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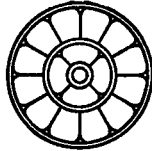
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.

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#### AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

*Mother India* has again to call for financial help. Our last appeal brought a very good response and we are deeply thankful. Costs have been steadily rising in everything. Our immediate need was to stock paper. We have paid a further Rs. 4,000. This has made a new gap in our resources. So we badly require donations of any amount that can be spared by our well-wishers.

The scheme of Life-Membership is still in force. If attended to, it can also help. Advertisements too can be a good contribution. Tariff cards can be had on application.

Increase in the number of subscribers is always welcome.

We shall be grateful for help in any form, and particularly in the form of donations. The donations will be tax-free if sent ear-marked for us through the Ashram Trust.

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# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXX

No. II

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

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## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

### CURING THE WORLD OF ITS FALSEHOOD

As long as they are not determined to follow the Truth, I can do nothing for them outwardly,—not the Truth as they see it, but the Truth as it is.

Truth is Supreme Harmony and Supreme Delight,

All disorder, all suffering is a falsehood,

This world of misery and suffering is a world of falsehood,

Only a change of consciousness and the conquest over falsehood can change the conditions of the world.

\*

Do you think, do you really think that you are the only one upon earth to feel the falsehood and suffer by it?

You would be wise to leave all that to those who have the knowledge to cure the falsehood and to lead the world to the Truth—and for yourself, learn to be quiet and to endure, because it is the shortest way to get out of trouble. Then you will feel that the Love is there and that it is worth bearing all the rest.

\*

When people allow their consciousness to remain in a turmoil, all their life becomes a turmoil.

Give me *in thought* the thing that troubles you and I shall get you rid of it.

## SOME ANSWERS BY THE MOTHER ON DEATH

DEATH is the phenomenon of decentralisation and dispersion of the cells which make up the physical body.

The consciousness is, by its very nature, immortal, and in order to manifest in the physical world, it assumes more or less lasting material forms.

The material substance is in course of transformation in order to become a multiform and increasingly perfect and lasting mode of expression for this consciousness.

18 MAY 1968

*Does the decentralisation occur all at once or by degrees?*

Everything does not disperse all at once; it takes a long time.

The central will of the physical being abdicates its will to hold all the cells together. That is the first phenomenon. It accepts dissolution for one reason or another. One of the strongest reasons is the sense of an irreparable disharmony; the other is a kind of disgust with continuing the effort of coordination and harmonisation. In fact, there are innumerable reasons, but unless there is a violent accident, it is above all this will to maintain cohesion which abdicates for one reason or another, or without reason. It is this which inevitably precedes death.

2 JUNE 1968

*When the will of the physical being abdicates without reason, is it without any physical reason or without any reason at all?*

The physical consciousness is conscious only physically: the will of the physical being can abdicate without any reason of which it is aware.

*What causes the physical being's disgust with continuing the effort of coordination and harmonisation?*

Usually, this disgust occurs when there is, in one part of the being (an important part, either vital or mental), an absolute refusal to progress. And so, physically, this is manifested as a refusal to strive against the deterioration which comes with time.

15 JULY 1968

*Is the will for progress enough to prevent the deterioration that comes with time? How can the physical being prevent this deterioration?*

That is precisely what the transformation of the body is: the physical cells not only become conscious, but receptive to the true Consciousness-Force; that is, they allow the working of this higher Consciousness. That is the work of transformation.

20 JULY 1968



*Does the central will of the physical being have a particular location in the body?*

It is the brain.

*After death, which part of the being becomes aware that one is dead?*

Any part of the being that survives can become aware that the body is no longer there. It depends.

*How can one tell for certain that the physical body is dead?*

Only when it decomposes.

*How can one control or prevent the process of disintegration?*

By carefully maintaining the physical balance.

*When one dies, does one necessarily feel physical pain?*

Not necessarily.

28 SEPTEMBER 1968

*What should we do in our daily lives to stop the process of death?*

The method is to detach one's consciousness from the body and to concentrate it on the deeper life, so as to bring this deeper consciousness into the body.

*If the sense of "self" has identified itself more with the mind in life, is this the same sense of "self" that has all the experiences after death, that is, that retains at the same time the memories of life? I am asking this about the mind, for it remains formed a little longer than the other parts after death.*

It is not true that the mind is more durable. The psychic consciousness which has identified itself with the little physical part leaves this little physical person. Insofar as this consciousness has shaped the life, it remembers what it has shaped and the memory is closely linked to the psychic consciousness in the events. Wherever the psychic consciousness has not taken part in events, there is no memory. And only the psychic consciousness can continue; it is not the mind that retains memories, that is quite incorrect.

I FEBRUARY 1969

## **A SPIRITUAL REMINISCENCE BY THE MOTHER IN THE YEAR OF HER PASSING**

Now I am nearing a hundred, it's only five years away now. I started making an effort to become conscious at five years old, my child. This is to let you know....And I go on, and it goes on. Only.... Of course, I have come to the point where I am doing the work for the cells of the body, but still, the work began a long time ago.

This is not to discourage you, but...it is to let you know that it does not happen just like that.

The body is made of a substance which is still very heavy, and it is the substance itself which has to change for the Supermind to be able to manifest.

8 FEBRUARY 1973

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### **THE SPIRITUAL WORK WITHOUT THE BODY**

#### **THE MOTHER'S COMMENT ON HER "PRAYER" OF APRIL 19, 1915**

I WAS at Lunel in France. The Prayer refers to an experience I had when I was not physically well and was in fact narrowly saved from death. I had an inflammation of the nerves.

I was lying in an easy-chair, in front of a garden. I saw that the spiritual power was still active in me: I could go on with occult experiments in spite of the illness. I used to concentrate on things and persons and circumstances and wanted to see if the power worked. It worked very well on the mental and vital planes. Then I broadened the field of activity. I could go on doing my work in various parts of France and America and other places. I could clearly see the faces of the persons worked upon. They could be made to do what they by themselves could not. These were controlled experiments.

I could see that nothing could stop the work: even without my body the work could go on.

Wherever the call was, I could attend.

*(Reported by A. B. Purani and sanctioned by the Mother)*

# REALISING THE TRUTH NOW—AND AFTER

## A TALK OF THE MOTHER—REVISED AND APPROVED BY HER— FROM HUTA'S DIARY

ON THE 14th October 1963, when I went to the Mother in a pensive mood, She said to me with all Her Force, "One must prepare for the Hour of God. Don't you know what Sri Aurobindo has said in 'The Hour of God'?"

And here, I believe, perhaps She meant this:

"Man's greatness is not in what he is, but in what he makes possible. His glory is that he is the closed place and secret workshop of a living labour in which supermanhood is being made ready by a divine Craftsman. But he is admitted too to a yet greater greatness and it is this that, allowed to be unlike the lower creation, he is partly an artisan of this divine change; his conscious assent, his consecrated will and participation are needed that into his body may descend the glory that will replace him. His aspiration is earth's call to the supramental creator.

"If earth calls and the Supreme answers, the hour can be even now for that immense and glorious transformation." (*The Hour of God*)

The Mother resumed what She was talking about:

"And that is why whoever aspires for the Truth, we simply pull the threads together and bring them here to prepare for the Hour of God. This is the right time. And if you can't realise the Truth in this very birth, afterwards it may take hundreds of lives. And then who knows whether Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will be here to help directly; then there may be only a Force.

"Human beings are lucky because they have a Mind. So, they can think, observe, express themselves, while animals, trees and plants have no thinking Mind and they cannot express themselves or anything—and they are not capable of doing something higher without Mind and its conceptions.

"Didn't you see what Sri Aurobindo has written in *Savitri*?

And in the belly of the sparse rolling mass  
A mind looks out from a small casual globe  
And wonders what itself and all things are.

The Mind is a great thing that human beings have, and with it human beings can consider what should be done and what shouldn't be done.

"When attacks come, simply call the Lord. But you must remember that you must call Him at the right moment, just in time and not after.

"The Lord wants earth to be beautiful, peaceful and happy.

"You must remember that the Supreme Mother has innumerable aspects and She holds the whole Universe in Her arms. She wants each and every thing to be transformed and to attain its Goal. Her Consciousness is greater and vaster than the Universe. And myself am one of the physical aspects of the Mother. This physical body is limited but my Consciousness is limitless. I always spread my Cons-

sciousness and with It I answer many calls. But very few receive my answers. Most people are not conscious and receptive, otherwise my work would be more easy. But who collaborates and receives? If the human beings had collaborated with the Divine in Her work—right from the very beginning—then the Truth that has taken a million years to be realised would have been realised within a few years. And there wouldn't have been so much struggle or difficulties. All depends on sincere collaboration and receptivity.

“But, of course, there will be an end to all miseries and difficulties. OM.”

© HUTA

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## UNDER THE NIGHT SKY

WHEN the last flush of day  
 Drew down the blinds on the world,  
 Night's nascent charm grew wide,  
 Swaddling the girdle of the earth;  
 While under the musing murk,  
 My spirit's fingers stretched above  
 And touched a bursting dome  
 Of flaming orbs caressing at first  
 The low-hung silver cadence in the west:  
 Then they strayed to the polar friend  
 Of sea-lost folk. Wheeling about  
 They passed a curve of fires on  
 To the milky meander teasing planet and star.  
 Yet through the garish glow of galaxies,  
 The spirit's night deepened;  
 When, with a sudden wink of inward hush,  
 The lids opened within, limning a lens,  
 Focussing a single star of splendour,  
 The parent light of all the shining spheres.

G. VISWANATHAN

## A MESSAGE FROM THE MOTHER

IN HUMAN life the cause of all difficulties, all discords, all moral sufferings, is the presence in everyone of the ego with its desires, its likes and dislikes. Even in a disinterested work which consists in helping others, until one has learned to overcome the ego and its demands; until one can force it to keep calm and quiet in one corner, the ego reacts to everything that displeases it, starts an inner storm that rises to the surface and spoils all the work.

This work of overcoming the ego is long, slow and difficult; it demands constant alertness and sustained effort. This effort is easier for some and more difficult for others.

We are here in the Ashram to do this work together with the help of Sri Aurobindo's knowledge and force, in an attempt to realise a community that is more harmonious, more united, and consequently much more effective in life.

As long as I was physically present among you all, my presence was helping you to achieve this mastery over the ego and so it was not necessary for me to speak to you about it individually very often.

But now this effort must become the basis of each individual's existence, more especially for those of you who have a responsible position and have to take care of others. The leaders must always set the example, the leaders must always practise the virtues they demand from those who are in their care; they must be understanding, patient, enduring, full of sympathy and of warm and friendly goodwill, not out of egoism to win friends for themselves, but out of generosity to be able to understand and help others.

To forget oneself, one's own likings and preferences, is indispensable in order to be a true leader.

That is what I am asking of you now, so that you can face your responsibilities as you should. And then you will find that where you used to feel disorder and disunity, they have vanished, and harmony, peace and joy have taken their place.

You know that I love you and that I am always with you to sustain you, help you and show you the way.

Blessings.

26 August 1969

# THE VITAL BEING AND LIFE'S IDEAL

## FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

INDEED, the vital in man's nature is a despotic and exacting tyrant. Moreover, since it is the vital which holds power, energy, enthusiasm, effective dynamism, many have a feeling of timorous respect for it and always try to please it. But it is a master that nothing can satisfy and its demands are without limit. Two ideas which are very widespread, especially in the West, contribute towards making its domination more sovereign. One is that the chief aim of life is to be happy; the other that one is born with a certain character and that it is impossible to change it.

The first idea is a childish deformation of a very profound truth: that all existence is based upon delight of being and without delight of being there would be no life. But this delight of being, which is a quality of the Divine and therefore unconditioned, must not be confused with the pursuit of pleasure in life, which depends largely upon circumstances. The conviction that one has the right to be happy leads, as a matter of course, to the will "to live one's own life" at any cost. This attitude, by its obscure and aggressive egoism, leads to every kind of conflict and misery, disappointment and discouragement, and very often ends in catastrophe.

In the world as it is now the goal of life is not to secure personal happiness, but to awaken the individual progressively to the Truth-consciousness.

The second idea arises from the fact that a fundamental change of character demands an almost complete mastery over the subconscious and a very rigorous disciplining of whatever comes up from the inconscient, which, in ordinary nature, expresses itself as the effects of atavism and of the environment in which one was born. Only an abnormal growth of consciousness and the constant help of Grace can achieve this Herculean task. That is why this task has rarely been attempted and many famous teachers have declared it to be unrealisable and chimerical. Yet it is not unrealisable. The transformation of character has in fact been realised by means of a clear-sighted discipline and a perseverance so obstinate that nothing, not even the most persistent failures, can discourage it.

We have only one thing to do: the perfect surrender of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, the total self-giving to the Divine Will, whatever happens, even in the midst of the night.

There is the night and there is the sun, the night and the sun, again the night, many nights, but one must cling to this will to surrender, cling to it as through a tempest, and give up everything into the hands of the Supreme Lord, until the day when the Sun comes for ever, the total victory.

# THE MOTHER AS THE ARTIST AND THE SPIRITUAL MESSENGER

## SOME INDIRECT DISCLOSURES

*(In her play, The Great Secret, written in 1954 in collaboration with Nolini, Pavitra, André and Pranab, who respectively represented "The Writer", "The Scientist", "The Industrialist" and "The Athlete", the Mother wrote the parts for "The Statesman", "The Artist" and "The Unknown Man". The first-named outlines her insight into the psychology of the élite among those who deal with national and international affairs. The speech of the Artist, keyed to the same élite level, is of particular interest and importance because, along with a dramatic element suited to the plot, it is bound to contain indirect autobiographical touches from a past period of the Mother's life. We are reproducing it here and following it up with that of the Unknown Man which gives us the Mother's spiritual vision in general and her call as a messenger of the Divine to the world of politics, literature, science, art, industry and physical culture.*

*The various characters are figured as facing death in a life-boat adrift in mid-ocean after a shipwreck and as reviewing their own lives' labour and insufficiency. The Unknown Man brings a new light and force to them—and ultimately they are saved.)*

### I

BORN into a thoroughly respectable bourgeois family where art was considered as a pastime rather than a career and artists as rather unreliable people, prone to debauchery and with a dangerous disregard for money, I felt, perhaps out of contrariness, a compelling need to become a painter. My entire consciousness was centred in my eyes and I could express myself more easily by a sketch than in words. I learnt much better by looking at pictures than by reading books, and what I had once seen—landscapes, faces or drawings—I never forgot.

At the age of thirteen, through much effort, I had almost mastered the techniques of drawing, water colour, pastels and oil painting. Then I had the chance to do some small commissions for friends and acquaintances of my parents, and as soon as I earned some money, my family began to take my vocation seriously. I took advantage of this to pursue my studies as far as I could. When I was old enough to be admitted, I joined the School of Fine Arts and almost immediately started taking part in competitions. I was one of the youngest artists even to win the Prix de Rome and that gave me the opportunity to make a thorough study of Italian art. Later on, travelling scholarships allowed me to visit Spain, Belgium, Holland, England and other countries too. I did not want to be a man of one period or one school,

and I studied the art of all countries, in all forms, oriental as well as occidental.

At the same time I went ahead with my own work, trying to find a new formula. Then came success and fame; I won first prizes in exhibitions, I sat on juries, my paintings were shown in the leading museums of the world and snatched up by the art dealers. It meant wealth, titles, honours; even the word "genius" was used ... But I am not satisfied. My conception of genius is quite different. We have to create new forms, with new methods and processes, in order to express a new kind of beauty that is higher and purer, truer and nobler. So long as I still feel bound to human animality, I cannot free myself completely from the forms of material Nature. The aspiration was there, but the knowledge, the vision was lacking.

And now that we are about to die, I feel that I have produced nothing of what I wanted to produce, I have created nothing of what I wanted to create. And in spite of all the fame that has been heaped upon me, I feel that I am a failure.

2

What you want to know, I can tell you.

All of you have had a similar experience, although your activities are so different in their nature and scope. All six of you have come to a similar conclusion in spite of the success that has crowned your efforts. For you have been living in the surface consciousness, seeing only the appearance of things and unaware of the true reality of the universe.

You represent the elite of mankind, each one of you has achieved in his own sphere the utmost of what man is capable of; you are therefore at the summit of the human race. But from this summit you look down into an abyss and you can go no further. None of you are satisfied but at the same time none of you know what to do. None of you know the solution to the twofold problem presented by life and your own goodwill. I say a twofold problem, for in fact it has two aspects, one individual and the other collective: how can one fully realise one's own good and the good of others? None of you have found the solution, for this riddle of life cannot be solved by mental man, however superior he may be. For that, one must be born into a new and higher consciousness, the Truth-Consciousness. For behind these fleeting appearances there is an eternal reality, behind this unconscious and warring multitude there is a single, serene Consciousness, behind these endless and innumerable falsehoods there is a pure, radiant Truth, behind this obscure and obdurate ignorance there is a sovereign knowledge.

