভে যদি অভয় পদে বাস ।

"My mind! do not run after the transitory pleasures of the senses if you long to find an abode at the Mother's feet."

*Yadavksha lava santusto* etc, of the Gita.

<sup>3</sup> "The special Grace of the Divine is for the seekers of the Divine—for the others it is the cosmic Will through their karma."—Sri Aurobindo

protection for the redress of my troubles I looked to relatives to serve me with sweets, fruits and other tasty stuff. When denied I felt badly hurt.

Asked how to know a desire, the Mother explains:<sup>1</sup>

“...if there is anything in you that makes somewhat like an intense vibration, then you may be sure that there lies a desire.... You must look at yourself very closely and tell yourself, ‘What will happen if I do not get the thing?’ Then if the immediate answer is, ‘Oh it will be very bad’, then you may be sure that it is a case of desire. It is the same for everything.” Again, on getting a thing, “if something in you jumps up with joy, you may be certain it was a desire”.

Prayer for the surrender of the desire-soul’s promptings created conditions which led to momentary conquest of desire but the prompting persisted endlessly for the reason that the vital refuses to relax its hold.

“Naturally with such continuous discipline desires will be kept at a distance and they will trouble you no more. You will be free then to enter a little more deeply into your being and open yourself in an aspiration towards the giver of delight, the divine element, the Divine Grace. If this movement is done in a sincere self-giving, that is to say, if you give yourself, if you offer yourself without expecting anything in return, you will feel then a kind of warmth that is sweet, intimate, radiating, that fills your heart and is the forerunner of the true delight ”<sup>2</sup>

This inspired the cry for a better life. But how were the soul-stirring words of the Mother to be kept always before the mind’s eye? I had the aspiration but not the guts to see it achieved. However you try to have such words imprinted in the consciousness, all goes off the very next moment. I had to undergo a long training. In order to make them living, I hit upon the idea to pick up a few relevant slokas of the Gita and get them by heart. The first selection was:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्पार्थ मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तथोच्यते ॥ (२।५५)

“When a man expels, O Partha, all desires from the mind, and is satisfied in the self by the self, then he is called stable in intelligence.”

Years passed. This procedure did not push me even a centimetre to my chosen path. Still I did not lose heart. Pandit Satwalkar says in his commentary on the Gita that in trying to follow the path of the Gita there is nothing but failure and failures yet in those failures lies the seed of success.

One does not know when the successful moments arrive.

To me with my “earth-bound feet” the Mother gave the first lift:

“If you are made of bits that are not only different but often altogether contradictory, these bits necessarily create a division in your being. For example, you have part of you which aspires for the divine life, to know the Divine, to unite with the Divine, to live it integrally, and then another part which has attachments, desires and which not only seeks after these things, but is quite upset when it does not have them. There are other contradictions, but this one is the most obvious.

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, April, 1964, p. 21. <sup>2</sup> *Bulletin*, April 1957, p. 87.

“These are not exceptional cases, they happen frequently. I could give you innumerable examples of such contradictions in the being; when one part tries to take a step forward, the other comes in and demolishes everything. Then one has always to do it over again and always it is demolished. That is why...if you notice in your being a part that pulls you to the other side, you must catch it, carefully train it as you train a child and set it in accord with the central part. That is the work of sincerity and it is indispensable.”<sup>1</sup>

These words sank deep and I made up my mind that the division, the contradiction must go, whatever the cost and this needed much effort.

Whenever there were urges of ignorant desires I adopted a surrendered attitude—tried to remain satisfied with what came of itself. It proved to be a great weapon.

Slowly I began to take “in all matters, small or great, the yogic attitude.”<sup>2</sup>

When a thing desired came of itself, the heart felt grateful; when not gained, it had no reaction. This was the welcome effect of taking a surrendered attitude.

In the ordinary life, “the one law that seems to reign” is “the law of desire”.<sup>3</sup> Though I feel I am released to some extent from this iron law, yet old habits sneak in unperceived. Purity has to be installed in the very cells.

When as a diabetic patient I was forbidden sweet things, I thought that the ban was meant to free me radically from desire for sweets. But when for two weeks I had to remain on a prescribed diet without any semblance of sweet things, I felt like one possessed by desire for them; it seemed to flame up even from the bodily cells. A feeling overtook me that I had been deprived of the very sap of life. When this feeling was offered to the Mother, it lost its intensity after a time. But it made me realise that though the days of struggle were over, mastery was yet a long way off. Despite a cry in the blood for a higher life “the murmurings of desire never died”. At this stage of development it would, indeed, be wrong to expect more.

There was a time when I could hardly meet anyone without entertaining some desire or a motive concealed in a corner of my being. If a friend wished to see me but did not serve me with sweets I felt disappointed. I was once invited to the opening ceremony of a cloth shop. But on seeing me the owner of the shop turned his face away as if I was an unwanted guest. This made me feel offended. Along with me was M and, though he was served everything, he did not accept anything but a soft drink and that too out of courtesy. This had been his practice all along. I was all admiration for him.

I looked within and felt I had the strength to push this weakness out of me. The only thing needed was a strong will.<sup>4</sup> That very day I took a vow not to take anything anywhere. Afterwards on several occasions, I was offered dishes of sweets but I remained firm. Whenever such dishes were placed before me and I refused

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin*, April, 1961, p. 65.    <sup>2</sup> *Bases of Yoga*, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> “Such returns of an old nature that is long expelled from the conscious parts of the being always happen” (*Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Part IV, p. 451).

<sup>4</sup> “Train yourself to look calmly...and see what has to be done and quietly will it; it is so that the ordinary consent of the nature-forces can be overtopped and overcome”.—SRI AUROBINDO

them, I turned within to see if there was any desire lurking and I found to my great relief that there was no sign of a contrary vibration. Thus I got rid of hankering.

One day in February 1962 I went to meet a friend from Calcutta. Along with his family he was just going to a restaurant and earnestly pressed me to join him. Out of courtesy I could not say no, but kept on searching within all the way. On reaching there he ordered four sweets which I liked most. Here I was confronted with a real test. Despite all persuasion I did not yield. Merely to deny, to refuse to yield means nothing unless the inner being remains immune, free from all taint of greed for delicacies. Had I yielded to the persuasion I should have suffered a sad relapse.

In this way my vital being was moulded by degrees.

*(To be continued)*

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## MIDNIGHT

O SWEET silence,  
How you make my heart content!  
Enchanting eyes  
Watching over the midnight,  
I long to dwell on you forever.

O love, you are closest to me  
In the brooding shimmer of space,  
Your sweet embrace  
Pulling me gently  
To your cavern of the stars.

O if it is meant to be,  
Then let my eyes close,  
But not before you've kissed them  
With your face of moon-lily glows.

RAJESHWARI

## DESCENT OF THE AVATAR

THE day bright with rays gold and blue, the fifteenth of August.... India, the sacred land, freed from foreign yoke stands anew.

Call of conch from all around mingled with the mantra, OM, the original sound announces the advent of the Avatar, our Lord, Lover and Friend.

O boundless, measureless unutterable One, how, by what mystery of Maya dost Thou veil Thy million suns and harness Thy mighty forces to plunge into the darkness of the earthly womb and take a human form amongst us?

From immemorable past Thou hast come down time and again in a mortal body to disperse darkness and show to the seekers the path divine.

In Treta Yuga we see Thy face in Rama, the God-man who by killing the Rakshasas installed on earth the principle of pure mind.

As a child in Dwapara, Thou hast shown to Yashoda, the mother, the whole universe within Thy mouth and she at the supernal sight was puzzled beyond measure.

Thou again as the charioteer of Arjuna in Kurukshetra hast proclaimed the essence of the Veda for the maintenance of the Dharma. Then to convince Thy friend and devotee Thou hast revealed Thy almighty and all-pervading universal stature to him. Whereupon Arjuna, the hero of heroes, trembled in terror and prayed with folded hands to see Thy friendly form again.

Thou as Buddha hast attained Nirvana under the Bodhi tree but forsaking the absolute attainment embraced the fallen and downtrodden with infinite compassion.

As Christ on the Cross words of eternal forgiveness dropped from Thy lips, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus Thou hast taken on Thyself the sins and sufferings of all.

In the barren lands of burning sun Thou hast made Mohammed, the prophet, preach the path of one God and no other.

Thou wast love incarnate in Sri Chaitanya who personified both Radha and Krishna in the same body.

In Sri Ramakrishna Thou hast signalled the call of Rama and Krishna at the same time, and at his ardent prayer even the image of Kali, the Mother, speaks. Thou hast brought about the synthesis of all religions in him.

Thy voice we hear in the thunderous call of Vivekananda, "Know, O mortal, each religion is true in its own way and everybody is the seeker of the soul."

Lastly, O Lord, we hear Thy footsteps on the shore of the boundless sea and the golden light descends. Suffusing Thy cells with Supramental rays Thou sinkest deep into the abyss of death to fight the adversary in its own domain. The human race witnesses with wonder the majestic body charged with the light of Truth-consciousness.

O Lord, from behind the veil Thou sowest the seeds of initiation and the flame of life divine sprouts without our knowing...

Come down, O Shakti, come Love, peace and divine Treasure in plenty.  
Come down, O illumined Knowledge of the Lord and Ishwara of India.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

*(Read by the author on the occasion of the Mother's Birth Centenary  
Celebration at the Bilaspur Centre, M. P.)*

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## A BEGGAR'S BOWL

MY being — a beggar's bowl —  
Offers itself for a mercy-dole  
Of Thy Love divine. My bleeding heart  
Naught save Thy touch can ever console.

For earthly riches I do not pray,  
Long have they ceased to allure me or sway.  
Sweet Mother, Thou and Thou alone  
Can my poor soul's deep thirst allay.

Small am I and very frail.  
How break these bars that my being jail  
And grant no freedom to move and mount—  
How carry this cross and its gripping nail?

My heart has now no strength to bear  
The adverse Force so well aware  
Of big or tiny faults in me.  
Let me not fall into its snare.

How far away now seem the skies!  
Give me the power forever to rise,  
To live in Thee, for none but Thee.  
Help me this goal to realise.

LALITA

## SRI AUROBINDO: A TRIBUTE

IN every age and in every clime,  
O Timeless, Thou comest on our earth,  
From Thy infinity plungest in Time.  
O Nameless, in mortal name's disguise  
Thou visitest and Thy flame-descent  
Fills with vast hope our small clay-birth.  
The great gods thrilled, sang in the skies  
At the thunder of Thy truth-advent.  
With Thy rapturous white compassion-fire  
Thou hast vanquished Nihil's blinding force  
And roused this Earth to God-desire;  
In her blind cells now blooms a rose.  
From Mount Parnassus the Muses stirred,  
In Thee they found the Lord of their word.  
While Saraswati from her lotus-seat  
Uprose, in Thee was her vision fulfilled.  
Vyasa, Valmiki, Homer, greet  
Thee and their loving homage yield.  
Life, in her caverned inconscience, gleamed  
As on her Thy diamond omniscience beamed.  
In worship mute Light's Angels stood  
To obey Thy deep love's sweet command.  
All creation found refuge in Thy beatitude;  
And Truth eternal sought its home in Thy hand.  
A poet of supernal themes, a sage of God,  
A seer of Truth supreme, a prophet of life divine—  
Yet, even like us, this earth Thou hast trod.  
And Thy immortal foot-prints shine  
Guiding us Godward and lead us to bliss:  
Such Thy bright mission in the mortal abyss.  
O Friend and Master, Lover and Guide,  
I salute Thy advent with humble pride.

KAMALAKANTO

## CLIMB OF THE CHILD

Out of the mud emerged a playing child  
And smiled with wide gleaming eyes  
And stretched his tiny hands into the air....  
I lifted the child high up to the sky;  
The climbing child broke  
Into love and laughter....

Tottering along the narrow sun-lit ways  
We watched the birds on the trees  
And the freely swimming fishes in the pool....

I lay down by the child,  
Reading out to him stories.  
We roamed the deep woods  
Ringing with the crickets' cry.  
Still we moved on  
And so did the night move with us....

The last brief sun-flames lit up  
The dark ponds and ditches.  
An unseen wild theme woke  
To some deep rapturous tune  
And long-forgotten faces floated past,  
Moved only by an utter union  
Of the two poles of Existence.

Hints flashed, followed by guesses,  
And the rest was nothing but the lispings of a profound prayer.

A life of significant dreams  
Dreamt by dreamers who only carry  
The message of a dead tongue  
Beyond the living fire of the language  
Expressing a conscious soul  
In a conscious world....

The dirt and the dust in the air remained.  
The child gaped at the vanity of toil  
And, laughing, climbed still  
To those great and difficult heights. ..



I sought for words that I never uttered.  
 I never thought with thoughts I should think  
 And my mind in after-sight and fore-sight  
 Disclosed two worlds to live in—  
 A world of children playing in the night  
 And a world of children in the Eternal Day.

I watched the bodies turn into leaping flames  
 And set ablaze the immense sky  
 As with a thousand shining suns....  
 And the earth, the children, the wood and the garden  
 All vanished into that splendid Light  
 And faces floated from grief to relief.  
 Thus all irresistibly spin  
 In a great whirling cycle....

VINAY

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## THE TOIL OF TIME

### A DREAM-VISION

EARLY in the morning on the 16th November 1977 I saw the Mother dressed in the suit she used to wear for her tennis practice. She looked slim, agile and perfectly healthy. I marked especially her rosy cheeks without any wrinkles or any other sign of age. She walked straight to a dais in the centre of the Ashram courtyard and took her seat on the chair meant for her. A big audience was awaiting her arrival. She started addressing the people in these words:

“I saw Time in a vision as a labourer standing naked, with dust and sand all over his body and his hair tousled and full of dust. I spoke about this vision to some disciples. They took it as an indication that Time was completely tired out and no longer able to help aspiring humanity. Thus they became pessimistic. What I meant to tell them was, ‘Look, how Time is working hard to help you in your aspiration!’ Instead of heartening the sadhaks it disheartened them. There is no room for pessimism at all.”

Sitting on the ground within earshot I remarked, “That means people should take great care how they interpret what the Mother says.” She expressed assent.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

# INTRODUCTION TO ZOROASTRIANISM

## PART I

### A TALK GIVEN ON SEPTEMBER 9, 1977 TO THE PARSI COMMUNITY AT THE TATA AUDITORIUM, BOMBAY HOUSE, BOMBAY, INDIA

I WOULD like to present to you in the next hour a description and an enactment through pictures and words and our own thoughts, a description of the world as it is given to us from the religion of Zarathustra. Most importantly, and most relevant for everyone, it is the place of man, and specifically of the Zoroastrian, in the world that I would like us to examine.

There are certain questions which have always fascinated and obsessed the human mind. The first question, perhaps, is "What am I? What is man? For what purpose are we truly here? What must I do in the world to fulfil myself? Am I created just to eat, sleep and procreate beings like me? Or is there a work to be done? Is that work just work for food, for shelter, for security and for the perpetuation of me as an animal on this planet, or is there a greater purpose?"

The next question is the beginning of the answer to these first questions, "What is it that we call God—the source of all the good creation in which we exist?" When man starts to ask this question, he is entering into a relationship between himself and a higher power in the Universe.

At various times in the history of humanity, certain individuals have appeared who are not of the common order of things. We call them prophets and saints, men of vision, and the greatest of these have received from the highest power in the Universe a revelation, a great teaching for mankind to help him in his earthly existence.

We know that Zarathustra lived several thousand years ago. Scholars disagree on the precise dating, but for the sake of convenience, I shall give you the date that is now predominant among most scholars. He certainly lived no later than 1000 B.C., judging by the great antiquity of the language of his hymns, and we date the Gathas roughly contemporary with the R̥gveda, *i.e.* about 1700-1400 B.C. Of course dating of the R̥gveda is itself very uncertain, and some scholars put that back beyond the 3rd millennium B.C., but whatever date we arrive at and without wishing to go into this further in this talk, your religion originates from great antiquity. It is thus a source of pride for Zoroastrians that Zarathustra was a prophet sent by God, to answer the needs of men, so early on in the history of mankind, and that this revelation, and the religion which is its flowering, still blooms today, thousands of years later.