And this Reality is here, very near, at the centre of your being as it is at the centre of the universe. You have only to find it and live it and you will be able to solve all your problems, overcome all your difficulties.

This, you may say, is what the religions preach: most of them have spoken of this Reality, calling it God, but they have supplied no satisfactory solution to your problem, no convincing answer to your questions, and they have totally failed in



their attempt to provide a remedy to the ills of suffering humanity.

Some of these religions were based on prophetic revelation, others on a philosophical and spiritual ideal, but very soon the revelation changed to rituals and the philosophical ideal to dogmas, and so the truth they contained vanished. Moreover, and most important, all religions, almost without exception, offer man an almost identical other-worldly solution, based on death, not on life. Their solution amounts to this: bear all your miseries without complaining, for this world is irremediably evil, and you shall be rewarded for your meekness after death; or else: renounce all attachment to life and you shall escape forever from the cruel necessity of living. This certainly cannot provide any remedy to the sufferings of humanity on earth nor to the condition of the world in general. On the contrary, if we want to find a true solution to the confusion, chaos and misery of the world, we have to find it in the world itself. And this is in fact where it is to be found. It exists potentially, we have only to discover it; it is neither mystic nor imaginary; it is altogether concrete and disclosed to us by Nature herself, if we know how to observe her. For the movement of Nature is an ascending one; from one form, one species, she brings forth a new one capable of manifesting something more of the universal consciousness. All goes to show that man is not the last step in terrestrial evolution. The human species will necessarily be succeeded by a new one which will be to man what man is to the animal; the present human consciousness will be replaced by a new consciousness, no longer mental but supramental. And this consciousness will give birth to a higher race, superhuman and divine.

The time has come for this possibility, promised and anticipated for so long, to become a living reality upon earth, and that is why you are all unsatisfied and feel that you have been unable to obtain what you wanted from life. Nothing but a radical change of consciousness can deliver the world from its present obscurity. Indeed, this transformation of the consciousness, this manifestation of a higher and truer consciousness, is not only possible but certain; it is the very aim of our existence, the purpose of life upon earth. First the consciousness must be transformed, then life, then forms; it is in this order that the new creation will unfold. All Nature's activity is in fact a progressive return towards the Supreme Reality which is both the origin and the goal of the universe, in its totality as well as in its smallest element. We must become concretely what we are essentially; we must live integrally the truth, the beauty, the power and the perfection that are hidden in the depths of our being, and then all life will become the expression of the sublime, eternal, divine Joy.

# SOME NOTES ON THE MOTHER'S *PRIÈRES ET MÉDITATIONS*

(Continued from the issue of October 1978)

(3)

July 18, 1914

“THE WINDS of tempest” were of course storms on the psychological plane. They touched only the outer consciousness. The consciousness above remained firm and secure; nothing could touch it.

The storm came from the hostile forces. There were doubts that shook the very foundations of the Work—doubts as to whether there was going to be any Manifestation at all. The whole atmosphere was sullied and everything that had been built up was demolished and had to be built again.

July 19, 1914

The “too narrow frames” are the constructions of the mental, vital and physical consciousness, the rigid constructions within which we normally dwell: ‘this cannot be, that should not be done’, ‘this is right, that is wrong’, and so on and so forth.

Each nation, each country, each age has its own notions of what is proper and what should be avoided. And each of them disagrees with the rest. What is considered good in one country is regarded as improper in another, and *vice versa*.

These man-made judgments of what is good and what is bad have no abiding value. They have to be overpassed. That is why it has been said that travel is an educator of youth. When one sees with one’s own eyes how relative is the value of those man-made standards, one is the readier to throw them overboard.

“All the riches of human possibilities are needed to translate an atom of Thy infinite Force.” This is meant to indicate the relative proportion of the human to the Divine.

There have been great and magnificent civilisations in the prehistoric past, and man has achieved many wonderful things. He has created and thought and accomplished; and then all has been destroyed and had to grow up anew. Similarly, the last six or seven thousand years of man’s known history have been full of glorious achievements.

But all this put together is but an atom and a speck that is blown off in a puff and is no more.

“The closed doors” are the doors that shut out the light within,—the light of

the psychic being that is the source of all energy and all joy. The doors are tightly and securely closed, so that very little of the inner light can come out on the surface. It needs a special kind of key to open those doors.

July 21, 1914

The description given here is an exact record of what took place. It is not an imaged description, there is no attempt at poetry. It is an experience that the Mother had in the course of the meditation.

The whole thing took place in the course of about half an hour, for she seldom meditated for more than that period.

In all countries, those who have practised yoga were aware of the Centres in our being that correspond to the different worlds or planes of existence. At the base is the Divine Energy coiled up as it were (*kunḍalmī śakti*), that is to say, involved in Matter. It is usually represented as a coiled-up serpent, but that is just a symbol: there is no serpent.

But it is true that the serpent has been taken, in all countries, as the symbol of the Force of Evolution. The reason is that Evolution does not take place in a straight line; it is always a spiral movement. The spiral does not move up in a straight line, but in a kind of up and down motion, something like that of a cord in looping the loop.

August 5, 1914

"Thou art in all things as a vivifying breath." This has been used in a figurative sense. The idea is that since the Divine is the source of all life and all peace, the only way to live and to be in peace is to be united with the Divine Presence.

"That Thy Work may be done and time may not pass in vain." In the earth's history, it happens about once in two or three thousand years that circumstances become favourable for the manifestation of the Divine Consciousness. If at those moments there are on earth men sufficiently open and surrendered who can receive the Influence, something is done, and there is a progress. If, on the other hand, people remain shut up in their own little selves, if they remain callous and indifferent to the Divine Call, the Influence comes and goes and leaves little trace behind. One has to wait for the next Descent before anything can happen.

Now is come one of those supreme moments in the earth's history when the Truth has to be received and proclaimed aloud to the peoples of the earth.

August 8, 1914

"Monstrous forces have swept down upon the earth." With the outbreak of the First World War, dark forces from the vital world came down on earth and sought to possess the consciousness of man. They left their traces even after the war was over.

Between the First and the Second World Wars, there was such a distortion in the consciousness of men! They grew lazy, people wanted to get rich quickly without making an effort, there was an increase in violence.

August 9, 1914

“All that obscures our understanding.” Unless there is something in the consciousness that is open to receive, no teaching, no knowledge however wonderful can have any use to those to whom they are given. The ancient disciplines took note of this and laid down the rule that no knowledge should be *imparted* to the novice. He would be shut up in a room with a question and he would not be allowed to come out till he had found the solution *by himself*. Later on, it was found that this procedure was unnecessary; since anything that one did not understand could be safely imparted to the novice and he would remain as blank as ever. And so the most secret doctrines were made public freely.

But, then, someone asked the Mother: “Can we not widen our consciousness?” Her reply was this:

Three things are necessary in order to widen one’s consciousness: a firm will, an absolute sincerity and an unlimited perseverance.

There must be a will that brooks no resistance. The perseverance must be such as will enable one to go on till the end is achieved; one may fail ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times, but one goes on.

Our normal reactions to things are like the galvanic reactions in a frog’s muscles. Every time we are touched on a particular point where we are weak, we react in the same way, as with a jerk of recoil. We have to persevere in our effort to master this kind of reaction, until it ceases.

This can best be aided by an absolute sincerity. Sincerity means: not to deceive oneself in regard to anything, *ne se tromper soi-même de rien*, not to hide anything from oneself, not to say “I know” when you do not really know, not to think you possess a capacity when you don’t.

There is always something in us that is hidden away in a corner, and lying coiled up like a small worm black and hideous, something that is quite small, *tout petit*, in itself, but enormous in its results on our behaviour. These little things have to be ferreted out: throw the full light of the torch on them and they will show themselves.

August 11, 1914

“The shadow cast by the earth has fallen back on her.” All the ill-will (*mauvaise volonté*), obscurity, inconstancy, the refusal to progress that are in the earth-nature go up and collect as it were in a cloud that covers the earth. When their weight becomes too heavy, they descend on the earth. This is an occult phenomenon that is referred to here.

"This atom in conflict" is the earth: that is what it looks like to the Divine Consciousness.

August 16, 1914

"The great Asuric beings." In the beginning of Creation, four Emanations came out of the Supreme. They were Light or Consciousness, Love or Delight, Truth, and Life. These were mighty Powers, endowed with freedom. As soon as they came out, they sought to have their own independent existence; they lost contact with the Origin and went about in their own way. This created a deformation where there should have been harmony.

Then they turned towards the earth; for the earth has been created as a centre of concentration through which the Divine would work out the miracle of transformation and manifestation. These Asuric beings have decided to change. But they find it very difficult to do it all at once, because of a long habit of perversion.

August 17, 1914

"This whirlwind of destruction" is the First World War. That war was even more destructive than the Second World War. In this connection the Mother gave a graphic description of trench warfare.

She had been present in Paris during one of the Zeppelin raids. Then she went to England, from where she embarked for Japan.

August 18, 1914

"All the play of these forces." To the Divine Consciousness, the external forms of men, their looks and outward expressions have not much value. The Mother always looks at the forces—mental, vital and others—that act and react and work through men and make them what they are. To her these forces are much more visible and tangible, and she always acts upon them.

"I feel like a boat...new countries." It is a constant fact of spiritual experience that after an effort one reaches a state of consciousness where all is peaceful and there is no more effort. One feels at rest, as if one has touched port. But this state does not last forever. One has to venture out again. There are difficulties, obstacles to surmount, new efforts to make. It is like climbing a hill. There is a stiff climb. Then for a time one reaches level ground. From here there is a new ascent.

August 20, 1914

"We must constantly renew the experience of inner discovery." There are people who have got into the habit of going out of their bodies, in a trance, by going above the body-consciousness. All they do is to concentrate a little, and up they go.

They do it almost mechanically: it has grown into a kind of habit with them, just as others contract physical habits.

It does them no good. In order to make real progress, one has to have every time a completely new experience. Forget all your past, forget that you have ever existed, become like a baby who has to have all its experience anew. Give up all preconceived ideas, all mental and vital habits, all attachments. Become a blank page. Go above into the higher consciousness, and then look at everything from that standpoint. Every time you do that you will find that you make a new contact with the Reality, discover as a concrete experience, a new truth, a new meaning in things. Approached in this manner, all problems find their right answer.

This, moreover, is the supreme method of keeping always young.

In this connection, the Mother related an experiment she had once made with regard to her body-consciousness. She erased from it all memory of past habits, so much so that the body forgot even how to eat or to walk. She had to teach it to walk once again. This of course was an extreme illustration. But the thing *can* be done.

*(To be continued)*

SANAT K. BANERJI

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## TWO POEMS OF 1976

18th NOVEMBER

THREE years ago today,  
A terrible Void entered all Life  
With an unspeakable sadness—  
The Beloved gone!—sharp wound of time's knife

Tearing our hearts as if forever.  
Our beings dropped into an endless space,  
Without Her Word to guide us,  
Without the radiance of Her great face!

Our tear-locked bodies, leaden—  
Despondent, with barren eyes—  
Moved towards the sweet still form...  
But a promise dawned, a new Sun in the skies.

The sense of loss, abandonment,  
Melted before an all-powering Love  
Held secret in the calm countenance, the shut gaze...  
The ground stopped slipping—Strength flowed from above!

19th NOVEMBER

ONCE again I stand before the couch  
Hallowed by You, in that shadowed room.  
The morning is yet grey and dull,  
But Your Presence dispels the gloom.

Oh, this time Your eyes are open!  
Your smile holds the world in its happiness:  
Our vacant hearts are filled with riches,  
You have returned to us, again to bless.

We are prostrate at your rose-petalled feet,  
Our long waiting to its destiny led—  
A brighter Sun rises on a greener world—  
Deep peace and pinnacled joy have wed!

MINNIE N. CANTENWALLA

## 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 27, 1940

P: America has agreed to supply 3000 planes per month.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. In that case England will very soon match Germany in air strength.

N: Amery says the Indian situation is not serious.

SRI AUROBINDO: Because there is no chance of Civil Disobedience perhaps. And Gandhi is now preparing the world for non-violence.

P: But nobody accepts it.

N: De Gaulle has advised the French people to offer passive resistance.

SRI AUROBINDO: Somebody offered it and published Churchill's photo in his paper. He got a sentence of seven years from Hitler, and that is only Hitler's first step.

N: Rajagopalachariar says England may think that if we are independent we shan't help her.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, they have the fear that we may act just as Ireland is doing.

P: They say there is a difference of opinion among Hitler's generals regarding the invasion of England.

SRI AUROBINDO: This may be only a story. Hitler may be trying to settle the Balkan problem first. But if it is true, it is remarkable that Kietel is against invasion. He has always been for attacking England. He is a General in name only. He knows nothing about war, he is merely Hitler's mouthpiece.

### EVENING

P: Nolini was saying that he found it very difficult to understand this book on modern poetry. How many people will read it?

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): Modern poetry doesn't seem worth reading. I have read Eliot's "Hippopotamus"—it is amusing. Nowadays one reads poetry not to enjoy oneself and for pleasure but as a duty or a task. All that these moderns are doing is to take most commonplace ideas and try to express them in poetry. Whatever is beautiful is to them romantic and what is grand is rhetorical. Take only commonplace mean things,



express them in mean dirty language, with no rhythm or as little as possible—that is the recipe for modern poetry.

P: The same thing, the same movement, is happening in art.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is an age of decadence like the Roman decadence. Only in a different way. That took 1000 years to start. Here also it may be 1000 years. Hitler's millennium will be like this probably.

July 28, 1940

N: Mussolini has been dramatic.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Yes.

S: What is it?

SRI AUROBINDO: On Mussolini's 57th birthday, he gave an interview to Press reporters. He showed his bare body and said, "Am I sick? Am I old?" and then galloped around on a horse.

P: But what about his fleet? It doesn't seem to venture out.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, for fear of being sick. (*Laughter*)... According to the Press report, it seems the British army in Africa is not enough. If this is true, they should reinforce it; otherwise if the Axis take Egypt and Alexandria it will be bad for England. Alexandria is like Gibraltar. I suppose they have concentrated all their forces in England.

P: Yes, this French collapse may have changed all their plan.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes... You must have read of America's army strength in the *New Statesman*. It is lamentable.

S: Yes. What have they been doing all these years?

SRI AUROBINDO: No wonder they were against sending any Expeditionary Force to Europe.

S: Now Japan is also threatening her.

SRI AUROBINDO: For that she has her navy to deal with Japan. If Hitler had a navy, after defeating England he would go straight for America; this present state of her army would be a great opportunity for him.

July 29, 1940

Germany has sunk one French refugee ship, but has been saying that England has done it.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*): Hitler says Churchill has sunk the French ship.

P: He says that?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. The *Daily Herald's* report may be true that Germany is inventing the story that England is going to invade Brittany and that Germany will come as saviour. (*Laughter*)

P: He wants all the world to believe this?

N: Meant for home-consumption.

P: He is making Brittany an autonomous state, it appears.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. If reports are true, he intends to take back Alsace-Lorraine and make a kingdom of Flanders with Northern France included in it. Perhaps Italy will take Savoy, Nice and Corsica.

N: Mussolini is stretching his arm towards Palestine too.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and he wants to drive out the Jews *en masse*.

S: Poor Jews! They have been cursed through the ages; from everywhere driven out.

N: Why is it so?

SRI AUROBINDO: Firstly they have always tried to keep their individuality; secondly, everywhere by their cleverness they have come to the top in all the professions and created jealousy among others.

NIRODBARAN

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## THE SERPENT AND THE ROPE

It takes time  
to understand.  
The rope is a rope  
and not a serpent,  
but a serpentine reality:  
its hidden hissings,  
its sleeping contradictions,  
the mystic knots  
of a coiled existence,  
its forked tongue  
unseen....

SANKARAN KUTTY

**A POEM BY NIRODBARAN  
WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS**

Birthday—17th November 1940

My mortal lips have kissed thy haloed feet,  
O Mother of Infinity,

*a wine of*  
And (have) tasted (a strange) ecstasy  
*celestial*  
(That a divine) Beauty alone can mete;

The inestimable sweetness of thy Grace  
Bestowed on my unworthy heart

*now intimate*  
Has made it an (integral) part  
*deep*  
Of thy own heart's limitless ocean-space.

*flows to thee,*  
My life (is) a harmonious wave  
Of thy life's many-mooded vast;

*boundaries*  
Crossing the (threshold) of the past  
*prison*  
It has come back to thee from its (dark-walled) cave.

*risen sun,*                      *y aureoled*  
No (sun-aureole) no(r) pearl (shedding) moon  
Can conquer my uplifted gaze  
That has dwelt on the heaven of thy face,  
*Caught*                      *depths as in a luminous*  
(That sent me) into (a brief rapturous) swoon.

*can*  
The world no more (a) bar (to) my eagle flight;  
*It is*  
(Appears) a substance of thy thought  
In which my brooding hours are wrought  
*Into a*  
(With the native) splendour of thy deathless light.

## THE MOTHER'S FORCE

FROM the very day of my arrival in the Ashram I was hearing a great deal about the Mother's Force. Everybody was talking about this Force as if it had been synonymous with the Mother herself! When someone was sick, met some difficulty in work, faced a problem in study or an obstruction in the inner sadhana, he invoked the Mother's Force and it always worked. This calling and the intervention of the Force seemed so spontaneous that nobody took it as anything but natural. It assumed the form of a miracle only in some rare cases. That was when the problem had already become so complicated that it did not get solved by a mere prayer and the Mother's personal intervention had to be sought.

Being new and too young to understand all this, I asked Sri Aurobindo what exactly was this unique thing called "the Mother's Force". Was it the same thing as the divine Shakti? There came forth one of the most beautiful and comprehensive explanations on the Mother he has ever given me in a few lines:

There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all these, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here—it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. She is that in the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the Divine Force.

The Master further explained the relationship between the Mother and her Force:

When I speak of the Mother's Force I do not speak of the force of the Prakriti which carries on things of the Ignorance but of the higher Force of the Divine that descends from above to transform the nature. The Mother's Force is the manifestation of the Mother herself...

It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine Nature.

We little human beings can never fathom the full glory of the Mother's personality. Such is the case with the Mother's Force too. How much potentiality it must have that it not only removes the Ignorance but also changes and transforms the nature into the divine Nature, a process which was never attempted in the old yogas. Sri Aurobindo tried to enlighten me about the workings of this Force in my correspondence:

MYSELF: Sometimes, if not often, the Mother's Force comes down, carries on some work and disappears. When once it had descended why has it to go back and

then return?

SRI AUROBINDO: So long as you cannot contain its action, there is no other way.

MYSELF: In that case, generally speaking, is not every sadhak ready to receive and contain the Mother's Force at any time and in any circumstances? Who on earth would not like to hold its constant action?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a question of mental wish but of capacity and whether all the parts of the being are ready and can retain it. If everybody were containing the constant action of the Mother's Force, the sadhana would be finished by now and the siddhi complete.

MYSELF: You wrote, "Ask for the consciousness of her Force." Does it mean that I should aspire to the Mother to know about her Force and how and where its workings are in me?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes—not know with the mind only, but to feel them and see them with the inner experience.

Finally I may quote a most enlightening answer to a question by me:<sup>1</sup>

Q : When a sadhak does his work with the right attitude and calls down the Mother's Force into him freely and directly, how does it act to remove his defects?

A: It acts by awakening the inner consciousness gradually or swiftly, by replacing the principle of ego-service by the principle of service of the Divine, by making him watch his actions and see his own defects and pushing him to rectify them, by establishing a connection between his consciousness and the Mother's Consciousness, by preparing his nature to be taken up more and more by the Mother's Consciousness and Force, by giving him experiences which make him ready for the major experiences of Yoga, by stimulating the growth of his psychic being, by opening him to the Mother as the universal Being etc. etc. Naturally it acts differently in different persons.

(7.5.1973)

NAGIN DOSHI

<sup>1</sup> From the forthcoming Volume III of *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*.

# LOVE AND USEFULNESS

## A PERSONAL LETTER

*(The author of this beautiful letter, at once simple and profound, would be the last one to wish for any publicity. But it has so touched its recipient by its spontaneous warmth as well as its unforced wisdom that, knowing the situation with which it deals to be hardly confined to one individual, this lucky person would like to share it with the readers of Mother India.)*

...WHILE we were talking that day in Pondy there were a couple of things I feel I did not explain well. I will dilate on them as I want you to understand me better. One is regarding my love for S, the other is about what you put as your feeling that you are "useless".

My love for S has had the usual fluctuations that ordinary human love does. Those small ranges were not difficult to swing in. It is only on experiencing the Mother's love of me and my increasing response to it, and the growth of intensity in both during the last ten months (full of critical happenings), that I have really started on the way of understanding higher or divine love. I told you the truth when I said that now I love the Mother in S. The thought of S, seeing her, hearing her voice, meeting her sidelong glance—all these and more create the same response in me—I remember and think of the Mother and there is a calm joy. I feel the Mother in her radiating a pure love which demands nothing, which does not bother whether it is accepted or even received or not, it just IS. And off and on in response I feel a similar soft, luminous stream of waters of love welling out of me to everything outside and to nobody in particular. The question of jealousy, of keeping or losing does not arise as long as I possess the Mother in her in my consciousness.

Concerning the second point—your feeling of "uselessness"—you must first ask to whom you were useful before. The true answer will be: "to the Mother"—and that answer holds good for the same question today and also tomorrow. Only She knows and can decide regarding your usefulness in your present physical being. If you ask her and tell her that you will acquiesce in what She tells you, there will be no more any questions. The whole trouble is caused by her allowing us this freedom to reject her. Once, and then repeatedly, as you go on accepting her the question of usefulness or otherwise is taken away from you. After all, my knife does not ask if it is any more useful or not in the operation theatre.

I feel like the knife asking me the question when often I have asked myself what good I am doing or whether I have done harm to such and such a patient, and the answer from the In-dweller invariably is: "Your job, like that of your knife, is not to slip from my fingers—not to use your puny will but allow me to handle you as I want." And then I am calmed.

21 August 1978

# OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

## RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

*(Continued from the issue of October 1978)*

12

### **The Divine and our Dullness—The Mother and Food—Not only Guru but True Mother—Grace towards Youngsters—Freedom and Discipline**

ALL of us have aspired for the grace of being allowed physical nearness to the Mother. The possibility to be in her presence hour after hour has seemed the greatest luck. Naturally I once exclaimed to her: "Oh Mother, I wish I could live with you!" Immediately she answered: "Do you think it is easy to live with me? There will be a tremendous unceasing pressure on you. You will have to be capable of standing before the highest ideal of consciousness every minute."

I realised how far I was from that ideal. So often I would let myself slip from the psychic poise and indulge the trickster ego for little common satisfactions! Those who have been chosen for physical attendance on the incarnate Divine have spoken of the inner demands the privileged proximity creates. Always the right attitude of humility, always the willingness to change what is deep-set in ourselves, always the ready response of the being to the Wonder in front of our eyes: these are tests very few can successfully pass. And perhaps the dulling of the soul's awareness of the Divinity present before it is the most common failing.

For years I was more or less near the Mother every day from about 9 a.m. to nearly 1.30 in the afternoon. Those hours were the greatest happiness of my life, but I once had to tell the Mother: "I feel terribly depressed because I am getting used to you." Getting used to the marvel of marvels that is the Avatar's existence amongst us may be adjudged the saddest, the most deplorable fact about human nature. The Divine no longer calls forth from us the ecstatic inner cry. We look at a body like our own, at movements such as we ourselves make, and we forget that here is the Supreme in a garb that resembles us in order to touch our ordinary humanity and draw it towards depths and heights beyond it. The light that comes through the embodiment—by means of the penetrating or compassionate gaze, the upbearing or enfolding curve of the blissful smile, the gesture of the hand to bless, to support, to lead—all these rarities grow too familiar and lose their moving power. We take them for granted and even begin to be careless about them. Some amusement or other of the normal life may send its lure into the atmosphere of Ananda: this atmosphere may fail to hold us as it should. I know that Nirod has appreciated very keenly the hours he spent attending on Sri Aurobindo after the accident of 23 November 1938. Full well he benefited from the Master's spiritual closeness and

poetic creativity. And yet he has frankly confided to me how he would not only miss the precious chance to be in Sri Aurobindo's room after he had finished his duty but also on occasion appear late for duty: what drew him away and kept him out was his passion for playing tennis. I have myself once or twice given up the glory of being near the Mother in the forenoon and chosen to enjoy the Sunday morning show of a picture like "The Brothers Karamazov" at a local theatre.

When I complained to the Mother that I was getting used to her I thought I was the only unfortunate one, but I soon learned that what I experienced was nothing exceptional. Others could suffer even more acutely and be led to strange remedies. A friend of mine would find himself unresponsive to the various photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in his rooms because they were there at all hours for his eyes. He struck upon the device of putting towels over them so that for a number of days the impression of Sri Aurobindo's majestic tranquillity and of the Mother's powerful sweetness would stop being commonplace. Then he would remove the white coverings and stand in excited enchantment before the revelation as if the Avatars in all their heavenly hue had burst upon the earth for the first time in history!

Yes, we could be dull towards the Divine, but the Mother never gave us up. Tirelessly she would tolerate our shortcomings, be sensitive to our needs and keep ever ready to pick us out of our trough of inertia or our slough of despond. But though she never stopped attending to us she would rarely lose a chance to correct us. There was no compromising with small desires. At the beginning of my stay I was asked by the Mother to take up painting all the flowers she gave us from day to day. I procured some tubes of water-colour. She used to visit Lalita's room every week and I would be there to meet the Mother along with her. I took off the cap of one tube and, holding the open nozzle near my nose, said: "It has a most appetising smell." At once the Mother's smiling face changed. There was an expression of disgust. She said: "Don't talk to me of eating." In a flash I was made to understand her outlook on food.

She never advised fasting or cutting down whatever food was necessary. But she discounted all desire to satisfy greed. And greed meant for her not just the urge to gorge oneself with as much stuff as available. It meant also the lip-smacking turn of the consciousness towards even a single morsel. Nothing should be eaten with an appetite gloating on taste. Food which tastes good is to be cooked but from a sense of doing a thing well, from an application of the artistic feeling to the culinary operation and not in order to make the mouth water and the eyes dance with the expectation of enjoying delicacies. The approach to food as to everything else has to be calm and consecrated. Discrimination, yes—but no like or dislike, resulting either in a move towards self-indulgence or in a reaction of recoil. The one mood in front of food has to be: "May it all go to the growth of the Divine within me!"

The Mother assured us that food would be much better digested if it was inwardly offered to the Divine. This offering goes beyond the grace often said before meals in a Christian household. Over and above the gratitude for God's gift of the "daily bread", there has to be a control of animal relish and of the eager push to fill the stom-



ach: the food consumed has to be not for personal pleasure or profit but to equip the body better for the development of the Yogi living in it, the Yogi who has pledged himself to the Divine's Will both internally and externally.

The Mother did not encourage any kind of food-faddism. Cleanliness and restrained spicing were favoured, but too much preoccupation with one kind of diet or another implied for her a lowered consciousness, an extreme externalisation of interest. Even on the subject of vegetarianism which is frequently linked in the East to the spiritual ideal she had no fixed ideas. In an institution like the Ashram she has established the rule of vegetarian food as the most rational, helpful and economical on the whole, but as between vegetarianism and meat-eating in general she has said that the kind of food consumed does not matter much until the stage is reached when physical transformation concretely starts. Then the body, increasingly Truth-sensitised by the Supermind, will have to be very selective in what subtle vibrations the stuff eaten may set up in the changing metabolic process.

Choosing vegetarianism for the Ashram as a collective body, she yet was ready to make individual exceptions and did not look upon meat-eating as something heinous just as she did not consider the sexual life as abominable in itself but only as unsuited to the ideal of turning all one's energies towards the Divine for a total transformation.

Even in the matter of that life I know of a case in which the Mother went out of her way to ask a young sadhak to give his wife a child even though he himself was all for absolute abstinence. The girl, who was a recent entrant into the Ashram and whose marriage with this young man the Mother had herself approved and brought about, had confessed to her that while she loved her very much she craved, like any ordinary woman, a child of her own. She honestly tried hard to live without one but could not feel happy. The Mother explained to the husband that the difficulties through which his wife was passing would end with the birth of a baby. The husband and wife were told to stay away from the Ashram during the time the child would be conceived and born and then return with it. The young sadhak could not believe that the Mother could issue such a command in the teeth of his own prayers to enable him to practise Brahmacharya in spite of marriage. In fact he resisted the command for a long period, feeling he was being Yogic thereby. We often think we are doing the Mother's Will when we are following our own notion of Yoga. To be a spiritual child of the Mother we must blindly do what she wants and not judge whether it is spiritual or not by our own standards or our own understanding of the Aurobindonian revelation. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were not merely Gurus of aspirants bent on a razor-sharp yogic path: they took under their wings a vast variety of souls at different stages of evolution: they were Divine Parents who knew the specific need of each of their children and did not prescribe indiscriminate cast-iron rules. Whatever they visioned for a devotee of theirs in the light of a more-than-mental wisdom they attempted to materialise, not caring for tradition or convention, not sticking hard-and-fast even to their own general guide-lines for an institution dedicated to Yogic

practice. They preserved the broad framework of this institution but theirs was a many-sided plasticity, dealing with each person according to his or her evolutionary requirement and according to the insight of the Grace which incalculably the evolving soul evoked from them. To obey their direct wish in each instance was the basic law for whoever aspired to be a part of the New Life they had come to create on earth.

A surprise akin to the young sadhak's but in another context awaited a middle-aged Sannyasi who wanted to join the Ashram. He offered as his credentials the ascetic regime he had followed for years. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, while appreciating the capacity for discipline he had developed, saw that he was cast in a rather rigid mould and the relatively free existence enjoyed in the Ashram would be a shock for him in the course of time and make him react in a way healthy neither for him nor for the people he would be in contact with. No doubt, he was genuinely spiritual, but in a life-denying and world-escaping manner which was foreign to a Yoga for a divine fulfilment in the very terms of terrestrial evolution. So he was quietly advised to give up his Sannyasa, live in the ordinary world for a time, face its difficulties and challenges and then come here to confront the complexities of the Integral Yoga. The ascetic was scandalised and went away murmuring he had made a big mistake in thinking the Ashram a spiritual place. The very fact that he could not accept implicitly the word of those whom he had wished to take as his spiritual masters and that he thought of the Integral Yoga on the lines of his own conception of what such a path should be like—this showed that he was not cut out for the New Life with its diverse psychological turns and intricate material situations. The New Life seeks for the secret truth behind every side of mental-vital-bodily nature and for a central stance of peace and purity amidst a constant circling of co-operative work, an inmost aloneness with God simultaneous with a radiating manifold of human relationships which have to be looked upon as the expression of the multiplicity inherent in the one world-creative Divine Father-Mother of a myriad manifestation.

Indeed, under the Mother the Ashram life, by combining liberty with light, never constituted a field of *laissez-aller*, each member permitted to live entirely as he liked. Outwardly, kindness, courtesy, consideration, the will to collaborate were invariably expected by the Mother. Inwardly, equanimity towards all conditions, aspiration to the Highest, rejection of egoistic trends, surrender to the soul's intuition and to the word of the Guru were the ideals ever set before the sadhak. But there was no uniform law of action: each one's *svadharma*, every sadhak's true mould of being and line of nature, were sought to be evoked. A set of rituals was never prescribed: a wide scope of individual spiritual experience was accepted and allowed. The Mother granted the utmost freedom possible for spontaneous development.

All the more she offered it to the youngsters whom she took into her fostering fold. I remember how my sister Minnie's daughter Jean—later named Jayini by the Mother—was received when she came to the Ashram to become the Mother's child. I have already mentioned the way her need in the marriage which the Mother had sanctioned was tackled. What I have to say further will show another aspect of the

Grace the Mother could pour on a young soul. Both Jean and her two brothers had been born in Bombay under the Mother's creative eye, as it were: her help had been received all during the prenatal months and they grew up in the atmosphere of deep devotion which my sister had always carried about her ever since in her late teens she first came into touch with the Mother. Gladly now the Mother welcomed my niece's prayer to enter the Ashram. Minnie had asked the Mother whether she would take the young girl into her care. The Mother replied that she certainly would but that she would look after the girl in her own way and not necessarily in any way expected of her—according to family norms or community customs. I took Jean to the Mother—a slim, pretty seventeen-year-old with a somewhat sad face and a rather restrained manner. After the interview in which the Mother was all gracious smiles I spoke to her alone about Jean and asked her what she thought. Later I wrote down her words and sent them to her for confirmation. She commented: *Ga va* ("It's all right"). My report, which has been included without my knowledge, as well as without mention of its subject, in *Champaklal's Treasures* (p.133), ran:

"Jean is a very refined girl, and she is extremely sensitive, easily hurt. Never scold her or speak harshly to her or force her to do anything. I find her very nice. But she looked so frightened—I don't know who could have told her about me that she should feel like that. Tell her that I found her very nice. She is very refined but somehow she has been living all tightened up. Let her feel quite free, don't try to put any ring around her. Let her feel completely relaxed and free here, and tell her that she should relax and just feel as if she were all the time in sunshine." (16.9.1968)

It should be clear that the Mother never had the school-mistress mentality. She was all for a happy flowering unique to each soul. But I must repeat that she did not want life to be without any discipline. She dwelt again and again on the need of discipline in order to realise anything worthwhile. What a modernist would call an "unrepressed" life in a "permissive" society was very far from her dream of the future humanity. Surely such an existence would be out of the question in an Ashram explicitly concentrating on the transcendence of common human nature and on the invocation of its divine counterpart. It would have no place, either, in a less demanding mode of inner progress like Auroville where unity with one's fellows is put more in front than union with the Divine. The Mother could be very patient and tolerant and understanding: she knew that Yoga could not be perfected soon and that several aspirants have necessarily to go slow, she was aware also that human unity is a gradual growth, but the Ideal, whatever it be, should be kept constantly in sight. While the multi-faceted being of man should not be compressed or coerced, impoverished or rendered lopsided, the sense of lightness and freedom required for its evolution cannot be properly developed unless one makes a repeated effort to resist the downward drag of petty impulses and does one's best to fight free of egoism.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

# LIFE IN AN ASHRAM

## SOME GENERAL AND PARTICULAR REFLECTIONS

*This article, written by a Westerner, was originally meant for the world outside the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. But it makes interesting and illuminative reading for insiders as well as outsiders—especially in the month of November, on the 24th of which in 1926 the Ashram as such may be said to have commenced with Sri Aurobindo putting the Mother at the head of the group around him.*

THE very thought of living in an Ashram holds no translatable symbol to the Western man of culture. He may, at best, equate it with some ancient centres of mystery teachings, of which the everyday man of our time has perhaps some kind of intuitive perception, but he can claim little tangible knowledge as his own.