Zarathustra, as you know, grew up in a society that worshipped many gods—some through devotion and love and some through fear of the gods' retribution—what are called the Ahuras and the daevas. In this climate it was that the young Zarathustra asked his own heart over his long period of wandering away from his family and friends: "Who is the true creator of the world? Who is my Lord? What

am I—a man—to do in the cosmos? When I die—is that the end of all my existence?” It seems that he searched his heart for the answers to these and many other questions, as perhaps most of us do to a greater or lesser extent.

Because he was a virtuous man, and because his searching was genuine, it so happened that one day when Zarathustra was attending a gathering to celebrate the spring festival he went at dawn to fetch water from a river nearby, for the Haoma ceremony. He waded deep into the current of the river in order to draw the purest water, and it was as he returned to the bank, in a state of ritual purity, emerging from water, that he saw there, standing on the bank a shining being dressed in a garment like light itself. This was *Vohu Manah*, “the good mind”. *Vohu Manah* then took Zarathustra into the presence of Ahura Mazda, “the Lord Wisdom” and the other five blessed immortals. There was such great light that he did not even see his own shadow. At this moment Zarathustra received spiritual enlightenment. We call this “revelation”, *i.e.* direct contact with the divine presence of God.

In the history of the earth few men have shared such an experience. For you and me this experience seems remote and fantastic. It happened to Zarathustra several times, and the purpose of it? Well, after this came the great outpouring of wisdom that we have today in the form of the Gathas, the Avestan scriptures. They are Zarathustra’s praising of God and guidance for man. “A light in darkness.”

It is this theme of a “light in darkness” that I would like to pursue when we look at the way the Zoroastrian religion describes God’s manifestation and creation of the world.

It is said that in the beginning there were in existence only the two great primeval powers of the Universe, whom we may call Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom, and *Angra Mainyus*. At some point these two great spirits chose to manifest to themselves, in a particular way. One manifested expansion, creativity, light and life, the other manifested nothingness, vacuum, destruction, darkness and doom.

Then Ahura Mazda called into Existence, by his supreme will, the six great *Amesa Spentas*, “the undying holy ones”,—“the Bounteous Immortals”. This was before there was any physical creation, before all this great universe of stars and suns and planets existed in space. He created the Yazatas and the souls of men and of the good animals. In the beginning, the world was first created in the spiritual form (AV. *nainyavaka*; Pahl. *mēnōg*) without any kind of material form. To this form of existence the souls of men return after their sojourn in the physical state (AV. *gaēth-yaka*; Pahl. *gētīg*). The *Amesa Spentas* in the spiritual world represent the blessed qualities of the forces of good in the Universe belonging to Ahura Mazda.

They are : *Vohu Manah*—Good Intention, Good Mind

*Asa Vahista*—Truth that is Best, Best Righteousness

*Khsathra Vairya*—Good Kingdom, desirable dominion/authority

*Spenta Armaiti*—Blessed devotion, obedience

*Haurvatat*—Wholeness, perfection

*Ameretat*—Undyingness, immortality.

plus, of course, *Spenta Mainyus*—the beneficent/holy spirit. From this spiritual creation the physical creation called *getig* in Pahl. came into existence.

*Ist Slide:* (Veil Nebula in Cygnus)

From the endless light of Ahura Mazda came this, the great Universe that surrounds our planet earth. Each of these points of light is a great sun, greater than our own sun. We cannot conceive of the distance from one side of the picture to the other. Only a power that is infinitely great could have ordered this space. This is the sky, this we call the first creation of Ahura Mazda in the physical world. We call it the Good Kingdom or Kingdom of Heaven, which is what *Khsathra Vairya* means. It says in the Gathas that “Mazda inhabits in Paradise the Sun-beholding dominion *Khsathra*” (Y. 43.16): what this means is that God is present in all the Universe and has dominion over it. It is the throne of God.

*Next Slide:* (Earth from space, sun seen from space)

But this is the way the sky appears above our earth. Here we have a picture of the earth surrounded by its atmosphere. The sky here is protective towards the earth. You see how from space the sun blazes mercilessly in blackness; well, it is the sky, the atmosphere of our planet which protects the earth like a shield.

*Next Slide:* (Blue sky and moon)

From the earth the sky looks like this. Zarathustra saw the sky as a great blue shield made of hard rock crystal. A strange concept, you might think, but in the deep blue, waterless sky of the Iranian plateau, under which Zarathustra stood, the sky really does gleam like a hard, polished crystal. The meaning of all this is that it is protective and dominating. So the Amesha Spenta is both a spiritual principle, the dominion or power of God, and also a physical reality.

Most important is to understand that there is no separation intended between the spiritual meaning and the physical reality, they are a continuation and completion of each other. The heavens above are the symbol of paradise. But it stands for the shining kingdom of Heaven to come on earth. Man reaches for the sky to bring it down to earth—the mighty power of God.

*Next Slide:* (Waterfall)

From the crystal sky we have the next creation of Ahura Mazda, Water, which is the creation belonging to the *Amesha Spenta, Haurvatat*. As you know, *Haurvatat* is the Avestan word meaning “wholeness, perfection.” We have had the crystal sky; the most perfect crystal is the diamond, which is composed of pure carbon. Carbon and water are contained in all forms of life. What I am trying to say is that these first two creations are the foundations of all physical existence. The power of God in the sky and the perfection of God in the waters—the sky above and the waters below. Water is the great purifier on earth.

*Next Slide:* (Pool of water)

Remember how Zarathustra first waded into the waters, and then, only when purified, was he received into the presence of the Lord. Let’s look at the waters on a

bigger scale.

*Next Slide:* (NASA photo of India from Space)

Here is the subcontinent of India. And as you see, it is floating like a child in the womb upon the great blue oceans of the planet. 75% of the earth's surface is filled by the waters. We are literally surrounded by the Perfection of God in the waters.

*Next Slide:* (River bank in Iran)

Wherever there is water there is life, and where there is no water what shall we expect?

*Next Slide.* (Lava forming crust)

We see the earth in its elemental form. Earth is the third Creation. It is guarded by the great female *Amesa Spenta Spenta Armaiti*. This spiritual principle of *Spenta Armaiti* is "Bounteous devotion or obedience". Here we see earth in its most primeval form, the solidified lava of a volcano, lava which has come from deep within the planet. Over thousands of years this will change its form and become earth as we know it, arable soil. We can understand the connection between *Spenta Armaiti*, i.e. "Bounteous devotion", "lowly obedience", and earth by looking at the English word "humility". In all obedience and devotion there is the action of humility. The word humility comes direct from the Latin word "humilis" meaning "of the earth".

The earth is the partner of the sky, it represents obedience in recognition of the power of God in the heaven. Thus we can talk of the Father, the Lord of Heaven and the Mother Earth—active and receptive principles.

*Next Slide:* (Rocks on coast of Ireland)

The earth is where the power of God achieves material form in lowly matter.

*Next Slide:* (Valley between Armenia and Iran)

So in this next slide let us recap on the first three creations. Above, *Khsathra Vairyā*, the firmament of heaven. In the middle, the clouds of rainwater, pregnant with life, the wholeness of *Haurvatat*. Below, Mother Nature in *Spenta Armaiti*.

The next creation of God belongs to the *Amesa Spenta Ameretat*. This means "undyingness, immortality" and is represented by the plant, the vegetable kingdom.

*Next Slide:* (Fields in Azarbaijan in N.W. Iran)

The miracle of life appearing from the mineral earth! Why does the plant represent immortality in Ahura Mazda's creation? If we look at this photograph,

*Next Slide:* (Sunflowers)

taken in North-Western Iran, of a field of sunflowers, perhaps we will get an idea of it. Each of these flowers contains thousands of seeds. The flowers will wither and die, and the seeds will fall to the ground. Thus from the death of the flower many new flowers will grow, because its essence lives on in the seeds. In this we see how, although the body of the flower perishes, the essence is immortal and unaffected by the ravages of time and season. The plant then is the very picture, the very synthesis of undyingness, *Ameretat*.

*Next Slide:* (Ancient Cypress tree in Cham, N. Yazd)

In the Zoroastrian mythology there was originally created the one plant, which

was attacked by the Evil Spirit. It withered and dried up, but *Ameretat*, who cares for plants, took it and pounded it up, and its essence was scattered over the earth by rain, and from it grew all plants. Hence, there is a very profound principle, that through the death of the outer form, through its sacrifice, there is the new birth from the essential seed. Our own bodies contain the seed of our children, display the characteristics of our ancestors, and we contain the essence of future generations. This then is the fourth creation. It is life opposed to the force of death which belongs solely to the Evil Spirit which attacks us.

*Next Slide:* (Sunflowers and cows)

Behind this field of sunflowers you may be able to see the long procession of cows going to be milked, early one morning in Azarbaijan. For thousands of years among Iranian peoples the cow has been the main source of livelihood, and it is only natural that the cow has a profound religious meaning, as it does in India. It seems that Zarathustra's people were a nomadic pastoral people who depended upon the cow as the shepherd depends upon his sheep. Some people imagine that the Zoroastrians began to revere the cow only as a result of contact with Hindus in India, since the Parsi settlement in Gujarat. This is by no means true and is contradicted by the wealth of evidence in the Avestan Scriptures which clearly shows that the cow has been revered by the Zoroastrian and pre-Zoroastrian peoples for thousands of years. The cow is associated with the *Amesa Spenta Vohu Manah*, and is the fifth creation of God. In this category come all the beneficent animals.

*Next Slide:* (Donkey)

They represent the principle of good nature, the "Good Mind". The beneficent animals work hard and are productive and ask no reward. They harm nothing and nobody and are incapable of evil thought or action, let alone word, and they embody the principle of living according to one's true nature.

*Next Slide:* (Deer in wood)

It is said in Yasna 31.10 that the cow chose the herdsman as the "Just Lord" and as the promotor of *Vohu Manah*. Man, therefore, has to live up to this obligation of looking after the herd, that is Good Mind. The Righteous man, the *Asavan*, is thereby "the herdsman" of God's creations, and must care for them as he is cared for by the "Blessed Immortals". In order to be the "good herdsman" in the world, he must listen to the voice of conscience in his heart, *Vohu Manah*.

*Next Slide:* (Tāq-e-bustān. Iran rock relief)

The sixth creation is Man himself. He is the "crown of creation" and is the steward of Ahura Mazda and the embodiment of *Spenta Mainyus* "the holy spirit" in the world. This means that he is responsible for making a dwelling within himself, in his own heart and soul, for all the other *Amesa Spentas*. He must embody all the spiritual principles that we have so far outlined. He must embody the Holy Spirit of Ahura Mazda, "good intention", "dominion or good authority", "obedience", "wholeness" or "integrity", and "undyingness". Then the forces of evil have no power to affect him. Then man is fulfilling the purpose for which he is in the world,

because then he can help to rid the world of the Evil Spirit. The religious texts say that in the beginning, before the material creation, God asked the souls of men to promise to help him in the struggle against the forces of evil. Man promised and thus was given this privileged place in the world which has made him so powerful as we see him today, and with such power—power for good or for evil according to his choice. This slide shows man accepting this special responsibility in the form of the *Khvarana* which is given to man, the “glory” of Ahura Mazda. Notice how this man is dressed as a noble warrior, ready for the fight against evil. Zarathustra clearly acknowledged the reality of the power of evil in the world, but the nobility of his doctrine consists in his refusal to retreat in its path, in favour of staunch resistance to evil. By prayer of thought and of word and of deed, the Zoroastrian can seal himself hermetically from the force of evil.

*Next Slide:* (Children bathing in Iranian desert)

Here we see a group of children bathing in the desert in Iran. Physical cleanliness is the first prerequisite for the Zoroastrian religion. When one is clean and purified one is strong, when one is in a state of impurity one is vulnerable to the influence of the evil spirit and its negative states. Only from a point of personal cleanliness can the Zoroastrian care for the other creations; if he is impure his action contaminates them. As has been observed by Professor Mary Boyce, “to a Zoroastrian cleanliness is not next to godliness, but a part of it.” The responsibility for all this rests upon every man rich or poor,

*Next Slide:* (Villagers in Iran)

young or old, male

*Next Slide:* (Women)

or female.

*Next Slide:* (Children)

These children must be taught, at an early age, that life, with all its joys, is also a serious business, and can end in catastrophe and destruction if not lived correctly. So Zoroastrian rituals and Zoroastrian traditions show people, as they grow up, what is the right way of life.

*Next Slide:* (Young women)

The Zoroastrian community are lucky that even today their traditional oral wisdom of the religion is still alive among its older generation.

*Next Slide:* (Old women)

This is not the knowledge of books but the wisdom of experience tried and tested over thousands of years. It may be encrusted with rituals which seem out of date and tiresome, but these rituals and observances are the outer forms which have protected the unique value and character of the religion. Both in the Parsi community, and in the Irani community in Yazd, etc., this traditional knowledge is in danger of disappearing altogether with the passing of the older generation, for the first time in thousands of years, as a result of the erosion of traditional society and of its hierarchy of seniority by the gradual secularization and mechanisation of life.

*Next slide:* (Old villager with Khordeh Avesta)

The words of the Avesta have a timeless quality which makes them as relevant today as ever. But it is difficult to penetrate the linguistic and cultural barriers that separate us from the age of Zarathustra. Here the role of the priest

*Next Slide:* (Parsi Priest)

is all-important. If man is in general the steward of Ahura Mazda on earth, the priest is all the more the chief steward. The priest has access to the ritual aspects of religion which are closed to the laity. The knowledge of philosophy and ritual are embodied in his example to other men. Thus the laws of purity are that much stricter for him and the standards of ethical behaviour expected from him are automatically much higher. But in another sense it is perfectly in accord with Zarathustra's teaching to emphasise that the priest cannot make up for another man's bad deeds, and that it is incumbent upon each individual to work all his life for Ahura Mazda's purpose.

*Next Slide:* (Old man from Zoroastrian village)

This is a picture of an old man Jamsed Khusravi who lives in a Zoroastrian village outside Yazd. I don't know whether he is still alive, but at any rate he is coming to the end of his life. You see his old body burnt and dried up by the harsh Iranian sun, and you can see the lines of trouble and experience on his face. But if you look carefully, perhaps you can recognise something that will live on after that body has gone. The Avestan word for the soul is "Urvan". When a man dies, it is said that on the fourth morning, when you say the beautiful "Patli Rath Nu Uth-yamnu", the soul leaves the body and passes to the "Bridge of the Separator"—*Chirvat Puhl*. Here the soul is judged according to the value of his good deeds when weighed against his bad deeds. This is one way of saying that your life on earth is of direct relevance to your fate when you die. If the good deeds weigh more, then the soul passes to the best existence, Paradise.

*Next Slide:* (Picture of whirling Dervishes in ecstasy)

Here is the abode of the Spiritual beings, the Blessed Immortals, and the least we know is that it is a state that the soul longs for. The tradition says that when the soul is more beset by evil deeds than by good it falls into hell.

*Next Slide:* (Fountains of molten lava)

This hell, which seems to be a place of punishment, is in fact a place where the sinners are shown the evil of their deeds. Fire and molten metal are the purgers of evil, in that they test man for what he is.

*Next Slide:* (Rivers of lava down mountain-side)

And indeed at the end of time all souls will be called to endure this test. They will have to walk through rivers of molten metal. To the wicked it will be painful in the extreme; to the good it will feel as though they are walking through warm milk. The heat of the fire will then purge away their sins and they will be made clean, so that they can enter the kingdom of God on earth. This may be a modification of an earlier doctrine that condemned irredeemable sinners to eternal damnation.