Ashram... life in an Ashram... India... Indian life... the search for the Master... the meeting with one... the Path... the discipleship... at the feet of the God-realised: these, as so many codes of some special meaning, ring the true sound to the Inner Being alone. Only to the Being who, seated within the outer personality, has his own memory and who patiently awaits the touch that can lead him to freedom from the imprisonment of Matter and Ignorance, to him the words will be electrifying; to the outer man, they remain mere items in the vocabulary.

The ancient Ashrams and their central Lights—the great Rishis and Yogis, the mighty centres of the Vedic teachings and others that laid the foundation to the entire spiritual culture of India—have left their mark on this land. The scriptures and epics speak of them, such as the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Puranas, the Mahabharata of which the better known portion, the Bhagavad-Gita, relates the discourse between the God Being and his disciple. All these speak with a tongue of gold of the Avatars on earth, who left their Golden Seeds of Divinity behind them to flourish after they were gone. Some of the Great Spiritual Beings are known to us from available sources of literature, while of others only the God-realised and the initiated know.

Each of these Centres, or Ashrams, as they are called in India, were and are the places of spiritual power of the particular God-realised men, around whom they grow into being. It is through their own spiritual state of consciousness and inner force that they call to themselves, maintain and tend to inner growth those whom they in their vision of wisdom see fit and ready to benefit from their presence. Theirs is the mighty energy of spirit to give. It is their touch, to which Sri Aurobindo refers as the force “that changes destiny”.<sup>1</sup>

Shall I plunge right into the depth of our standard conception of things which says that I was in search of my Master and I found him? In truth, the opposite is true, as I came to understand. It is He, the Master of the Being, that finds you and

<sup>1</sup> “The Hour of God.”

calls you, though it may appear otherwise. It is true that when the soul is ready and the longing for its Master grows strong, it begins to search most desperately and calls out to be heard. It calls ardently and it is this call which is answered and the way of the caller is found toward the called. But only because He has allowed it and made it available. The time comes for the caller and the called to meet. To arrive at the feet of the Master of the Inner Being is a true arrival, a homecoming of the long lost soul. An instant inner contact with this Central Force is felt and for this meeting there is no substitute.

It is a known fact that each soul must have certain preliminary attributes that enable it to move towards its own progress. Perhaps of these, the most important ones are the right perception and the faculty of discrimination. Need one say that without them the aspirant is defenceless and in grave danger of losing himself on a very slippery path? There are some spiritual teachers in India of varied calibre, who impart to the seeker the stage of consciousness they themselves have reached and, with all due respect to the true ones, it must be said that India holds her own in this field up to our day. Then there are those who offer the fastest results and the shortest cuts to their own projections of divinity to the unsuspecting—trading their small occult tricks for gain or fame and popularity. Of such, there are as many as their equivalents in the West. But, then, this is the state of the world as we find it now, and discriminatory caution and, above all, patience need to be learned by each. To tell the True from the False is one of the master keys that open the first door upon the spiritual Path. The next may well be staying-power, trust and faithfulness. Else, many may find their passage to one Ashram or another, yet because of something still left in the lower nature which resisted the inner call, lose it and drift away in modes whose variety has no end.

It is more honest and also more beneficial to the reader to speak of that which one can best describe, because of personal experience and therefore knowledge, instead of giving a symposium of what is derived from the records and writings but not directly known. I shall therefore make an attempt to speak only of that Ashram and the life within it, which I happen to know and that portion of its Truth that I have been able to comprehend. To speak of anything else would scarcely hold interest for the discriminating reader. This is the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, in Pondicherry, South India. It is here where I have come to learn the inner meaning of the many things for which no amount of reading or hearing about them was food enough any longer.

I came to India for the first time in 1966 driven by the same hunger that is so well known to each seeker who has experienced it. North India, the Himalayas and Tibet had drawn me as a magnet since I equated those places with the home of the Masters. Yet it was here in South India that the fulfilment of my aspirations awaited me. Pondicherry-bound from Adyar on a State Bus, even before actually entering this Ashram, some ten miles outside of it, I felt a Force, such as I had never experienced before, engulf me. Waves of peace and bliss covered me over and over

again. "My God," I thought, "where am I going? This is no ordinary thing." The Force grew stronger still and by the time I got down at the bus station I was in another world. I fell silent, unable to bring myself to talk, lest I should break the spell. It was hours later that, cleaned and refreshed, I first entered the Ashram proper. This seemed the Power Station from where the Force I had felt was emanating. Above the gate I saw a symbol which I learned was that of the Universal Mother.

In the courtyard, flowers most glorious in colours and blooms of the rarest kind greeted the eye everywhere. Men and women, dressed mostly in white, moved quietly about, their faces as serene-looking as one sees in sacred pictures. Perfume of incense filled the air, drifting in the warm Indian summer day. In the centre of the courtyard, as a mighty dais decked with blossoms and surrounded by incense, lay the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo. Since my first visit the Samadhi also of the Mother, who left her body in 1973, is at the same spot. Here lie their bodies in specially prepared caskets of rosewood lined with silver, and a platform of white marble is erected over them. It is covered by flowers in certain patterns, different each day—a potent place for meditation. The great embodiments of spirituality in India are rarely cremated, since they were inhabited by a divine consciousness and remain charged with a portion of its Force. This is the reason why places where they are put to rest become places of pilgrimage for ages to come.

Upstairs, in the farther part of the building overlooking this inner court, are the rooms that were occupied by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Below that part and at the foot of the inner stairway leading to it, is the Mediation Hall. The floors and walls are covered with a marblelike material—how cool and soothing to the feet during the hot summer months! The high ceiling is domed in a special geometrical shape, arching upward and is entirely lined with mirror-like steel sheets, covering a portion of the upper walls also. On certain occasions this entire hall is lined with golden silk, reflecting its glow throughout. The moment I entered here some significances reached my perception. The outer gate... the inner court... the antechamber... the upper chamber and, after I had observed the shining steel-domed Hall of Silence, the description of such a place in *The Mahatma Letters* by A. P. Sinnett, to which the disciple was taken and left to meditate in, came to my mind.

What followed was of an occult nature, a contact was made in an inner way and this Force found here had temporarily allowed me near it on probation, as I later understood. My eventual Darshan<sup>1</sup> with the Mother, I shall understandably not speak of. This is a sacred and secret event. May each soul that ardently seeks for itself, as it must do, find it when its time is right and is called to approach the Path that leads to the feet of the Master of the Inner Being.

The Courtyard itself, small as it may comparatively seem, so limited in space and confined in measure, yet how immense, how illimitable for the souls who come here to receive this Grace of God! A Consciousness is centred here, such as has no bounds—the Force of the Great Beings, Sri Aurobindo the Avatar, and the Mother

<sup>1</sup> Darshan: Vision, seeing the embodiment of the Spiritual Being in the physical or subtle-physical body

the Universal Shakti. How many who come here know them truly? They alone could answer that. But the sun of the Grace shines evenly upon all, only the capacity of their receiving it differs according to their own opening towards it.

To the reader who may not be familiar with these names, a short synopsis: Sri Aurobindo from early youth had several yogic experiences, but it was in India after his return from England that he realised Nirvanic Consciousness and soon afterwards the Cosmic Absolute Brahman. Later, when arrested by the British for patriotic activities and in jail at Alipur, the Lord Krishna appeared to him, outlining his future spiritual work and mission. From here on, he followed only the inner guidance that eventually freed him and led him to Pondicherry. The first meeting between the Mother and himself took place four years later, in 1914. She instantly recognised him as the one who had come to her in her visions since an early age, during her own yogic unfoldment. She had called him Krishna, not knowing who he was. Of this meeting she wrote in her diary, addressing the Supreme Lord: "It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the deepest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is here on earth. His presence is enough to prove that a day shall come when darkness shall be transformed into Light, when Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth." The World War was approaching, she had to leave India after its outbreak, and returned to Sri Aurobindo in 1920, from which time she never left him. Here their joint mission begins to shape. We know the occult import of the conjoined Forces of the Purusha and Prakriti aspects.

Until this stage Sri Aurobindo had not accepted disciples although some had followed him to Pondicherry, but, as knowledge spread of the rise of the new luminary, disciples began to flock to his presence. He wished to retire into the temporary seclusion needed for his inner work and in 1926 he gave sanction to the Mother to create an Ashram and left its entire management to her. It was in the same year on the 24th of November that the Divine Light descended into his physical body and simultaneously it was realized by the Mother also. Sri Aurobindo conducted all his work on the Inner Plane, but expounded his Yogic labours and aims for evolution in his voluminous writings. The sadhaks<sup>1</sup> were allowed to write to him daily if that was necessary for their sadhanas.<sup>2</sup> He replied to each, spending twelve hours a day for this work alone, which in his inexhaustible compassion and patience he considered important for their development. He guided each carefully and his replies constitute three large invaluable volumes called *Letters on Yoga*. The recently published two volumes of Nagin Doshi, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, are a similarly marvellous aid to each seeker. His understanding of the difficulties of human nature, his Godly love and knowledge are reflected in these letters.

It was their joint aim to draw the Supramental Consciousness into their bodies and thereby into the earth atmosphere. But the resistance of the Inconscient Force of earth was immense, and Sri Aurobindo decided, as it was later learned, to withdraw from his body in 1950 and work for this aim from the Subtle-physical

<sup>1</sup> Sadhak—one who practises Yoga.

<sup>2</sup> Sadhana—the process of Yoga.

Plane more effectively. When he had left his body the Mother announced that Sri Aurobindo's Force had passed over into her. She continued her work until the last, fighting the Adverse Forces on the Inner Plane and effecting the transforming process in the Outer.

Sri Aurobindo brought to earth the advent of Supermanhood and laid foundation to the bridge that is eventually to usher in the Supramental descent permanently. Each Avatar effects the spiritual progression of our evolution and embodies the consciousness of the next stage whose base he came to lay.

Three years before his passing, India became independent on his seventy-fifth birthday, August 15th, 1947. And it was six years after his leaving his body that the Supramental Consciousness reached the earth on the 29th of February 1956, as announced by the Mother. "This evening the Divine Presence, concrete and material was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine. As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness, that 'the time has come', and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces. Then the Supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow." A Power was now established in the earth atmosphere and its working upon it is clearly observable from the rapidly altering events in the affairs of the world.

The Mother's energy, her capacity of creation and execution were inexhaustible. She ate little and slept little, drawing her strength from her own inner being. Available to the sadhaks almost all of the time, attending to their needs and that of the entire Ashram constantly, her ever-present Divine Love poured from her like honey. No one, who has seen it, can ever forget her unearthly smile. They were not Gurus in the usual sense, but incarnated embodiments of a Universal Consciousness functioning in two complementary forms.

How can I even attempt to elaborate in this compass the workings of the Mother's Consciousness in the particular Ashram which she created—less still the mighty world-evolving workings of the Force of the Universal Mother, whom she embodied?

This place with all its outward functions was put in motion by her ceaseless Powers working upon it, conjoined with that of Sri Aurobindo's. It is not, as most Ashrams in India, set in a beautiful forest or near hills, cut away from the comings and goings of the world. Quite the contrary: it is placed in the world's midst. It occupies part of a South Indian township, Pondicherry, busy with its commerce and industry, poverty and backwardness, etc. The buildings occupied by the Ashram for its various departments are spread about the town. The Ashram could best be likened to a small suburb. Everybody is occupied in such activities as were appointed for them by the Mother as best suited to their respective sadhanas. Work here is a Yoga. There are small crafts and industries and all incomes derived from these go towards



the maintenance of the Ashram. The laundry, dining room, nursing home, surgery, and such, occupy quite a number of sadhaks. Then there are the printing press, book-shops, art gallery, library and last but not least the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. This centre, spreading through several buildings, holds some 600 students from kindergarten to university level. The teaching staff is international and the subjects are taught in French, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, apart from several languages such as German, Italian, Bengali and Tamil. The Physical Education Department itself occupies acres of space in several areas, including a large modern swimming pool and huge sports grounds for many kinds of sport, gymnastics and athletics. The arts, painting, drawing, dancing, music, singing and theatre works are all performed in a spacious auditorium which is the Ashram Theatre.

All are occupied with one activity or another, but the main occupation goes on within each one, of which no one knows, save the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, who aid and conduct it from the occult plane. This inner contact and its workings upon the individual is different for each, naturally. One could go on endlessly trying to describe in minute detail the life in the Ashram and its outer activities, but would that give an image of its inner content and inner ways?

Four times a year, on certain dates, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gave joint Darshan to all the devotees who came here from far and wide to receive their blessing. Some, after seeing their God-like countenance, could never leave and remained in the Ashram if they were permitted. Even now these days of Darshan are special days of meditation. Four more dates are now added to these, that of Sri Aurobindo's day of leaving his body, and the one when it was laid in the Samadhi, and since 1973 the days of the Mother's departure and her Samadhi-rest.

Days before these events, an uncommonly powerful descent of Force is observable in the atmosphere. Let me attempt to describe it. This descending Force gathers momentum days beforehand, till one feels intoxicated as if having drunk too much Amrita.<sup>1</sup> Visitors from all over India and overseas begin to arrive. The Ashram Courtyard is filled with people seated on grass mats spread around, in deep meditation under the shade of the immense tree hovering like a giant canopy over the Samadhi and the courtyard. The Mother named it "Service Tree", which, when in bloom, spreads a fragrant golden carpet over the ground.

No word is heard, the peace and silence is almost tangible. On the appointed day, from very early morning, devotees begin to go upstairs to visit the room of Sri Aurobindo, or the Mother, as the occasion may be. Their Presence is unmistakable everywhere. The scene is a feast for the eye and the soul.

As a mighty flower-decked throne, the Samadhi appears to float on an ocean of blue, seen through the gossamer play of the burning incense around it. The golden rays of the morning sun shining through it make an unearthly sight. A gentle moving line, as in a celestial scene, files past one by one towards the rooms upstairs. Serene, indrawn faces, and eyes that shine as if lit from within. These, my sisters and brothers

<sup>1</sup> Nectar.

who, like myself, came here to open the flowers of their inner selves to the Light and the Grace that descends here today. Young and old, Eastern and Western, from all over the world, interblend in this majestic procession. To these, God is as real as the rising of the sun. Faces that I already know, and others who come newly from far-away places on each of these occasions—each represents a race, a country's soul from which it has sprung. One feels, now that things are on the move, this line will never end, until all will seek God and their own souls. As so many flowers in a garland, a multi-coloured splendour, they move ever onward. What beauty!

At exactly 10 a.m. three strokes on a gong signal the start of a half-hour meditation, four strokes the end of it. One feels a new meaning descending upon our lives, erasing the tired worn-out yesterday. These here assembled are already part of a slowly unfolding history—the first humble pages written in the sagas of God. Already something new is afoot. This blending of races, colours, cultures, religions, mentalities—all flowing into the one Consciousness which brought them here. Supremely intelligent, that consciousness knows its own plans and designs, and the mode for their execution. Each here is already a portion of a new implantation on earth. Knowingly or not, they carry the golden seed within their bosoms, planted there by the touch of the Grace. One day the seed will bloom and bear fruit, the New will enter into the midst of the Old Creation. The Power of Truth has impregnated it with its own substance—what can stop it from growing and spreading? Its receptacle, for the present, is India. This holy land of the seers, yogis, the greatest of souls who, seen or unseen, hold the balance of this earth and its development in their mighty consciousness. Theirs the Power of the Divine. They, the pillars of the Golden Bridge, that will one day link heaven to earth.

In Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Yoga there is no room for compromise or half-way measures or self-deceit. These may bring on quite a different result than the sadhak could have bargained for. The Force, which he has called to act upon his lower nature to mould and change it, may eject him with a jolt from his imagined throne of conceit and false self-esteem, till the lesson is learnt in this or in another life, and the transforming process may be continued once again. The Integral Yoga, as Sri Aurobindo has termed it, cannot be satisfied with partial victories, but has to aim towards Superhumanhood as the next intermediary stage of being that will lead humanity towards the Supramental Consciousness. The veil of Ignorance must be and will be lifted that separates it from the state of Truth. The energy of the lower nature and of the ego has to be harnessed and transformed, and the Mind and its stuff replaced by Consciousness.

I cannot elaborate on these profundities here, as it is not the subject of this article. Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga* will throw ample light on it for the student, as well as *The Life Divine*, *The Hour of God* (Birth Centenary Edition Volume 17), and *The Future Evolution of Man*.<sup>1</sup> His epic symbolic poem for this entire Cosmic Scheme, called *Savitri*, describes it entirely in detail. It is the longest epic in English,

<sup>1</sup> Compilation from major works.

written in blank verse. His small work, *The Mother*, is invaluable learning for the seeker.

Some may think that living in an Ashram, oriented towards the inner life, means withdrawal from the world. In some ways this may be true, because one no longer partakes in the life of desires which the great schools of learning called "the stage of the householder". They never advised the aspirants to turn to the spiritual life before they had experienced and completed the other first, lest it should pull them back later.

But the spiritual Path is infinitely more arduous, laborious, if more subtly so, than the outer, though it may seem on the surface non-active to the onlooker. There is absolutely no question of withdrawal or non-caring about the affairs of the world. Were this the case, it could not be called spiritual. Just the contrary is the case for those who take their inner stands firmly. They are the ones who bear the brunt of the battle between the clashing forces of Light and Darkness and who willingly accept the blows they may receive thus, being out in front in the field. This is the true self-giving, without regard for self, so that Their Will may be done. At least it is so at this stage of things. Such is the nature and the way of an Ashram.

As I write this, the morning hours play harmonies on the Indian sky above, as like some richly clad enchantress it plays with the heart. My sky now, my land—the land of all homecoming souls. Where sacred words are uttered day in and day out throughout the country, like the rhythmic sound of the waves that kiss the shores of Mother India—there lies the hope of Man's Spiritual Dawn.

GEORGETTE COTY

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## **“OUR LIFE ON THIS EARTH IS A DIVINE POEM THAT WE ARE TRANSLATING IN EARTHLY LANGUAGE”**

THE first thing that strikes us in this memorable statement of Sri Aurobindo is that our life is a poem. A poem is a thing of beauty, it is full of harmony, it springs out of delight, the delight of the poet, who is thrilled by beauty and is in love with it. A poem is not a thing of labour or duty or a burden to carry, but a creation of joy.

So this is the first thing—a reply to the cynics and the materialists, who consider our life an accident, a chance, a discordant haphazard thing without meaning or purpose, or to the scientists who consider it a mechanistic arrangement of blind laws and forces, without a conscient creator.

The second thing that Sri Aurobindo affirms and which reassures us immensely is that the poet is no ordinary poet or dreamer who ‘flies like a lark but catches nothing’, or a vague idealist incapable of realising his dreams or ideals, but the Divine himself. So the poem is not only harmonious, pleasing, delightful but also divine—a thing of deathless beauty, truth, joy, and strength with a marvellous significance. As it is divine it will realise itself.

The third thing is that the poem is not yet fully translated in earthly language. This is why the discords, the tragedies, the apparent meaninglessness. Take Kalidasa’s *Shakuntala*. In Sanskrit it is most beautiful. But supposing it is rendered into English by a poor translator. Suppose further that it is presented to us unfinished. We may find it crude and even purposeless. *Shakuntala* is repudiated by her lover and husband, Dushyanta, and broken-hearted goes to the forest. If it were to finish here, what then?

So the divine poem is yet imperfectly translated by a crude humanity and that also not fully.

But Sri Aurobindo implies that it is in the process of being translated. It is difficult to translate a heavenly thing in the gross stuff of our earth, but it is being done. The translation will become more and more magnificent and faithful when it reaches its perfection and end, our earthly life will put on a divine beauty and harmony—the dream of the divine poet will be fulfilled.

Only Sri Aurobindo could say this! And the beauty of it is that he has demonstrated the truth of what he has said in his own life which was a thing of indescribable beauty and harmony, as much of it as could be brought at the time into the earthly mould. He is still at work translating it and infusing this earth with the heavenly Light, Joy and Loveliness.

JAGADISH KHANNA

# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of October 1978)

## Chapter V

### Descent into the Inconscient

3 (Contd.)

THERE are times in which no one understands you. When your soul yearns for the joy of true love you are treated as an idiot.

Three days before being packed off to the Mental Hospital, once at dead of night while fast asleep I dreamt that slowly from the feet upward the body was growing numb and cold and seemed to turn into sand. My feeling at the time was that I had sunk and my body had been turning into earth. When this process reached the throat and was about to come to the head, a cry rang out, 'O Lord, the earth cries, 'Manifest Thyself'.' The cry was loud and persistent. The whole house rushed in, a doctor was called. He took the cry for a symptom of madness.

Another remarkable experience was there from which it can be inferred that "Though Hell claimed rule, the Spirit still had power" *Savitri*, 2, VII).

Pondering over the Gita, my mind never received any impression from the sloka कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वश (2. 58), "Who draws away the senses from the object of sense, as the tortoise draws in his limbs into his shell", yet I had a very vivid experience of that aphorism.

It was the day when the Mother was to appear at the balcony. The sky was thick with clouds. It was slowly, silently drizzling as if the heavens were pouring drops of nectar to mark their joy at the Mother's appearance. All the sadhaks were rushing to share in the joy. I was the only one confined to bed. Suddenly the consciousness turned within, I began to draw my legs up to the chest, pressing them more and more against it and thrusting my head in between the knees. Gradually the whole consciousness got focused on withdrawing itself inward bit by bit, and in this withdrawal-gesture the limbs of the body also participated. I shrank almost into a bundle—*kurma iva*, tortoise-like, as said in the Gita, all-in-drawn and motionless. When the process of withdrawal was complete and no further movement was possible the "body's wall" gave way, and there gleamed a white light in the central part of the heart.

Just when the consciousness was going to take a plunge, the breathing returned in a very feeble way and the body began to expand. With awareness recovered, I found that my clothes, the wrapper, were all wet with perspiration as if I had taken a dip in a tank though it was daybreak and the weather was cool due to the rains.

By the way, the time arrived to welcome the advent of the year 1959. One and

all stood in the queue for their turn to receive the New Year Calender from the Mother. It is strange that in the midst of those hundreds the Mother remembered that I could not avail myself of the opportunity, and sent a Calender for me. Overwhelmed, the moment I placed the calender on my bosom I felt the soft and sweet touch of her lotus palm on my head.

Since 1940 I had been arranging flowers for the 1st of every month. Word was sent to me that the Mother would appear on the prosperity day of February 1, 1959. That meant I should arrange flowers for her distribution.

A few days earlier I had been lying in bed and musing that this time I would worship the Mother with 5800 flowers as She would be appearing for the first time after December 8, 1958 and particularly as it would be the completion of my fifty-eighth year.

But when the news was conveyed to me I was completely broken. From that broken heart rose a dying voice, "Mother! I have been trodden underfoot, mowed down mercilessly." I was compelled to adore the feet that trampled me. Some hints can be gathered from these lines about a hostile Force:

Often the pilgrim on the Eternal's road  
 .....wandering alone,  
 Or lost in deserts where no path is seen,  
 Falls overpowered by her lion leap,  
 A conquered captive under her dreadful paws. (*Savitri*, I, p. 204)

Next morning I lay as good as dead, mouth open, eyes still, limbs motionless, body immobile and stone-cold. A bare thread of consciousness was there at the crown of the head which saw and remembered the scene. I had not the least trace in my memory of how this had happened.

This is the tragedy of the inner death  
 When forfeited is the divine element  
 And only a mind and body live to die. (*Ibid.*)

All this was the price I had to pay for losing the inner balance as well as the contact with the Mother.

The price would not have been so heavy had I embarked upon the voyage after closing up various holes in my ship. I suffered because I was not fully equipped, nor alert. If I could have kept myself well fortified, "the evil that rises from the gulf" would hardly have had the chance to hit me so hard.

The following may be linked up with the above to complete the episode:

Once my witness consciousness saw from a distance that this body had become a piece of stone and looked like a statue of white marble, and was thrown into a dust-bin in front of the Ashram. People were spitting upon it in contempt and ridicule.

Next I saw that my wife was pleading for me: "He has never been insincere; why is he treated this way?"

The weaknesses of my nature were a splendid opportunity for the opposing forces. This I could understand. But what made them ridicule me with the word 'transformation' although I never entertained any longing for transformation? My being shrank even to offer the flower to which the Mother had given that name. Yet in the midst of such a terrible scene and such shocking experiences in that delicate state of my nerves I had several taunting remarks about transformation. Those were the days when I stood like a "trembling prey" before the altar. Let me cite an instance:

On my return journey from Shillong to Lucknow, suddenly I saw myself thrown beneath a running train. Screaming helplessly I lay looking at the wheels of the train passing over my left thigh. I was feeling the agony inwardly as one feels in the physical body. The whole scene is still fresh in my memory. I remember having heard a voice in the air with an ironical twist: "Transformation of the right thigh is done, now comes the turn of the left."

To go back to other occurrences of my stay in the hospital. The day I was shifted to the special ward something unthought of happened. A dark-complexioned youth came seeking a job and he was engaged as my attendant. This was a special case, because outsiders are as a rule not allowed to attend on an indoor patient. He proved to be a Godsend.

On the third day, for the purposes of various examinations, I was taken in the hospital bus to the General Hospital. The boy too was sent along with me. When I saw odd-looking faces, deformed bodies, dirty and stinking figures, I got upset. Of a sudden I heard "a still small voice": "*Do not speak a word, simply follow the boy.*" From then on I blindly followed him and he took far better care of me than a nurse.

Another thing to be noted: from that very day my "useless talking" stopped altogether. This taxed the brain very much. "Was I the same person who had talked so freely with the doctor the other day?" I wondered.

In the hospital when I was subjected to a rigorous examination and a barrage of questions, I kept mum, simply turning to the boy. The doctors are said to have reported: "This is a peculiar kind of patient: he seems to understand everything but does not utter a word."

Then I was taken to the big operation-theatre. I got awfully frightened.

While awaiting my turn outside, there flashed before my open eyes the benign figure of Mother Durga in the midst of a bright white light. At once I became calm and collected.

(The same flash and figure and white light blessed my vision some days afterwards just as the Mother appeared on the balcony.)

When I was asked to go into the operation-theatre I held the boy by the hand and insisted that he should be with me and not the hospital ward. This offended the

latter and he took revenge by harassing me in several ways but I refused to yield.

One more important event that I have to relate is so startling that I am doubtful about its being accepted as true, but what I relate is for me fact not fiction. The mystery cannot be unravelled by a surface reading, for an unseen power was at work.

When I became aware that I was in the hospital, I refused to take anything of the hospital food. Then came to my ears a sonorous voice:

“Simply move your mouth and do nothing more.” Following this command I found that the food did not pass down the throat but disappeared of itself mysteriously after a little chewing. I still remember what I did and how but at the time there appeared nothing unusual about it. I realised the unusualness long after my recovery.

As I was obeying the boy blindly, perhaps the hospital authorities wanted to put me to the test of serving me with bazar stuff, hot with red pepper which almost burned my tongue as I began to swallow it. But there was no actual swallowing. The wonder of wonders was that, as in the preceding instance, not a bit passed down the throat. My will not to take hospital food stood intact.

On the fourth day I seemed to have returned to a bit of normalcy. Early in the morning there rang a celestial voice in my ears: “Now I leave you, obey the doctor.” The voice acted so powerfully that thenceforth I never disobeyed the doctor.

As long as I was in the hospital, the day passed in the company of the boy though we hardly exchanged words. He looked to my needs so well that I had not to tell him anything. But at night I was left to row my boat all alone. The effect of the sleeping mixture lasted till midnight; after that, I could be at ease neither in bed nor on my legs. Movement might help to slip me into sleep, hence I would go on taking rounds with the pace of a snail in the little space by the cot, or stand at the window. Neither of the two acts could I do for more than five minutes, so I kept on repeating the same process all through the night—“Kneeling one must cross hard-hearted stony courts”—(*Savitri*, I, VII)—till the boy came at 7 a.m and unlocked the thick iron-barred doors. After he gave me a hot bath, I took a chair and mustering, as much as I could, my scattered strength, chanted like a Vedic *mantra* the following lines from *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo:

“And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible.”

These words appeared like a healing balm to my bleeding wounds and I drew great solace from repeating them. Daily I recited the same lines inwardly along with these:

“Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo's Centenary Vol. 25, p. 10.



How could the "dragon power" lurking in the depths tolerate what I was doing? My procedure continued till the arms were injected with medicines. Thereafter I completely lost the capacity to read.

The forces thought they had won the battle. Little did they know that "the spirit rises mightier by defeat":

In our defeated hearts God's strength survives  
And victory's star still lights our desperate road.

*(To be continued)*

## *Glimpses of The Mother's Life*

Compiled by *Nilima*

with the help of *Shraddhavan*

Edited by *K. D. Sethna*

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# THE IMAGE OF MAN

## HIS FOUR FACETS

(Continued from the issue of October 1978)

### Facet VI: The Spiritual Personality

(2)

SATYAVAN in Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* reveals another aspect of the spiritual personality than the one in *The Rishi*. In the latter the fabric of legend is meagre except that the image of the chief character is a compound portrait of the Vedic seer and Sri Aurobindo himself. In *Savitri* the image has a façade of the legend which is both symbolic and spiritual. We are not informed about Satyavan as a man, his nature, his aspirations and his inner development in the myth, and we cannot expect this too, for then the myth would cease to be a myth and turn into a document of a true human person. Sri Aurobindo opens the curtain and lets us have a glimpse of the man as such not perhaps in the romantic or realistic sense but in the true spiritual aspect.

Being a spiritual image does not necessarily imply a false or utopian picture, for so-called realism as such throws a garish light on man's trivial, ugly sensational and external nature which in itself is not revelatory of man's truer and deeper self. I mean man's baser nature is not all he is nor can it serve as a dependable introduction to him. More true, more valid are his spiritual side, his higher calling, his nobler leanings.

Further, *Savitri* is an epic of consciousness, of inner truths and spiritual deeds. Here those externalities are there which are reflections of the inner truths. The poem does not attempt to interpret subtler realities from the faulty, unsure data of the material existence as does the common man. *Savitri* is an epic of the future, and Satyavan comes in the garb of a legend as the hero of the days to be.

Essentially the Rishi and Satyavan are identical. The Rishi is an adventurer of inner paths, a wayfarer in the realms of consciousness. Satyavan too is the same. But only up to here the identity extends. The Rishi's aim is to call down a greater light and not only establish it in the earth-consciousness but raise up, by degrees, the whole humanity to this level. The first projection of this aim is his meeting Manu and making Manu his effective instrument. In Satyavan, the heroic aspect of the wayfaring is absent. Like Ashwapathy in Book II, he has traversed the worlds, acquired the various experiences of the aspects of the Spirit as manifest in nature and made himself ready spiritually and psychologically for the coming of Savitri, which crowns his existence. To him, she is not a lover, a royal person or even an ideal mate, but the missing reality that renders valid and harmonises the opposites of Existence and Truth.

The very fact that he is aware and recognises this great truth makes him worthy of Savitri and, what is more, puts him at the same high level as she.

This is the aspect of spiritual consanguinity. There are other aspects too of soul-identity, of emotional equality and life-affinity which bring the pair together. Hence the poem transcends the romantic form and becomes an epic of spiritual significance.

Satyavan offers us a fourfold aspect in the presentation of spiritual realities. There are two in front, apparent, and two unseen, yet equally valid and concrete.

Externally he is the son of the king of Salwa, Dyumatsena. He does not regret his lot or fate but makes this banishment the sign of a unique privilege, because it opens a glad untarnished communion with Nature and consequently a communion with his deeper self.

Savitri meets him in her wandering which is her soul-quest, and, finding him to be her one and true mate, weds him in the teeth of Narad's prophecy that Satyavan's life is only for the span of one more year.