Now we come to the seventh and last creation of God—the Fire. Fire pervades the whole universe and is seen in the great constellations.

*Next Slide:* (Great Nebula in Orion)

Here we have a picture of the greatest fire imaginable, this is called a nebula. Millions of stars are in a state of conflagration at an unthinkable temperature, as you see from the brilliant clouds of coloured gaseous matter millions of miles across. Perhaps that is how we might imagine the glory of Ahura Mazda in his heaven. But we might remember that this is still a picture, and that Ahura Mazda existed in his splendour before all this came into being.

*Next Slide:* (Horse-head Nebula in Orion)

These are the fires of the millions of suns in the Universe, and if you remember,

*Next Slide:* (Great Galaxy in Andromeda)

I said that I would describe the good creation in terms of a light in darkness. Here we see the light of a whole galaxy swirling and struggling for its survival amid the surrounding darkness. This is a very great symbol for us of the battle between truth and falsehood.

*Next Slide:* (Spiral of Galaxy)

This is a galaxy in motion, and it shows us that in this Universe, which has been set in movement by God, all is in a state of change struggling against the forces of entropy and impermanence. After the original creation (Pahl. *Bundahish*) of the world by Ahura Mazda, the creations were attacked by the Evil Spirit and so the world entered a second cycle, which is called, in the tradition of the Pahlavi books, the *Gumezisn*, “the mixture.” Everything is thus in a state of flux and change. Only when the world enters the third cycle—the *Wizarisn*, “the separation”—will the world be restored to its state of pristine permanence and unflinching perfection. But in our own world, though we see impermanence and evil all around us, light is a very powerful symbol of the all-pervading truth of God, *Asa*, the seventh creation, Fire.

*Next Slide:* (Sunrise over Bosphorus, Turkey)

The light of the sun supports all life on this planet; were the sun not to have risen this morning, the world would have frozen immediately. The light of the sun penetrates deep into the earth,

*Next Slide:* (Photo from bottom of well in Zoroastrian village in Iran)

as breath permeates our bodies, for the Earth too is a living organism which inhales and exhales.

*Next Slide:* (Eruption of Mt. Etna)

Here you see the earth exhaling; it is exhaling the fire of the earth.

*Next Slide:* (Dead tree silhouetted against incandescent gas coming from lava deep in Halemaumau pit crater)

So there we have the untamed violence of the natural fire.

*Next Slide:* (Sacred Fire in Fire Temple in Yazd, Iran)

And here we have the sacred fire of the Fire Temple. The element is the same, but the fire here is of a completely different character. This fire which resides in

the fire temple at Yazd has been alive for thousands of years, carefully tended by generations of pious priests, who would rather have died than allow it to be extinguished by the ignorant unbeliever. This fire is the symbol of *Asa Vahista*; it embodies the very presence of this *Amesa Spenta* for the Zoroastrian. In the Gathas it says that "fire is strong through *Asa*" (Y. 43.4 etc.) It is a living symbol, not a static icon, of the power of Truth; Fire is self-illuminating; it survives in its physical form through the observances and attention of the Zoroastrian,

*Next Slide:* (Priest offering wood to fire)

just as truth must be recognised and not ignored. *Asa* is invoked in the Gathas by Zarathustra even more than *Vohu Manah*— and this underlines the fact that "Truth" and "Righteousness", which are what *Asa* means, are the highest ideals of the Zoroastrian. The "Lie", the *Druj*, is the greatest curse of creation which threatens, but never will succeed in eclipsing the light of truth in the Universe.

*Next Slide:* (Priests pray before Fire)

Fire is "worthy of sacrifice, worthy of prayer in the dwellings of men". (Ates Niyayes). So Zoroastrians pray standing and turned towards fire, because the fire is the purifier of prayers, it directs the prayers to God and reflects back to the Zoroastrian the light of his Lord, Mazda.

*Next Slide:* (Tāq-e-bostān in Iran, rock relief of Mithra)

This is a picture of a man who has taken the light of *Asa Vahista* into his soul. Some scholars say this is a depiction of the Yasata Mithra (Mehr in Gujarati), but it is an ideal picture of the Zoroastrian who has kindled the fire of *Asa* in his own heart. So you see the light of *Asa* emanating from his head. He is wearing the robes of a warrior as though his loins are girt for the battle against evil.

So Man is the agent of God and *Asa* is the holy power that he may wield against the onslaughts of the *Druj*, "the lie"—*Ahriman*. It is a foregone conclusion that evil will be purged from the world, and that a time will come when the world will be made wonderful at the *Frasokereti*. This is the goal of the whole universe, conscious and unconscious, to recreate the situation before the invasion of *Angra Mainyus*.

So we have come to the end of the creation of the world. Of course this is an on-going process which happens at every instant, but now we can see the purpose implicit in Zarathustra's revelation. Man as the crown of creation must look after the physical creations and make sure that he does not aid the forces of entropy and decay in his environment. Secondly, and this is the high ethical and spiritual purpose, he must incorporate the Holy Spirit of Ahura Mazda and the six other "Holy Immortals" into his own being through his own practice of their principles. In other words, it is true to say that Zoroastrianism has a profound message for the modern world. First, that man has such power, today especially, that he can either destroy, in childish ignorance, his own planet, by polluting it out of existence, or he can tend it and its inhabitants so that it becomes a beautiful place, vibrant with life in its every manifestation. Second, that man has the potential to become a being purified from his habitual failings and sufferings through the spiritualisation of his own life. This

way man receives the answers to those questions we posed earlier, because he is brought face to face with the Lord of Wisdom, Ahura Mazda, as a personal God, whom he can find in his own heart. This is a realisation which cannot be achieved with the mind, but the mind must first be shown where to look. However, the Zoroastrian revelation has an appeal to the intellect which equals any other religious system of the world. Like every other religion, however, it is a way of life, and not to be experienced in a talk. So this is where I step down and you take over—in life.

ALAN WILLIAMS

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### ANNOUNCING

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

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

1. A long article by Huta—*Spiritual and Occult Truths*—which will include unpublished letters and talks of the Mother as well as an account of some significant experiences of her own.
  2. Sanat K. Banerji's article *The Mother on Her Old Body and the New*.
  3. Charles Maloney's dissertation *The Mother, Death and Evolution*.
  4. *A Ray of the Mother's Grace* by the author of *Towards the Higher Life*.
  5. Writings by Udar and Nagin Doshi suitable for the great occasion.
  6. A vision by Lalita and a poem by Minnie N. Canteenwalla.
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# THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

## CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1977)

### The Yoga of King Lear

#### I. Introduction

*King Lear* is at once the most highly praised and intensely criticised of all Shakespeare's works. Samuel Johnson said it is "deservedly celebrated among the dramas of Shakespeare" yet at the same time he supported the changes made in the text by Tate in which Cordelia is allowed to retire with victory and felicity. "Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and, what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles."<sup>1</sup> A.C. Bradley's judgement is that *King Lear* is "Shakespeare's greatest work, but it is not...the best of his plays."<sup>2</sup> He would wish that "the deaths of Edmund, Goneril, Regan and Gloucester should be followed by the escape of Lear and Cordelia from death," and even goes so far as to say: "I believe Shakespeare would have ended his play thus had he taken the subject in hand a few years later...."<sup>3</sup> Many critics have sworn that the story is too fantastic and cruel to be true and that it should be viewed only as an allegory or fantasy. Yet Johnson called it a "just representation of the common events of human life" and C. J. Sisson has cited historical evidence from the lives of several men which closely resembled Lear's division of his kingdom and tragic rejection by his daughters.

Despite its undeniable greatness, throughout the last four centuries *King Lear* has left audiences, readers and critics alike emotionally exhausted and mentally unsatisfied by its conclusion. Shakespeare seems to have created a world too cruel and unmerciful to be true to life and too filled with horror and unrelieved suffering to be true to the art of tragedy. These divergent impressions arise from the fact that of all Shakespeare's works, *King Lear* expresses human existence in its most universal aspect and in its profoundest depths. A psychological analysis of the characters such as Bradley undertook cannot by itself resolve or place in proper perspective all the elements which contribute to these impressions because there is much here beyond the normal scope of psychology and the conscious or unconscious motivations in men. Nor can a broad holistic approach such as G. Wilson Knight's which portrays the dramatic milieu of the play without clearly revealing the lines of causality, the role of character and the relationship between symbol and reality, art and life.