This year is for Savitri an occasion for great joy and a great spiritual adventure, her self-discovery as the World-Mother.

Satyavan dies but Savitri does not abandon his soul and pursues the Lord of Death in spite of the hazards and perils and finally annihilates Death, revealing herself as the great Mother.

As the supreme test and the last lap of her adventure, which is really the typical Aurobindonian touch, comes the golden veil which conceals Satyavan from Savitri. In front now stands, instead of Death, a luminous secret Godhead questioning her, testing her, offering her boons and finally pronouncing that it was His own fiat, the supreme fiat, that Savitri was executing. Savitri, He said, was His voice, His love, His embodiment of a new creation.

Both she and Satyavan return to earth and are again human entities but with a difference. In the passage of meeting with Death, Savitri has known herself, Satyavan too has become aware of her divinity once more with a singular intensity.

This is the theme of the epic. This is the external body. In its essential and inner aspect, both are spiritual personalities, sent down with a mission: that of opening the way to a new race of men, a new consciousness to be established on earth. The meeting with and the annihilating of Death is the vital pivot, not a mere granting of a new life to Satyavan, the husband, as in the myth but the rescuing of the soul from the clutches of Ignorance and of Death which in its essential aspect is nothing of the universal or transcendental Power, but a physical force, a necessary method, a way of Nature in its passage to physical immortality.

Satyavan is the human soul rescued from the grim tentacles of Ignorance and, by surmounting them Savitri, makes the earth ready for a larger manifestation.

In the myth, the return of Satyavan is a miracle accredited to the ethical purity of Savitri. But a mere moral quality cannot sway the vast universal force of Death. That is, we are shown the wizardry, but not the true reason, the *raison d'être*, of this miracle. But in *Savitri* we walk behind the scene of the drama, confront the mar-

vellous tides of events that made possible the advent of Savitri as the great World-Mother, feel the texture of the panorama that constitutes this universe and lastly see the consequence of this advent. Then the conquest of Death appears not as a neo-romantic feat, but something natural and inevitable, something in the very scheme of things, the fiat of the Supreme.

Coming to the poem itself, Satyavan appeared to Savitri on his first appearance thus:

As might a soul on Nature's background limned  
Stand out for a moment in a house of dream  
Created by the ardent breath of life,  
So he appeared against the forest verge  
Inset twixt green relief and golden ray.  
As if a weapon of the living light  
Erect and lofty like a spear of God  
His figure led the splendour of the morn.

(Sri Aurobindo's Centenary Ed., Vol. 29, p.393)

The image outlined is essentially of spiritual beauty wedded to power and sweetness, something divine and nevertheless unmistakably human—a new Aurobindonian hero, not like the other heroes he created in the past: Ruru, Pururavas, Eric, Perseus, Vutsa Udayana or Bajji Prabhu. The earlier heroes were truly romantic, but here Satyavan transcends the romantic horizon and leaps into something truly ideal, a synthesis of the human and the divine.

This image is, to describe it in cinematographic terms, a “long shot”, an overall and general impression.

Coming down to a “close-up”, we find:

A tablet of young wisdom was his brow,  
Freedom's imperious beauty curved his limbs,  
The joy of life was on his open face.  
His look was a wide day-break of the gods.  
His head was a youthful Rishi's touched with light.  
His body was a lover's and a king's. (Ibid.)

The seven aspects described here are seven aspects of psychological truths which lend perfection to a spiritual personality.

The first is wisdom which crowns his forehead, instead of the clouded or groping intellect of the common man. Here all is revealed, seized and made one with his consciousness. This at once lifts up Satyavan to the status of a god.

The next is freedom, freedom from the knots of desires, hungers, hopes and fears that build up the complex web of human character. It is the freedom of the soul. Freedom has another implication here—that of the unbound spirit of the natural man,

close to nature, closer to the things of the spirit, and closest to God.

With freedom emerges another element, the joy to live, to be amid nature's primal splendour as against the hampered limiting joys as a citizen, a courtier and a prince. This is youth's dash and exuberance that is natural to life.

The fourth throws open the gates to Satyavan's true nature. His look is the clear dawn of the gods as against the clouded twilight that is the vision of men. His look tears apart the veil of ignorance and ushers in the clear light of wisdom. He gazes straight into the heart of things instead of being deluded by appearances. This is the vision of the soul.

The fifth is a continuation of the first quality—wisdom, a storehouse of knowledge, illumination from above. It was incarnate wisdom, without any aspect of senility, which we usually associate with knowledge, thus suggesting a knowledge by identity rather than by experience and age.

Coming down to the body itself, we are offered a dual image. The lover's body suggests a body of beauty, with the passion of youth and the freshness of untarnished emotions. It is a pedestal for the richness and plenitude that love brings, a repository of romance and idealism.

The body of the king suggests a body of dignity, power, mastery and sovereignty. As a rule a lover is never royal or sovereign in personality. But when this fusion occurs there is a marvel, a marvel of reconciliation of the opposites, making the lover assume a new status of dignity and sovereignty wedded to sweetness and charm.

There are two other implied significances. To Savitri, he was the lover on the one hand, a royal possessor of what she possessed and was. On the other hand she was his equal and even greater than he.

Savitri saw in him a vastness and light,  
A brother to the sunshine and the sky. *(Ibid.)*

After outlining his external nature, Sri Aurobindo reveals that he was,

A Veda-knower of the unwritten book  
Perusing the mystic scripture of her forms. *(Ibid.)*

Again the implication of the Rishi emerges with a greater clarity. Veda stands for the book of spiritual and occult knowledge, knowledge of the inner worlds, realities, forces both named and unnamed that stand behind or above the projected actualities of matter, life and thought. This book Satyavan has read and is a possessor of the great wisdom, a *Vedajña*.

To Savitri he presents:

A symbol figure standing mid earth's scenes,  
A king of life outlined in delicate air. *(Ibid., p.395)*

He was the symbol of all that Nature aspired to and became: he was the apex of life. The recognition was spontaneous; hence

Her soul flung wide its doors to this new sun. (Ibid.)

Was Sri Aurobindo then going to repeat in romantic approach the eternal theme of love between man and woman?

Love between man and woman is there, no doubt. But this love and its two instruments both transcend the commonality and become vehicles of a higher reality, the world of the mother and the earth-soul and uniting them is the Divine Love. Again, the thing is far from abstract, the persons depicted are living, articulate and tangible beings, and not just allegorical personalities as those of Spenser's *Faery Queane* or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Sri Aurobindo here transcends, I repeat, the lower, common or trivial human emotions, but without lessening the intensity, the vibrancy that are generally associated with an inherent grossness.

Does he depict some ideal or even impossible state? On the contrary, the state is as real and tangible as anything we know, but it belongs to another plane of consciousness, another dimension of nature.

When Satyavan and Savitri meet,

All in a moment was surprised and seized,  
All in unconscious ecstasy lain wrapped  
Or under imagination's coloured lids  
Held up in a large mirror-air of dream,  
Broke forth in flame to recreate the world,  
And in that flame to new things she was born. (Ibid., p.395)

As a result,

An alchemy worked, the transmutation came;  
The missioned face had wrought the master's spell. (Ibid.)

And, when Satyavan saw Savitri,

He turned to the vision like a sea to the moon  
And suffered a dream of beauty and of change,  
Discovered the aureole around a mortal's head,  
Adored a new divinity in things. (Ibid., p.395)

Then Savitri suddenly realised that this meeting was not an accident; it was pre-planned by some unseen master-dramatist. Therefore this was only a continuation

of the past life and relationship. Thus:

Her inner vision still remembering knew  
 A forehead that wore the crown of all her past,  
 Two eyes her constant and eternal stars,  
 Comrade and sovereign eyes that claimed her soul,  
 Lids known through many lives, large frames of love. (*Ibid.*)

In Satyavan it awoke a nameless, occult response, as if here were a secret call and his secret answer:

His passion surged a wave from fathomless deeps;  
 It leapt to earth from far forgotten heights,  
 But kept its nature of infinity. (*Ibid.*, p.397)

A veil was rent from behind. But on the human scene there yet lurked a mist of unknowing. Satyavan, as an introduction of himself, does not speak of his human identity, but unfolds his experiences of Nature and of God.

He then invites her to descend from her chariot and come to his father's "creep-ered hermitage".

Savitri, thrilled by his voice, does so and answers Satyavan's query in a musing tone,

I am Savitri,  
 Princess of Madra. Who art thou? What name  
 Musical on earth expresses thee to mien? (*Ibid.*, p.402)

Mark the turn of language: she is seeking only his external name, and his inner recognition, which she is already aware of and is in communion with.

Introducing himself in relation to Dyumatsena, Satyavan says:

Son of that king I, Satyavan, have lived  
 Contented, for not yet of thee aware,  
 In my high peopled loneliness of spirit  
 And this huge vital murmur kin to me,  
 Nursed by the vastness, pupil of solitude. (*Ibid.*, p.403)

He does not regret his father's banishment or his deprivation of the luxury, ease, fame and pomp due to a prince. A born yogi, his life is a preparation of sharing his existence with Savitri. Instead, he is glad of his being on the bosom of Nature, who

came to her recovered child;  
 I reigned in a kingdom of a nobler kind

Than men can build upon dull Matter's soil;  
 I met the frankness of the primal earth,  
 I enjoyed the intimacy of infant God. (*Ibid.*, p.403)

Then he gives a description of Nature, all viewed through the mystic gaze of the awakened seer. Even the trivial things like the spotted deer, the king-fisher, the swan, the trembling of leaves—all these:

Lived on the tablet of my inner sight, (*Ibid.*, p.405)

and the butterflies, the long-bills and the peacocks

Painted my memory like a frescoed wall. (*Ibid.*)

Moreover he turned to the inner worlds, to subtler realities. He expresses his anguish that his profounder aspiration is not fulfilled although

I felt a covert touch, I heard a call,  
 But could not clasp the body of my God  
 Or hold between my hands the World-Mother's feet. (*Ibid.*)

This was the pinnacle of his quest. For already, he had experienced floods of universal nature invade him and had felt all things and people as portions of the One Reality, the presence of the One in All. Yet there was something missing,

And Matter still slept empty of its Lord, (*Ibid.*)

Coming face to face with Savitri, there came a sudden revelation. He remembered the past when, although

The spirit was saved, the body lost and mute  
 Lived still with Death and ancient Ignorance. (*Ibid.*, p.405-6)

With her arrival there was a difference:

But thou hast come and all will surely change:  
 I shall feel the World-Mother in thy golden limbs  
 And hear her wisdom in thy sacred voice. (*Ibid.*, p.406)

This is both prescience and prophecy. The love-idyll is transmuted to an epic of godhead and soul, a stirring drama of powers unimaginable on earth.

Though Satyavan is externally unaware of the fact that he has only a year to live



after the nuptials, prescience tells him that,

My body like my spirit shall be free;  
It shall escape from Death and Ignorance. (*Ibid.*)

But he is aware, as he has already confessed, that there was something missing in all his spiritual experiences. There was a crucial enigma that he could not solve. In other words:

I looked upon the world and missed the Self,  
And when I found the Self, I lost the world. (*Ibid.*, p.407)

This riddle is a primal one and has vexed philosophers, thinkers and yogis since man outgrew animality. Different schools came into being, the chief of which are hedonism, idealism, nihilism and materialism, as a result. Satyavan too faces this riddle as a seeker. He is a man of realisation, yet to him as well the solution remained as elusive as ever. He has missed

...the body of God,  
The link of the finite with the Infinite. (*Ibid.*, p.408)

Meeting Savitri he realises that here was his goal, his spiritual destination, the one who would solve his inner and external problems; he exclaims:

But now the gold link comes to me with thy feet  
And His gold sun has shone on me from thy face. (*Ibid.*)

His whole existence undergoes a subtle change. He invites her:

O my bright beauty's princess, Savitri,  
By my delight and thy own joy compelled  
Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine. (*Ibid.*)

*(To be concluded)*

ROMEN

## THIS TIME

IT WAS an unknown ethereal, embalming garden. Dew-drenched flowers smiled mysteriously at me, the green carpet twinkled with vernal showers, and the rainbow-colour butterflies fluttered in the air. A blue soothing light enveloped the garden. Everything around me seemed to announce someone's imminent arrival.

A soft but powerful voice whispered into my ears, "Get ready! get ready! She will come! Don't miss Her this time. Wash, scrub and polish and empty your innermost chamber, to receive Her. Purify yourself in the flames of Truth, Light and Love. All will then scintillate in Her Glory and Presence. The golden hour is nearing. Hurry up." I felt that even the earth throbbed with ecstasy.

Thinking over what to tell Her, I said to myself, "I will tell Her, 'I will not let you go this time. This time I shall put the guards of Truth, Love, Light and Beauty to imprison you in my chamber. Don't you run away, leaving me behind in the chasm of darkness of this world. Do break down the doors of my little temple, and transform it into a gateless, vast space replete with your ever-flowing Presence and Love. I shall offer my lust, jealousy, hatred and my insincerities at your Lotus Feet. Do crush them, Mother dear, and please place your Divine Feet on my heart.'"

Suddenly my chain of thoughts was interrupted. I saw two tiny delicate golden feet descending in the hushed silence of the garden. Then I perceived the sweet Mother, radiating with celestial golden light. She wore a white immaculate sari. She smiled affectionately at me and I was overwhelmed by Her Presence. A sublime bliss pervaded my sanctuary and filled it with pure love. I remained mute and the golden gates of my temple opened wide for Her. All my thoughts were lost in Her immortal smile.

Then I saw a golden flame blazing before me. Gradually it reduced to a little steady beacon of love and light and merged into my breast. I put my hand on my breast in order to touch the flame, but it was too swift. I felt Her Love streaming out with golden light into every nerve and vein of mine.

A soft voice within said, "My child, I am here, constantly with you. Why do you look outside for me? Be sincere and surrender yourself to me." I turned within and saw Her smiling ever lovingly at me.

But Oh God! as I opened my eyes to the dark physical world, I could perceive Her no more. I can always see Her when I shut my eyes away from this obscure world of sorrows and open them to that inner immortal call of Love and Light.

This reminds me of some of the Mother's golden words:

"Go deep inside the temple and you will find me there."

UMA JOSHI

# THE MARRIAGE OF SUNDARAMURTI

*(Continued from the issue of October 1978)*

4

THE wedding hall in which they were received  
Adjoined the ancient temple's central shrine.  
At the door a pair of lopped banana trees  
Stood, bunches of green fruit and purple flowers,  
Tokens of spring's fertility, dangling down.  
Passing beneath a woven palm-frond wreath,  
The bridegroom's party entered the spacious hall.  
It was illuminated by a hundred lamps  
And everywhere the smoke of incense swirled.  
They were greeted by the father of the bride.  
The good Sadangali Shivasharyar  
Made ostentatious reverence to the king,  
Who gave such salutations in return  
As were due a member of the priestly caste.  
The festive preparations then began:  
The men went to the barber to be shaved,  
The women to their gossip and their work,  
For in the kitchen a gigantic feast  
Was being prepared: white rice and dal and ghee  
And breads and cunningly spiced vegetables,  
That, as they sizzled in the pungent oil,  
Gave off a symphony of celestial smells.  
Not only the invited wedding guests  
But all the Brahmuns in the neighbourhood  
And more from miles away were being fed  
At the expense of the father of Pavai.  
She at the moment was at her toilette.  
Surrounded by her envious friends, she sat  
On a verandah high above the street,  
Listening to the music of the shenais  
And mridangams being played on the temple stairs.  
Her eyes with shimmering black collyrium  
Were being made longer and sublimely curved,  
As her hair, half-woven into lustrous braids,  
Was piled atop her regal head to bear  
A gold tiara, but allowed to fall

Behind in silky long luxurious waves.  
 A mass of golden necklaces adorned  
 The sweetness of her undeveloped breast  
 And all the chains were heavy with gems and pearls.  
 Inlaid gold were the bangles on her arms  
 And gold the rings that sparkled upon her hands  
 And dangled brightly from her ears and nose.  
 One but could think to see her seated there  
 That all the riches of Golconda's mines  
 Had been hammered into ornaments for Pavai.  
 For golden was the girdle that from her waist  
 Hung over her robe of silk lamé, whose folds  
 Delightfully half-covered and half-showed  
 Her slender hips and pretty, girlish legs  
 And, stopping just short of the floor, revealed  
 A pair of anklets that shone glimmeringly  
 Above her tiny feet stained red with lac.  
 She laughed in protest at her girlfriends' jibes.  
 Behind, her mother looked on wonderingly.