We can see in Shakespeare's works a gradual development which in a sense parallels the historical development of dramatic literature. In his early comedies plot is the sole or major element and character remains a minor or insignificant determinant.

As his art develops the delineation and individuality of character becomes more prominent and is able to exert a major influence on the course of action. In his later works Shakespeare transcends even the boundaries of individual character, giving his works a still wider amplitude. The character, atmosphere and forces at play in the social milieu are portrayed and integrated with the plot. Not only man but physical nature—the animals, climate, stars, seas—are related to and become expressions of the human experience. A power or powers greater than man, forces of universal life, good and evil, the gods and fate—influence and even determine the course of events overriding human motives and action. But always the portrayal remains faithful to the realities and potentialities of human nature. This is the impression we get from Shakespeare's greatest works, the impression of an all-embracing vision of human existence in its widest cosmic context.

*King Lear* is not only a consummate artistic masterpiece. It is also Shakespeare's most all-encompassing portrayal of human life. Character, atmosphere, dramatic techniques are all employed and inextricably bound together in an effort to give living reality to his vision. Like nature herself, Shakespeare has created a world which is in its essence and major outlines, in its portrayal of human personality and social interrelations, in its expressions of simultaneity and sequence and in many other respects true to life. The challenge that he poses before us is to discover the nature of the correspondence between his work and nature's own creation and, once that correspondence is known, to see in and through his work the character of life itself.

Numerous theories have been put forth to explain the sequence of tragedies Shakespeare wrote during this same period by linking it to some experience of melancholy, anger, despair in the author himself. But such theories overlook the fact that it is in this very same period, in fact, in these same tragic works that he has portrayed the heights to which human nature can rise in its purest and noblest if not happiest terms. Surely the creation of so much light alongside with the darkness and the perfection of the artistic medium through which he gives them expression argue against them having been written in a state of melancholy or any other condition which is a drain on the mental energies. It is not the dark side of human nature which is Shakespeare's chief concern at all. His effort is to portray human life in its fullest, widest and profoundest context; to reveal not only the dark depths but also the treasure rooms of our being; to pierce beneath the superficial motives and forces of our surface behaviour, social and cultural expressions, to the deeper levels of individual character and human nature; and to place these aspects of human existence in their true relation to the wider field of universal life. He chose the medium of tragedy because at his time man had not yet emerged sufficiently from the lower and darker portion of nature which he inherited from his animal ancestors. The greatest intensities of which human life was capable were suffering, hatred and evil and it was through such experiences that they most fully realized their place in the cosmic scheme. Certainly love, joy, nobility, loyalty, self-giving were developed, in some individual cases to a very high pitch, but they were not yet able to establish themselves in the conscious-

ness of humanity to the extent of the negative forces in nature.

In *King Lear* Shakespeare transcends the natural boundaries of drama to express life beyond the limits of his artistic medium. For this reason Bradley calls it his greatest work but not his best play. Its failure as a play is a success at a higher and wider level. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare represents destruction at the physical level—war, murder, etc. In *Lear* it is faith, love, hope and expectation that are destroyed—things of the mind. It is psychological destruction in the wider plane of life, destruction of values not just bodies.

The forces expressing themselves in *King Lear* are of universal dimensions. Both good and evil find their purest and most powerful expressions but it is the impression of evil which is most predominant and enduring. Kindness and good were not sufficiently developed to get expressed on that scale. It can be seen that Shakespeare's evil, cruel characters are always more powerful than his good ones. Even in *The Tempest* where he portrays the power of good victorious, it is only by magic that it conquers, not as a normal power in life. The expression he gives to good, though it reaches a high beauty, is less compelling, inevitable and realistic because he is expressing conditions which human consciousness is not yet fully able to realize. The intense expression of positive forces is made possible by a further development of human culture.

The universal character of *King Lear* by which we do not refer merely to its general application to all mankind but to the intensity and extensity of the forces at play, is indicated in many ways. The unbearable nature of Lear's suffering, its prolonged and unrelieved continuity, the destruction of not merely family but of the deep emotional bonds between father and child, the disruption of an entire kingdom and Lear's loss of his sanity, all point to the action of very powerful forces. The swiftness with which the issue leads to calamity is another indication. The King's entire initiative is compressed into a few short moments and all else is but an inevitable working out of that initiative by life. Finally, even the forces of physical nature expressing themselves in the storm play a role in his suffering. The intensity of evil has saturated that plane of life and nature itself responds to the movement. On learning of Edgar's betrayal, Gloucester gives a superstitious but nonetheless accurate expression to the conditions pertaining in the land.

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd, twixt son and father.

I.ii.100

Bradley reflects this universality of the forces at work and their evil nature: "...these terrible forces bursting into monstrous life and flinging themselves upon those human beings who are weak and defenceless, partly from old age, but partly because they are

human and lack the dreadful undivided energy of the beast."<sup>4</sup>

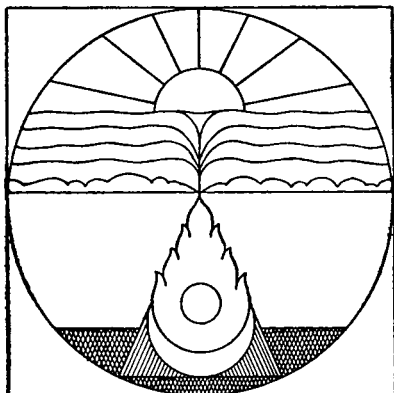
When we recover from the shrinking of our senses at the horror which is presented, we discover that though evil is by far the most intense and penetrating force represented here, it is not either during the course of action or in the end a dominating influence against which all others are helpless. Rather we find that this evil has been released into the atmosphere by a chain of events it did not initiate and that after a brief but terrible period of destruction those who were its instruments are themselves destroyed. A still deeper insight into the life portrayed here will reveal that what we took to be a thoroughly pessimistic portrayal of evil, suffering and destruction contains within it a process of growing human consciousness and evolving social life.

(To be continued)

GARRY JACOBS

NOTES

1. *Casebook: King Lear*, Edited by Frank Kermode, Macmillan & Co, 1969 pp. 27 & 29.
2. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley, Macmillan & Co., 1965, p. 202.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 202 & 206.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 220.



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## ON BREATHING

IN Hindi to go for a walk is to “eat the air”, *hāwā khānā*. The Bengalis turn it into a jingle, *hāō khāō*. What in the Western world is a stroll, a “stretching one’s legs”, is here a repast, a delight, a feasting on the atmospheric element.

Getting high on the air is as easy as it is cheap. All one needs is a good pair of lungs and some wide-open countryside. But, unfortunately, in these carbon-monoxide polluted days—days when people would rather breathe the fumes of burning weeds than the sweet air of mountain or pasture, when bird-like respirations have replaced the virile full-chested draught—these essential and quite natural prerequisites are not easy of attainment. We have to learn again to breathe and, breathing properly, learn again to live.

Breath is life, the Indian word *prāṇa* means both, and in a large number of languages the word for soul (which is much more than life, to be sure) comes from the same root as the word for breath. The Sanskrit *ātman*, from the same root as the Greek *atmos*, vapour, has its occidental counterpart in the Latin *anima*. So, though it is true that one cannot live without breathing, the significance of the double meaning of *prāṇa* goes deeper than that.

In the West, or in sections of it, it is sometimes thought that Indian Yogis live only on air. There are reasons for this misconception; the fame of *prāṇāyāma* is one. I once lived for a while with two student-teachers in Manhattan (a wretched little island whose proximity to the ocean and to one of the earth’s great rivers goes unnoticed by most of its several million inhabitants, who are obliged to breathe an atmosphere that is undoubtedly among the world’s worst). I was studying “yoga” at the time at a little place on West 57th Street, just down from Carnegie Hall. I returned home one afternoon while my friends were telling one another what they had spent the day learning at the Great University they attended. One had read a then-fashionable psychologist; the other had received a bit of practical training. And what about me? I had learned to breathe. We all laughed heartily; but, all fun aside, there are few things we need to learn more.