The bridegroom meanwhile in another place  
 Was being no less sumptuously arrayed.  
 A cloth of white embroidered silk left bare  
 A body that outshone its ornaments:  
 A torso's grace expanding lionlike  
 Into broad shoulders that bore up with pride  
 A head that was a warrior's and king's—  
 All culminated and epitomised  
 By the unearthly beauty of his face.  
 It was as delicate as any girl's,  
 As a saint's, as undisfigured by desire,  
 But all the titan's strength was latent there  
 Behind the careless laughter of a child.  
 The pre-established hour was now at hand,  
 And as the bridegroom placed the crimson mark  
 Between his brows, he felt that it was he  
 Who was the virgin whose excited hands  
 Were adorning her for her beloved lord—  
 A moment's fancy. Into the hall he strode  
 And took his place upon the bridal seat.  
 Soon he was joined by a demure Pavai,  
 Her gaze cast down, as he with steady eyes  
 Devoured her beauty. Keenly fragrant white

Star-jasmine wreaths were plaited through her hair  
And her already necklace-covered breast  
Was heaped with blossoms: bright orange marigolds  
And cream and yellow and white chrysanthemums,  
All interwoven with auspicious greens,  
And from the longest garland, hanging down  
Below her waist, was a great crimson rose.  
He saw in her the future of his seed.  
“My wife, my children’s mother, you will bear  
Me strong sons to perform the ancient rites,  
Bringing refreshment to my ancestors  
Who are in heaven, as the law requires,  
And bringing earthly joy to me: red lips  
To kiss and limbs to fondle and young hands  
For me to lead upon the ancient way,  
The way of Shiva, and when I depart,  
To take from me my sceptre and my throne”:  
Such thoughts possessed him as insatiably  
He gazed upon her beauty. Now the fire  
Was kindled, and its tongues, libation-fed,  
Rose crackling upwards as the summoning priest  
Intoned the Veda’s timeless litany.  
The hall with an expectant atmosphere  
Was silently surcharged, as if the Gods  
Had come to join the deity of Flame  
As witnesses of the momentous act.  
The ritual presentation of the bride  
Was then performed and the girl’s hand was placed  
In Sundaramurti’s. Mute, amazed, he watched  
Uncommon beats of ordinary time  
Assume a greatening portentousness  
As the unique and irreversible  
Event approached. Now nothing else remained  
But the performance of the final rites—  
The circumambulation of the fire,  
The mantras and the seven sacred steps—  
And Pavai would be his eternally.  
Almost in ecstasy the hierophant  
From tranced interior communion turned  
To the awaiting pair—then suddenly  
A rumbling at the far end of the hall  
Becoming more disturbingly distinct

As time flowed on, was heard: "No, no, not now,  
The feast is afterwards": the jarring voice,  
Of the porter then took on an angry tone:  
"Not now, I said. You, stop him! Don't let him in!"  
The sounds of a scuffle and loud voices broke  
The concentrated atmosphere. The boy,  
His bride's pained eyes upon him, looking up,  
Saw, pushing through the dense excited crowd,  
Like a wax moth entering a maddened hive,  
The silhouette of an intruding form  
And an icy shiver shuddered down his spine.  
It was a sadhu. In one hand he held  
A trishul, whose metallic clank was heard  
Each time it struck against the floor's hard stone  
With every step he took across the hall.  
A rag around his loins was all he wore  
And the vessel he carried in his gnarled left hand,  
A begging bowl that once was a human skull,  
Completed his possessions. Unopposed,  
He strode with steady purpose till he stood  
Before the richly decorated seat  
Where, Sundaramurti sat with his Pavai.  
The firelight fell upon his face; the boy  
Could now see clearly. Like an image of stone  
Whose features had been carved inalterably,  
His lips and brow were set in marble strength.  
A timeless beauty of immortal calm  
Transfigured the rough contours of his face.  
The eyes were dark unsoundable wells of power  
No surface scintillation could disturb,  
As if through them the eternal watched the world.  
The guests stood hypnotised; none dared to speak.  
The priest looked helplessly from side to side.  
The king first broke the silence: "Welcome, friend,  
Auspicious is your coming, for today  
Two votaries of Shiva are to be wed.  
Please sit and with your holy presence bless  
This sacrament and, when the ritual  
Has been accomplished, join us at our feast."  
A murmur of approval filled the hall,  
The sadhu stood unmoving. Then he turned  
His penetrating eyes upon the king:

"I will not witness your illegal rite  
 Nor with your unclean food pollute my lips,"  
 He snarled, "I did not come to glut myself,  
 But to claim my property. This boy is mine."  
 Sundarar shrank beneath the fearful gaze  
 That had left Narasingha and was fixed on him.  
 A puzzled silence followed. Then the king  
 Asked quietly, "What do you mean, my friend?"  
 "I mean just what I say. He is my slave,  
 And so cannot be wed. The proof is here,"  
 Then, drawing out from his cloth a cajan leaf  
 On which some granthic letters had been scratched,  
 He read aloud: "*I, Umapati, son  
 Of Lingaswami, Brahmin of Arur,  
 Do on this day submit and dedicate  
 Myself and all my lawful progeny  
 Forever as hereditary slaves  
 To the Brahmin of Tiruvenainallur.*"  
 This Umapati fathered," the man went on,  
 "Sadaiyanar, the father of this boy,  
 Who now has come of age—a pretty child—  
 The time has come for me to collect my dues."  
 An excited undertone at this arose,  
 Which swelled into an uproar as Sundarar,  
 Impelled by the anguished eyes of his Pavaï,  
 Which filled him with a power not his own,  
 Leaped down, his face flushed, from the bridal seat,  
 Crying aloud, "What, have you all gone mad  
 To give a hearing to this lunatic?  
 When was a Brahmin ever a Brahmin's slave?  
 As for this, this so-called deed, a forgery  
 Not worth examination, let the fire  
 Receive it as an offering." Violently  
 He snatched away the palm-leaf document  
 And, casting it into the flame's voracious mouth,  
 He mounted again the platform. Undisturbed  
 The sadhu answered, "Call me, if you wish,  
 A madman, I have made a lawful claim,  
 Which cannot thus be settled, but must be  
 Adjudicated by the village court."  
 After brief parley with his counsellors  
 The king announced, "In order to take away

All shadow of question from this sacrament,  
 The ceremony is postponed until  
 This suit, advanced inopportunately by  
 The Brahmin of Tiruvenaimallur,  
 Has been decided by the panchayet."  
 The council members sat. "What evidence  
 Have you to support your claim?" they asked the man,  
 "Your deed has turned to ashes." "I would be  
 A madman indeed," he cried, with a shrill laugh,  
 To carry such a precious document  
 Tied up in the loose end of my loin cloth. Fools!  
 The copy alone has been destroyed. Behold  
 The signed original." In his hand, which seemed  
 To make a conjuring gesture, there appeared  
 A lettered palm-leaf, which he placed before  
 The astonished jurymen. The oldest there,  
 Balsubramaniam of Tirunallur,  
 Examining it, declared, "I know this hand.  
 It is Umapati's, who was for years  
 My neighbor and friend. The signature is good."  
 Then, after consulting with the rest, he said,  
 "We rule in the claimant's favour unanimously.  
 The wedding cannot be held, the boy must be  
 Surrendered as hereditary slave  
 To the Brahmin of Tiruvenaimallur."  
 The madman's hideous laughter filled the hall  
 As, breaking through the crowd, he seized the wrist  
 Of Sundaramurti in his iron grip.  
 He, at the painful touch, rose like one struck  
 By zigzag lightning, crying, "It is not true.  
 I am a Brahmin. It is my wedding day.  
 Let go of me." The grip grew tighter still.  
 He turned to the king. Narasingha, helpless, smiled.  
 He turned to Sadangali, saying, "Your daughter is mine.  
 The arrangements..." But the merchant Brahmin raised  
 A pudgy, ring-encumbered, pointing hand  
 Accusingly and sputtered from quivering jowls:  
 "Is yours? My daughter is yours? I gave my child  
 To a prince, a Brahmin's son, but now we find  
 That you are not what you appear to be.  
 Nambi Arurar indeed! You are no more  
 Than the bondsman of a filthy pariah



Who claims to be a Brahmin—but no string  
Can make this outcaste other than what he is.  
The ritual is invalid. I take back  
The dowry; I never gave it anyway.  
No daughter of mine will ever marry a slave.”  
Ashamed, indignant, turning back to his bride,  
Sundarar whispered softly, “Still, Pavai,  
Although my kin and neighbours and false friends  
Repudiate me in my hour of trial,  
Still you could assuage the wounds and make all well.”  
But Pavai gave no answer; she veiled her face.  
The adoring eyes were gone, the lips were hard.  
“All abandon you but me,” the madman cried,  
As he gave a jerk to Sundarar’s captive wrist,  
“Now come along, boy, we’ve got a long way to go  
And it’s getting dark.” “Where are you taking me?”  
The madman stopped short. “Why, to your new home:  
The temple of Tiruvenainallur.”  
The people gasped. It was a hundred years  
Since lawful ritual had been performed  
In that deserted temple and no man  
Had entered its unconsecrated shrine  
For generations, since it had been defiled  
By the unspeakable illicit rites  
Of a thaumaturgic worshipper of Power.  
The only devotees who frequented  
That temple were pramathas, ghouls and ghosts,  
Unless disciples of the sorcerer  
Or he himself still lived. Into the night  
The grim ascetic dragged the helpless boy.  
Behind, the lights of Puttur disappeared.

*(To be continued)*

PETER HEEHS

# THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

## CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of October 1978)

### The Yoga of *King Lear*

#### X. The Tragic Power of *King Lear*

To man who by nature seeks to discover and have faith in what is good in the world, *King Lear* presents a very powerful almost frightening display of the reality of evil and its capacities for destruction. So great is this impression, so horrible the suffering of Lear, the blinding of Gloucester, the monstrous designs of Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Cornwall and Oswald that we are always in danger of not seeing them in their wider context, a context in which they appear indeed as a real fact of life but not any longer as the only or even the most powerful reality. For Shakespeare has not only shown us the existence of pure evil. At the same time he has revealed with equally powerful expression the reality of goodness, loyalty, love and self-giving in some of the noblest beings in all of literature—in Kent, and Cordelia, to a lesser degree in Edgar and the Fool and, alongside his other capacities, in Lear himself. As Bradley notes, "Yet, surely, if we condemn the universe for Cordelia's death, we ought also to remember that it gave her birth. The fact that Socrates was executed does not remove the fact that he lived, and the inference thence to be drawn about the world that provided him."<sup>28</sup>

But it is not only the existence of high and noble characters that argues against the sole supremacy of evil. A closer look at the events and results of action will clearly reveal the natural limitations in which evil functions in the drama and the fact that its primary capacity is for self-destruction. As we pointed out earlier, the folly of the court scene and Lear's initiative to divide his kingdom and reject Cordelia and Kent is due to his vital egoism and is not a direct outcome of evil forces at work. What Lear does is to make his evil daughters his masters and they readily use the power put in their hands, but that power came only from his initiative, not from any native capacity of the evil in them. He tried to give them more than their consciousness deserved with the result that everything he gave was quickly lost.

It can be seen throughout the story that on almost every occasion that evil forces take an active initiative, the result is a setback for their cause though it may at the same time induce considerable suffering in others. Cornwall blinds Gloucester but loses his life in the process. Oswald attempts to kill Gloucester and is killed by Edgar. Goneril plots Albany's murder in a letter and that letter leads to the death of Edmund, Regan and herself. In fact, except for the servant who kills Cornwall and, of course, Cordelia, none of the positive characters die directly as a result of an evil ini-

tiative while all of the negative characters die as a direct result of their own or each other's acts. Surely Cordelia's death is a tremendous loss which we feel equals the loss of a hundred evil beings but the world which she leaves behind seems far safer and purer for the sacrifice. Though Lear and Gloucester are dead and Kent is soon to die, good seems more securely established than before the cataclysm unleashed by Lear. The country is left in the charge of a more mature Edgar and a stronger Albany with a vivid memory of the dangers of an egoistic or ignorant rejection of the bonds of filial love and loyalty.

*King Lear* is a powerful and profound expression of life in its greatest amplitude and depth. Shakespeare's art is instinct with knowledge of life and that knowledge expresses itself unencumbered by any philosophy, religion or art-theory. He never tries to give a final answer to any of the ultimate questions of life. He simply presents life in its entirety and leaves the solution of its riddle to man. His tragedies can be interpreted by atheist, pessimist, theist alike as support for their views, for life offers support to all limited approaches but refuses to be contained or fixed in its movements by them. Nevertheless, there are certain essential facts pertaining to the nature of the world Shakespeare portrays which can be identified and enumerated without passing final judgment on life or attributing any conscious intention to the author.

The first obvious and very painful fact we are faced with is the existence of suffering as a common if not inevitable part of human existence. This suffering seems to issue from two sources which may turn out to be one. There is firstly the limitation, ignorance and imperfection of man. It is apparent that man by his actions brings about various results in life which he never intended and that one common result is to inflict suffering on himself and on others. Bradley notes that this causal relationship between man's acts and the results "...makes it impossible for us permanently to regard the world displayed in this tragedy as subject to a mere arbitrary or malicious power. It makes us feel that this world is so far at least a rational and a moral order, that there holds in it the law, not of proportionate requital, but of strict connection between act and consequence."<sup>29</sup> This connection is one basic principle of life. The other source of suffering which is undeniable to our perception is the existence of evil in the world, a force which takes active initiative to destroy and inflict harm. And there even seems to be something which we can call absolute or original evil in that it destroys and hurts purely for the perverse joy and sake of doing so.

There is a second equally impressive reality in the life Shakespeare depicts. It is the reality of good, happiness, and the possibility of human perfection. For every human weakness and fault there is a higher personality-characteristic which if rarely achieved is nevertheless within the reach of some to attain.

Thirdly, it is evident that human life is not a static existence but a dynamic interaction between the lower and higher realities in man, an interaction that in one case appears to end in a destruction of the higher and in others in the upliftment of

the lower. But when viewed from the widest viewpoint it reveals itself as an evolving progression in which lower and higher, good and evil, joy and suffering sacrifice themselves and each other for a growth and perfection of the whole. It appears that only by undergoing the ordeal of suffering and evil what is high and good perfects itself, and that only by challenging and inflicting itself on good and often destroying it can evil ultimately destroy itself. When examined in an isolated event one side or other of this process may be accentuated leading us to draw various limited conclusions about the nature of our existence. But when it is viewed in total the overall direction and nature of the movement become apparent. Through acting and receiving the responses of life to his action, man grows in self-knowledge and knowledge of life, he shapes his capacities, purifies himself in successive stages, sheds one layer after another of purely physical and animal existence, discovers one after another higher and purer faculties of his being—faculties of power, of love, of knowledge and of joy—and gradually raises his consciousness level after level from the dull dross of the ignorant animal to the beautiful heights of human perfection and beyond.

The role of suffering in this process is to insistently present to man's consciousness all that is limited, ignorant, false and perverse in it so that he may gradually come to acknowledge the necessity of change and undertake it. In most men the process is completely unconscious, and very slow. In some there is a partial dawning of awareness and a partial consent to a change. Then the growth is accelerated, the need for innumerable repetitions of every experience is greatly reduced. When man fully comes to perceive the nature of his being and life's responses to him, and dedicates himself fully to making the inner growths necessitated at every moment, he steps out of the slow natural evolution of nature into the process of conscious evolution known as yoga.

When examined in the light of these basic facts it can be shown that the processes, principles and laws characteristic of life are the means nature employs to awaken the perception and the need in man for this evolutionary growth. There is not merely a strict connection between act and consequence as Bradley says, but also a strict relation between the intensity of the two, not merely a qualitative but also an exact quantitative relationship. However, that quality and quantity do not follow our narrow mental and moral formula of right and justice. They are true to a much wider and ultimately much truer law of evolving consciousness. Ultimately what Shakespeare portrays is not the fatalism of life and nature but the laws of determinism and causality to which human life is subject during its upward evolutionary ascent.

(Concluded)

GARRY JACOBS

<sup>28</sup> *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley, Macmillan & Co. 1965, p. 254.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**On The Mother:** The Chronicle of a Manifestation and Ministry. Volume Two. By *K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar*. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry. 1978. Rs. 75.00 (for volumes one and two).

THIS second volume keeps up the promise of the first.

It is smaller in size; this is natural enough, for it covers a shorter period, from the end of 1950 to the end of 1973. These were years when the Mother was alone, for Sri Aurobindo was no longer physically by her side. But, as she explained to a disciple, "Formerly I used to go to Sri Aurobindo and discuss questions with him. Now he is in me...". She elaborated on another occasion: "He is still with me, day and night, thinking through my brain, writing through my pen, speaking through my mouth and acting through my organising power."

The first eight years of this period saw the Mother speaking at length, regularly in the evening, at the Playground. Her Talks, which have by now mostly appeared in print, in the original French and in an English garb, are almost encyclopaedic in the nature of their contents, covering practically everything under the sun that is of value to human life and thought, to yoga and the new life which the Mother envisages for man. "What made the discourses memorable," says Dr. Iyengar, "what made them a form of alchemic action even more than streams of thought-laden cadenced speech, was the personality of the Mother, her heart of compassion, her mother-might and her mind of Light." All of us who have listened to these Talks as they were given would see at once how well he has caught their spirit.

He has naturally devoted considerable space to some of the salient points in these Talks. It is impossible to give a full summary in a biography of this nature which seeks to bring out all aspects of the Mother's life and work. But the points he has chosen give one a rough indication of what might interest the general reader most. He has done well to review in outline the little pieces, dramatic and otherwise, which the Mother found time to write during this period in the midst of her incessant daily work, of seeing people, meeting the heads of Ashram departments, giving general blessings more than once a day, attending to correspondence and, perhaps the most neglected of all and the most important of all, the preparation of her own physical body for the transformation on which the success of the Work depended. She no doubt went out for tennis for about an hour in the afternoon and spent some time in the Ashram Sports Ground to look after the games and athletic competitions so well organised by the Director of Physical Education, Pranab. But was this sufficient for the all-important work of her own body-change? One wonders. During all these years she seems to have concentrated mainly on preparing the minds and bodies of the children who now were allowed to steal the show. It was on this that depended the future.

An indispensable step towards this future was the Supramental Manifestation of February 29, 1956. It is difficult for men to understand exactly what happened on that day. The Mother has said later that she has purposely left it vague. She asks a question of the Lord, which, as recorded by one of the disciples, Champaklal, is worth noting. "My Lord," she says, "what Thou hast wanted me to do I have done. The gates of the Supramental world have been thrown open and the Supramental Consciousness, Light and Force are flooding the earth.... Now that the Supramental is there,... is it that the mission of this form is ended and that another form is to take up the Work in its place?"

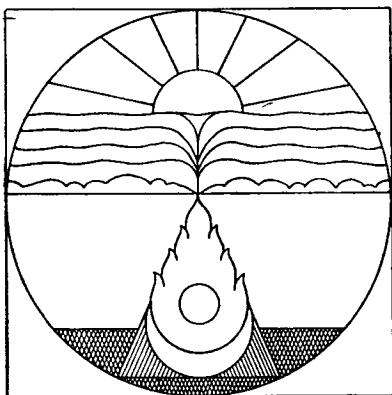
It is not on record what answer she received from the Lord, nor are we sure of the date. But it is obvious that she had much work still to do, on her own body and, through it, on the world at large. That was the task to which she gave herself almost exclusively during the remaining years of her life. Outwardly, there were some significant changes. She stopped going out for tennis or to the play-fields. The balcony Darshan in the morning came to a stop. Then she ceased coming down to her rooms on the first floor altogether. There were periodical attacks of "illness"; these grew ominously more and more frequent and painful and even dangerous as time went on. But she continued to receive visitors—large numbers of them at times to the despairing bewilderment of her close attendants. She answered letters, gave Messages on special occasions and admonitions to disciples, appeared on the balcony on the second floor to give Darshan on the old scheduled dates (except for a long break in 1962). She regularly saw the heads of Ashram departments in connection with their work. And, most astonishing of all, she floated a new Project, that of Auroville, "the city which the earth needs" and which may serve as the cradle for a new humanity; she continued to give detailed instructions as to the lines on which it should develop. She showed an active interest in the new plans of education taking shape in the Ashram School, in the work of the Sri Aurobindo Society, in the World Union organisation created by Ashram inmates with its branches all over the world, in the New Age Association which serves as a forum of discussions relating to Sri Aurobindo's thought, and latterly in the newly formed "Sri Aurobindo's Action" group aiming at India's resurgence. We may add that She also gave advice as well as "Words" to Ashram periodicals like *Mother India*.

Dr. Iyengar has drawn an admirable portrait of all these external activities. He has also tabled chronologically the inner movements relating to the work of body-change. But this is a very difficult subject and, in the Mother's own words, almost "incomprehensible" to the human mind. The aim was new, the process was new, for it had never been attempted before by anyone as far as the Mother was aware. It was literally a blind journey through regions of the Unknown and the Dangerous, with no one to guide her. And yet she had to do the work, not for her own sake certainly, for, as she says in one of her last talks, her body had not the slightest ambition to become the first *corps glorieux*. The work was most pain-

ful, but she continued to do it to the end, because it had to be done; no one else could do it.

The curtain drops. There is bewilderment and consternation among the disciples and admirers. A big question mark appears. "What happens next?" She declared early in 1970: "With or without a body, the struggle continues and will end by Victory." Dr. Iyengar ends his Epilogue to the book in this happy mood.

SANAT K. BANERJI



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# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

19

LIKE Oxford, Cambridge also has twenty to thirty Colleges, and naturally as many magnificent towers and domes and steeples. It is impossible to describe each and every one of them in a short compass. We shall mention only some unusual features. Emmanuel II's statue in Rome with all its paraphernalia is known in Europe as the Wedding Cake. In Cambridge the tower of St. John's College looks more or less like a wedding cake and this one too is known by that name. A lot of people are acquainted with Pepys' Diary. Pepys when he died bequeathed his collection of three thousand books including his famous Diary to Magdalene College, Cambridge. So they have a special Pepys Library there.

The Cavendish Laboratory is also in Cambridge, where our nephew was a research student and later became a Don. Cavendish Laboratory is famous for physics and they say that it was there that the first experiments in nuclear fission took place. At Queen's College they will show you Newton's Sundial, although research has revealed that the Sundial was built the very year the great scientist was born. Emmanuel College is visited by streams of American tourists. Why? Because John Harvard who founded the famous Harvard University in the United States studied there. Sir Christopher Wren has two buildings to his credit in Cambridge, a library in Trinity College and a chapel in Pembroke College. Neither of them is remarkable work, but they are interesting because they are the famous architect's first attempts.

The chapels of Oxford and Cambridge deserve special mention. All the Colleges without exception have a chapel of their own. Attending chapel is as compulsory as attending dinner in the Hall. Some of the chapels are as large as a church. One or two are as big as a Cathedral, yet they are all known as chapels. The main altar of almost all the chapels is beautiful, though differing in style and gorgeousness. The Fan-Vaulting ceiling so admired by the connoisseurs is best found in the Christ Church chapel in Oxford. Here under the exquisite ceiling King Henry VIII banqueted several times, they say.

King's College, Cambridge, where Sri Aurobindo studied, has a chapel large enough to be called a cathedral. It is without doubt the finest building in Cambridge. The two pillars outside the main altar are simply magnificent. Rising tall and straight, plain at the base but ornate at the top, they seem to touch the Empyrean. A combination of glorious strength, overwhelming grandeur and noble austerity, the whole edifice embodies man's heavenward aspiration if ever he tried to express his aspiration in stone. It reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's line on how Mughal architecture "touches with a devout hand the skirts of the Divine". It seems to draw "some radiant glow of a superior lustre". It seems to say, "There are two



powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers." On both sides of the chapel there are twenty-five superb stained-glass windows depicting stories of the Old and the New Testaments. The ceiling has two miles of narrow stone ribbon to form another Fan-vaulting ceiling of surpassing beauty. This is quite unparalleled in England. And if anyone is interested to know its dimensions, it is 289 feet long and 80 feet high. The lamps in the garden too are worth mentioning, for no one would want to put new ones there for the old.

\*

We hear of "The Night Climbers" of Cambridge. Their hobby is to climb the buildings at night. The boys climb the steeples and towers and the most impossible heights on the College and church buildings. This pastime is strictly forbidden. The Guards, if they can catch a night climber, would promptly take him to the authorities and have him expelled. The whole affair is so full of hazard that a single false step or a slip means sure death. Like the mountaineers the Night Climbers too become obsessed. They start with the lowest buildings and the aim is to climb the highest. To them it is a problem they must solve, and an experiment they must bring to fruition. When successful, it brings them a great sense of achievement. And they would tell you half a dozen hair-raising stories of hair-breadth escapes.

The Poppy-day Rag is another feature of Cambridge life. On Poppy Day (11th November) one is free to collect money for the wounded soldiers of war. Even in India it was very popular at one time. We offered our contributions and in return got a beautiful red poppy. The whole thing used to be organised by the Red Cross. On that day the Cambridge boys stage the most fantastic show imaginable. There are processions with floats and huge paper effigies depicting historical personages and events. For example, a Trojan horse with Greek soldiers may be posted on the road. And a soldier may at any time jump out of it on a pedestrian and demand contributions. The whole affair is called the "Rag" and they do the most outrageous things. They also organise raffles and competitions and games to collect money. The greatest honour is to be the largest collector. Areas are fixed for the boys and poaching is not allowed. The boys go from house to house to collect money. The result of the boys' activities is that Cambridge collects the largest amount per unit of the country's population. When the day is over they take the whole show, floats and all, and go down to the river and drown everything in the water with great *éclat*. That is the greatest event of the day.

Punting is a favourite pastime in both Oxford and Cambridge. Apart from the two large rivers there are smaller streams that flow past the lawns languorous and dreamy. Willows hang over and gently sway like angels' wings over the punters. And of course everyone knows about the boat races. Although the Universities are about 800 years old yet the boat races are a recent innovation. It all started in 1829.

Charles Wordsworth, nephew of the great poet, was very fond of swimming. So much so that when he had a girl friend who lived on the opposite bank of the river Thames, he swam every evening across the river to get to her. Later he married her. He had a friend at Cambridge while he was in Oxford. And these two were the originators of the famous Regatta. The races are known in Oxford as the "Eights Week" and in Cambridge as the "May Races". To this day they have kept a detailed record as to who won in which year. It took some time for the event to become an annual function. The dress too was gradually fixed. The boats in the 19th century were not the sleek slim craft we see today in the pictures. The original boats had uncomfortable fixed seats and no outriggers. They were large enough to accommodate double the size of the crew. Improvements were quick to come, the result is the beautiful skiffs of our day. Any kind of foul play is a thing quite unthinkable in these races.

There are several clubs in both Oxford and Cambridge. The most famous is the Union started sometime in early 19th century. The Union is modelled on the House of Commons. It has a President, a Librarian, and a Treasurer. Debates and speeches are the common features in it. Although a certain amount of histrionics and lengthy speeches are applauded here, these would be discouraged in the House of Commons. The participants are on the whole full of fire and have considerable command over their vocabulary. Their wit and sarcasm are remarkable. Eloquence comes easily to them. Vigorous participation automatically brings fluency of speech, cogency of thought and power of argumentation. The members even invite attacks so that they may deliver appropriate counter-attacks. But all the while high spirits, good manners, and courtesy are encouraged and hecklers are discouraged. The orators come well briefed with facts and figures. There is nothing boyish about these debaters. For the Union is a tremendous opportunity to air one's views and sharpen one's intelligence and skill in debate, that will be helpful in after years in the House of Commons.

Oxford and Cambridge are still the citadels of educational graciousness. Learning yes, but with leisure and luxury and all the good things of life. Both the Universities still aim at turning out gentlemen, and the gentlemen's sons come there to enjoy and learn and be gentlemen. Yet there is a certain change visible now. Demands of the age of Technology are imperative and a lot of students go there these days on State scholarships. To them the exams are more important than expensive dinner parties and trips to London.

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA AND SANAT K. BANERJI

## *Students' Section*

### **THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION**

#### **SPECIAL FORTY-FIRST SEMINAR**

In Celebration of the Mother's Birth Centenary  
18th-19th February 1978

*(Continued from the issue of October 1978)*

#### **WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER**

Speech by Sachchidananda Mohanty

At first glance, the subject of the Seminar may seem rather facetious. After all, when a man's whole life and personality have been moulded under the Mother's care, any attempt to specify her role can only become superfluous. But in life it is sometimes useful to pause and take stock of the progress one has made. As we celebrate the Mother's centenary let us trim our lamps so that they may burn a little brighter and help illumine our path ahead.

What I propose to say has nothing sensational about it. It does not make any startling spiritual disclosures. It may not throw any light on pressing spiritual problems. And yet I have chosen to speak about it because it is my experience and therefore matters so much to me. It is true that the memories of such influences of the Mother belong to the most sacredly personal recesses of the heart. That is why one has to voice them with a lot of care and hesitancy. How much has the Mother's example concretely helped me, it's hard for me to tell. Most of these influences are undoubtedly shared by others as well. It can only be a difference of emphasis.

What I liked the most in the Mother is her total humility verging on complete self-effacement. We, who exult a great deal in our petty achievements and are ever ready to snatch credit for ourselves, have a lesson in the life of one who never so much as declared her godliness. Even small instances like her composition of prayers for children—always addressed to the Lord rather than to herself—speak eloquently of what should be our right attitude. It is not the intellectual humility of a Socrates or a Newton but a more fundamental awareness of the utter insignificance of the self without God and the realisation that what we prize so highly as mine and ours are only so many empty bubbles on the sea of transience.

It is only in such a humble spirit that we can appreciate the extreme difficulty of judging life. The tools that we use—our likes and dislikes buttressed by a convenient guise of Reason—are instrumental to perpetuate a greater ignorance. There

is very little that we can actually claim to know because things in the phenomenal world are always so relative. Knowledge assuredly is a worthwhile pursuit. One can never have enough of it. But even knowledge is not the final aim. Let us not forget the greater That from which all our actions get some meaning and for which even knowledge is only a means.

The second lesson that has helped me to face life is the Mother's advice not to get upset by surface happenings. Even in our falls and stumblings there is a hidden purpose. Success and failures are only the symptoms of a being in ignorance who tries to judge events by narrow utilitarian standards. God's ways are mysterious. Even our tragic failures can be His stepping-stones. Whenever we get depressed over apparent setbacks or reverses we should avoid doing the easiest thing by rushing headlong into action. Let us not be misled by the myth of the mental panacea. Let us instead quieten the mind with the full conviction that events are meaningful occurrences. The answer is sure to come, if only we have a little patience and an ardent aspiration anchored to the rock of faith. As Sri Aurobindo says: "We must be governed by the guide within rather than by the opinions of men."<sup>1</sup>

The third great lesson that has inspired me is the attitude to work. As the Mother tells us, it is not what work one does that matters, it is the inner attitude and spirit that does. As Sri Aurobindo writes, "There is nothing small in God's eyes; let there be nothing small in thine."<sup>2</sup> The true art of living lies not in any cowardly shirking of one's duty. We should face life as hero-warriors, accept the challenges thankfully as means for our progress, take the crises and traumas in our stride for a greater growth and awareness. I often think of the Mother's remarkable care and diligence, her amazing zest and spirit of dedication working away from dawn till late at night, not caring for food or rest, joyously accepting the whole burden of man. And yet she accomplished everything with such meticulous order and harmony. Whenever we tend to feel tired or bored because the task at hand has no immediate ulterior interest, we ought to think of the Mother and try to realise at least an infinitesimal bit of her disinterestedness.

I have benefited a great deal from the standard of values that the Mother has placed before us. Don't measure success in terms of material rewards, she said. Don't look up to men for their riches and power. They are in fact slaves and not masters. The true worth of a man lies not in such accidental factors. It is the inner state of being and consciousness, the openness to truth and beauty and the many finer aspects of life that constitute a mature soul. Those who have them are alone truly blessed. For, in losing everything, they gain all. As the poet said, "We receive but what we give."

For the great majority of us that are acquisitive by nature, the Mother's example of an infinite grace, a compassion that knew no limits cannot come too soon. We should allow it to permeate our entire being and make us more generous,

<sup>1</sup> *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1955 Edition), p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> *Thoughts and Aphorisms* (1958 Edition), p. 52.

noble and compassionate. For as she said, "It is only when you are conscious of the whole world at the same time that you can be conscious of the Divine."

But more than all this, what perhaps lingers, most in my mind is her ever smiling and cheerful countenance, always hopeful and optimistic even for seemingly irremediable human nature, to kindle the divine Fire in the womb of matter. Her valiant battle against the fixed and unalterable laws and an unswerving loyalty to the ideal can only inspire us for a greater faith and sincerity of effort. In the battle of life there is no better weapon for the soldier of light than a smiling face. It is not merely a matter of facial expression but an inner radiance and glow that dispels all gloom and spreads hope and joy all around. It is a joy that springs from our inmost heart and soul and contains in it the knowledge of an ultimate victory.

It is to this victory that she ever beckons us. The message<sup>1</sup> she gave after the passing of Sri Aurobindo, an eloquent and loving testimony of a grateful humanity, applies equally well in her case. It is by being loyal to the spirit of that message that we can be better men and true pioneers of a new creation.

*Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI*

<sup>1</sup> "To THEE who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to THEE our infinite gratitude. Before THEE who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before THEE who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before THEE we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to THEE". (9 December 1950).

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