*Prāṇāyāma* does not mean breath-death, as is sometimes supposed; that is false etymology and, to the English ear, immelodious jingling. *Yama*, the God of death, is spelt with two short *a*’s and *prāṇa* ends in another. Besides, the word *yama* comes from the root *yam*, “to control”—he is the ordainer, the upholder of the law. The real second element of *prāṇāyāma* is *āyāma*, another word from the same root (with a lengthened first vowel and the strengthening prefix *ā*), which also means, among other things, “control”. Control of the breath has been practised in India and other parts of the world for centuries as a means of raising the consciousness. A connection between consciousness and breath is implied.

Distance runners, naturally, breathe a lot—probably ten times more deeply and vigorously than ordinary people. This is because their muscle cells and indeed all the cells of their bodies are in need of more oxygen and cast off more carbon-dioxide



than the corresponding cells of their easy-going, ambulatory brethren. Swimmers too need a good deal of air. It is said that the necessarily rhythmic breathing of the swimmer has affinities with the carefully measured inhalation, retention and exhalation of *prāṇāyāma*.

Rhythm is the secret of control. One could easily go so far as to say that rhythm is control, for what is rhythmless is chaotic and without form—*tohu vah bohu*. The voice of of God upon the waters is the order of the cadence of life.

One can live without breathing even as one can live without heartbeat; this (the going without breath) is the famous *kumbhaka* of the *haṭhayogin*. This is supposed to be a very desirable thing, though it depends how you look at it. The *haṭhayogin* in *kumbhaka* is in a state of *samādhi*—oblivious of himself and of the world; plunged, apparently, in a superconscious state—superconscious even to himself. The ordinary breather may have nothing to envy him for.

Sri Aurobindo once practised *prāṇāyāma*. For a period he did it as much as six hours a day and he obtained some remarkable results. Later he gave it up completely and dissuaded his disciples from attempting it. Having tried all the mechanical methods and having extracted from them their essence of power, he abandoned them all without regret. It is better if the mastery comes spontaneously:

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream;  
It fills my members with a might divine.

If we want to bring our highest state of consciousness into our lives, good, hearty, rhythmical breathing is essential. Inhalation, of course, should start from the abdomen, the chest swelling in its turn as the lungs, their cavity greatened, become inflated. Oxygen, nitrogen, a wonderfully variegated gaseous mixture rushes down through the bronchi. The alveoli tingle with joy while the pulmonary capillaries pulse out their diapason of hemoglobin-rich blood—permeation, the mingling of cell and cell, a dance of delight. When all is told, delight is the essence of breathing:

को ह्येवान्यत् क. प्राण्यात् । यदेष आकाशा आनन्दो न स्यात् ।

For who could labour to draw in the breath  
or who could have strength to breathe it out,  
if there were not that Bliss in the heaven of his heart,  
the ether within his being?

Walking by the seaside is perhaps better than in the mountains because of ions and what not.

PETER HEEHS

# THE TORTOISE AND THE MOUSE

## A STORY

*(Continued from the issue of December 1977)*

“ANGUS, old friend.”

“Yes, Mousie.”

“Let’s go to Hermione and find out what’s happening.”

Angus, always anxious to please agreed.

It did not take very long for them to get to the seashore, for now Angus could easily keep up with Maurizio. Moreover on their way Angus had found that he could walk on his back legs, a change that not only enabled him to see more of the countryside but gave him a whole new and dizzying perspective. He took Maurizio on his shoulders so that he could share it.

Maurizio was not a little worried by Angus’s lack of protection in the wild belt that surrounded Hermione’s headquarters but Angus moved through the country as though it belonged to him; and perhaps it did, for though many ferocious creatures started to charge at them as had the bandicoot, the encounters always ended the same way, with the would-be predator walking slowly away shaking his head in bewilderment.

Finally they arrived at the destination for which they had set out so long ago. Beside a large hole in the sand stood a sign reading:

Hermione the Hermit Krab.

Enter at your peral.

They made their way into her underground chamber. At first they could see nothing. But Hermione had seen them and passed immediately into a trance. Her hollow voice seemed to come from far away:

When on shell-less tortoise mouse shall appear

The day of days is drawing near.

What follows next nobody knows,

It brings the old world to a close.

In the approved sibyl fashion she gave a cackle of laughter which echoed weirdly through the chamber and made Maurizio shudder. Then Hermione shuddered and was herself again, a plump comfortable self now that she wasn’t in a trance and she offered them tea, a little buttered lettuce for Angus, and for Maurizio some thinly sliced lettuce sandwiches and muffins.

“I don’t know what I said in my trance, Angus,” she said, “but it hardly needs a sibyl to see that you’re something brand new. And as far as I’m concerned it’s about time we had a real change. Everybody worthwhile’s felt it coming and been trying to get ready. Maybe at last we’ll have something new and interesting in the world. Don’t ask me how long it’s going to take. That’s what everybody comes to ask. It

makes me cross.”

“It’s quite all right, thank you,” said Angus, “We won’t be idle in the meantime.”

“What will you do?” asked Hermione offering the plate of muffins.

“Mousie and I had a game which we’re not doing any more but it’d be a shame to let it die out. Perhaps people will want to know about it one day so in about six months’ time we’ll stage a pageant. And that’ll take some preparation. If you know of anybody who’s interested let us know. Also, I think I shall take up gardening and grow lots of little pink flowers. If we have any more time which we probably shall, my friend Maurizio here is very accomplished and I believe I shall ask him to teach me to juggle.”

This time I am truly very tempted to leave the story. It is such a cosy scene, the friends and Hermione exchanging recipes and gardening experiences. Why take it any further?

And yet, the story is not complete. There was something else. SO:

At last Maurizio and Angus knew the time had come for them to leave. For one thing Hermione had asked if they knew the proverb about how guests resembled fishes after three days. They climbed out of her house one morning and blinked at the sun and the shiningness of the sea. It was all very beautiful and they loved the feel of warm sand between their toes. They played hide and seek, at least Maurizio hid in the old shell which lay at the entrance of Hermione’s burrow, or he scampered down other crab dwellings. Finally he got tired of this and said, “We’d better be moving, Old Friend.”

“Yes, let us be on our way,” agreed Angus starting to move off.

“Not without this?” said Mousie with ill-disguised anxiety in his voice. This was the old shell. “We can’t leave it here.”

“Why on earth not? It’s such an ugly old thing.”

“I used to think that but it’s beautiful, battered as it is. And I suppose I’ll never really forget that bandicoot rushing towards you.”

“But you saw what happened.”

“Yes, I know...”

“It’s just too much of a burden to carry and it belongs to our past anyway.”

“Well, all right,” said Maurizio. “Though I don’t really like it.”

They had not gone twenty yards when some unidentifiable animal about twice as big as Morry but nowhere near as big as the bandicoot hove into sight and attacked Angus. Maurizio’s defence, or rather counter-attack, was so violent that they quickly frightened the creature away, but it was a bewildered and disappointed Angus who kept on saying, “What happened, what happened? I thought no animal would ever again....”

“Well, I don’t know what happened but let’s go and get your shell,” said Maurizio, turning back towards Hermione’s.

“But that means I’ll have to walk on all fours again.”

“No, you can just carry it on your head and be ready to get into it quickly if

necessary.”

“I suppose,” said Angus. “But still what happened?”

“One thing that didn’t happen is those animals spending eternities doing the game.” When Angus had worked this out he nodded agreement.

“But then of course,” admitted Maurizio, “you’re wondering why they didn’t attack you when we were on our way here?”

“Yes, that is what I was wondering.”

“Well, I haven’t a clue.”

“Could it be that then we were fresh from our victory? Could it be that something in my head still wants to go in?”

“Could be anything, but don’t you rack your old brains over it, Angus, we’re not likely to find out.”

“I suppose not. Couldn’t we ask Hermione? She may know.”

“We *could* ask...,” said Maurizio, and then “We *could ask*.” He very much doubted that her answer would be civil, for, when they had left, they had been on the point of outstaying their welcome, and had found out that fishes start to smell after three days.

The moment she saw them she scampered around in irritation and finally knocked herself into a trance. What she said in this condition was very garbled and what did come through was mainly in the form of dire predictions: violence, intrigue, darkness before the final lifting of the shell.

“I don’t know what I said,” she commented after a few cackles, “but it felt good. Anyhow I’m feeling better.”

“It didn’t sound so good,” said Maurizio glumly and then related what had happened to them when they had left.

“Not to be wondered at. Not to be wondered at, but I can’t tell you anything about it. I just happen to see what’s going to happen,” she said, irritation creeping back. “I’m not supposed to interpret it. Goodness knows I’ve got enough to do without pretending to be a sage. If it’s a sage you want don’t come here.” And then she went on to explain. “It was a promise,” she said. “Perhaps one day you will be proof against all violence but for now thank your lucky starfish that you’ve worked it all out with Mousie. But if you want to work on a wider scale... with pageants;...” She shook her eyes, raised her pincers briefly and started scuttling about again.

“Are you advising us not to?” asked Angus.

“I’m not advising you anything. But you don’t make an omelette without breaking eggs.” And she would say no more except,

“I would show you to the door only I know that you know your way.” And with that they had to be content, or rather they had to leave but they were not content. As soon as they got out Angus sat down beside his shell. Maurizio came straight to the point.

“Would you rather,” he said, “that we find a nice secluded spot, do the juggling, some gardening and forget about the pageant?”

"It's not that I haven't been thinking about it..., but well..."

"But well what?"

"Well, perhaps we should."

"Stage the pageant?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because, Mousie, after all why were we going to do it in the first place?"

"Because it was going to be fun, of course."

"Were we going to have an audience?"

"I don't know." It was something they had never discussed or even thought about seriously, but now that they did Angus realised that ever since his experience with the command performance he was extremely nervous about audiences and he said so. And then Maurizio said,

"Well, I've been extremely nervous about audiences all my life and the idea of going back on the stage, now that we discuss it seriously, still knots my stomach."

"That settles that," said Angus.

"I suppose so."

"We'll do it just for ourselves."

"Just for ourselves," said Angus heaving his upside down shell onto his head.

"Let's go and find our secluded spot."

"Let's do." They had not gone twenty yards when they were again stopped, this time by their own thoughts. They turned to face each other.

"Mousie, I've been thinking."

"So have I."

"Perhaps we've been having the same thoughts."

"Perhaps, Angus, I'm only afraid we have."

"Speak."

"No, you first. You're oldest."

"Well, the thought that came to me, Mousie, was of the three oranges..."

Maurizio groaned. They sat down.

"Angus, we'd better discuss this."

There was a long silence while they watched the waves coming towards them and receding. The seagulls dipped over them.

"Aren't we entitled to any peace?" asked Maurizio theatrically.

"Perhaps it wouldn't really be peace if we were the only ones to enjoy it."

"I'd settle for that right now."

"So would I right now. But later on?"

"Angus?"

"So we'll put off the juggling?"

"What you propose will be tricky juggling indeed and I doubt that we'll have time for both kinds."

"But you know how much we enjoyed the game."

"That we did, Old Friend."

"Though at first we were appalled at the idea."

"I was. It was your idea."

"Yes."

"Angus, I doubt that either of us has any idea of what we're getting ourselves into."

"We had none last time."

"True."

"Then it's yes."

"It's yes."

"Do or die."

"Do or try." They stared at each other pensively for long moments. And then Maurizio laughed and Angus beamed.

"Actually you know, Angus, I'm glad. It makes me feel young."

"I'm glad too."

"We must be mad."

"What else is there to be?"

"Nothing." They got up again and Angus heaved his shell onto his head.

They walked along the water's edge and paused from time to time to say the things that came into their minds. And that is where we leave them, walking along the water's edge, stopping to speak or just to smile.

*(Concluded)*

MAGGI

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# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

*(Continued from the issue of December 1977)*

EVERYONE has seen pictures of the Houses of Parliament in London. It is an impressive building in Gothic style. Part of it was bombed during the War. They have rebuilt it exactly as it was before. Some parts of the building are a thousand years old. Originally on this very site was the Palace of Westminster. Perhaps there were more than one building. One was the sovereign's residence. From the time of Edward the Confessor to Henry VIII all the kings resided here. Perhaps there was another building called the Banqueting Hall. Parliamentary meetings were held here. Westminster Abbey is very near. Westminster was once outside London. Gradually it was incorporated into Greater London. The original buildings were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1838. The building we see today was completed in 1852.

From the northern corner of the Houses of Parliament rises the stately clock tower. The bell as everyone knows is called Big Ben. The story goes that the first bell that had been hung up was christened St. Stephen. As soon as it was hung up it cracked. Naturally the name became unlucky. So when the present bell was ready there was the problem of giving it a name. For some reason or other there was a great controversy over the name. The Prime Minister jokingly shouted, "Why not call it Big Ben?" Sir Benjamin Hall who was the chief commissioner for works and was in charge of installing the bell was a very big man. So Big Ben it became and the name is now famous all the world over. You may be in Popocatepetl or Helsinki or Vladivostock but you will never fail to hear Big Ben if you happen to be listening to the B.B.C. Big Ben weighs 13 tons and its chimes are broadcast throughout the world.

The Houses of Parliament, they say, have thirty acres of floor-space. The whole building covers an area of about nine acres without the courtyards. There are a thousand rooms, thirty lifts, and fifty staircases and three miles of corridor. There are 625 members in the House of Commons and about 700 in the House of Lords. Parliament has its own rules of business and etiquette. With all its traditions and unwritten usages, its calendar and officers and clerks, it is one of the most complicated and imposing mechanisms of its kind on the globe. Its work is to make laws, levy taxes, pass judgment on policy and question Ministers. The chief officer of the Houses of Parliament is the Lord Great Chamberlain. Next to him is the Sergeant-at-Arms who sees to it that no breach of its privileges and traditions is committed and the dignity, prestige and the age-old customs of the Houses are maintained intact. There is a bar, a restaurant, a library and a post-office within its precincts. Members may use the telephone free of charge. There is also a walk on the riverside

for the members. The entrance is guarded by a policeman who knows every member by name and face and even his constituency.

The chamber where the Commons sit is a new hall rebuilt after the bombing exactly like the old one. There are only 300 seats although the members are over 600. Visitors are allowed in the visitors' gallery. There is also a special gallery for ladies. The Press too has a gallery reserved for the reporters. On the first day of the session twelve Yeomen of the Guard dressed in full Tudor regalia solemnly search every room, and corridor, and subterranean passage within its precincts, carrying an Elizabethan lantern. They search high and low for the descendants of Guy Fawkes. "Remember, remember, the fifth of November, gunpowder, treason and plot." On that day in 1605 during the reign of James I, Guy Fawkes blew up a few rooms in the Houses of Parliament, from an underground cellar. So this fantastic search goes on every year.

The Commons meet at 2-45 and all-night sittings are not unusual. The Lords meet at 4-30. When the House of Commons opens there is a stately procession. First the Speaker enters, then the Chaplain. The Chaplain reads the Psalms and three prayers. Equally dramatic is the going out of the Speaker. A Yeoman of the Guard with a lighted lantern cries out, "Who goes home?" Two hundred years ago going home at midnight was a dangerous affair. For the protection of the Members a whole body of Yeomen of the Guard was sent out to escort any Member who might want to leave. The admonition of the attendant who carries the files and papers of each Member as he rises to leave is well worth quoting: "The usual time tomorrow, Sir, the usual time tomorrow." Just imagine an attendant telling Sir Winston Churchill, "Be punctual, Sir." But nobody takes offence, as it is all part of the show. Parliament is described very lovingly by the Englishmen themselves as a "Museum of antiquity". It is at the same time the most exclusive and distinguished club in Christendom.

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI