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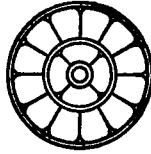
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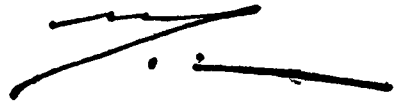


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXX

No. 3

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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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 for a year. We have now paid Rs. 10,000. This has made a big 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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THE MOTHER'S LONGEST LETTER TO A SADHAK

(Vasudha has brought out a valuable collection, Letters to My Little Smile, consisting of the Mother's correspondence both with her and with Chandulal, her brother. Among its many treasures is what is most probably the longest letter written by the Mother to an inmate of the Ashram. It is addressed to Chandulal and illuminates with simplicity a number of problems at once spiritual and practical. With acknowledgments to Vasudha we are reproducing the letter. The original was in French.)

I AM going to begin by telling you a very small story. Then I shall answer you.

You must have seen the new clock which is supposed to run for six months. When it was set going it was running very fast. Pavitra tried to find out how to regulate it and discovered a sort of screw with which you can lengthen or shorten the pendulum. I looked at the clock with the inner sight and I told Pavitra, "You have to shorten the pendulum in order to make it go slower." He looked at me with stupefaction and explained that in mechanics the longer the pendulum the slower the movement (I know that all right—but this is not an ordinary pendulum since it works by a rotatory movement). I answered, as I always do: "Do as you think." He lengthened the pendulum and the clock started going even faster. After a day's observation, he agreed to shorten the pendulum and now the clock is working all right.

I believe in the superiority of the inner vision over the outer vision and this belief is based not only on a theoretical knowledge but on thousands of examples I have come across during a life that is already long. Unfortunately I am surrounded by people who, although they are here to practise yoga, are still convinced that "a cat is a cat", as we commonly say in French, and that one can rely only on one's physical eyes for seeing and observing, on one's physical mind's knowledge for judging and deciding and that the laws of Nature are *laws*, that is, all that is an exception to them is a miracle. This is not true.

That is at the root of all the misunderstandings and reservations. You know already, and I am mentioning it only to recall it to your memory, that an experiment made with an attitude of reservation and doubt is not an experiment and that the outer circumstances will always combine to support the doubts and *this* for a reason not very difficult to understand: doubt veils the consciousness and the subconscious sincerity and in action some small factors creep in which seem to be of no importance at all but which are just sufficient to change all the factors of the problem and to bring about the result which, in one's doubt, one had foreseen.

I have nothing else to add except this. When the question of re-doing Pavitra's rooms arose, I looked very carefully and repeatedly with the inner eye and I saw this: brush the wall with the metal brush so that whatever is loose falls off and cover the rest with a thick layer of distemper which for the very reason that it is thick will

be enough to hide the irregularities. The process was expected to be simple, rapid and fully satisfactory. I put into it all the necessary force for it to become an effective formation charged with the power of realisation and I said that the work could be done, adding in a few words how it was to be done (This was long ago—the first time that it was decided to re-do the walls of Pavitra's apartment, it was perhaps a year ago). My formation was so living, so real, so active, that I made the mistake of not recalling it to your memory before the work began. I have the tendency to believe that the consciousness of those around me is, at least partially and in its limited functioning, similar to mine. I explain—I know that each one of you has a very small and limited consciousness compared with mine, but within its limits I have the illusion that its *nature* is similar to mine, and that is why there are many things I do not say because they are to me *so obvious* that it would be absolutely pointless to say them. It is here that from your side there must intervene a freedom of movement and speech that arises from a loving confidence. If there is something of which you are not sure, you must ask me about it; if you do not see *very clearly my intention*, you must find it out; if you do not know my formation very accurately, you must ask me to explain it to you. When I do not do so, it is because I think you are sufficiently receptive for the formation to act and realise itself without my having to speak about it, and, in fact, this happens often—it is only when the mind and vital get in the way, for some reason or other, that the functioning becomes faulty.

Read this carefully, study it and when you come today I will ask you to read it from the point I have marked with a red cross, for I think it can be useful to all those who will be there. I shall surely ask you to translate it into English, in order to be sure that you have understood fully.

May Peace be with you—I bless you.

June 7, 1934

THE BODY AND ITS DESTINY

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER

THE method we use to deal with our body, maintain it, keep it fit, improve it and keep it in good health, depends *exclusively* on the state of consciousness we are in, for our body is an instrument of our consciousness and this consciousness can act directly on it and obtain what it wants from it.

So, if you are in an ordinary physical consciousness, if you see things with the eyes of the ordinary physical consciousness, if you think of them with the ordinary physical consciousness, it will be the ordinary physical means you will have to use to act on your body. These ordinary physical means make up the whole science which has accumulated through thousands of years of human existence. This science is very complex, its processes innumerable, complicated, uncertain, often contradictory, always progressive and almost absolutely relative! Still, very precise results have been achieved; ever since physical culture has become a serious preoccupation, a certain number of experiments, studies, observations have accumulated, which enable us to regulate diet, activities, exercise, the whole outer organisation of life, and provide an adequate basis so that those who make the effort to study and conform strictly to these things may have a chance to maintain their body in good health, correct the defects it may have and improve its general condition, and even achieve results which are sometimes quite remarkable.

I may add, moreover, that this intellectual human science, such as it is at present, in its very sincere effort to find the truth, is, surprisingly enough, drawing closer and closer to the essential truth of the Spirit. It is not impossible to foresee the movement where the two will unite in a very deep and very close understanding of the essential truth.

So, for all those who live on the physical plane, in the physical consciousness, it is physical means and processes which have to be used in dealing with the body. And as the vast majority of human beings, even in the Ashram, live in a consciousness which, if not exclusively physical, is at least predominantly physical, it is quite natural for them to follow and obey all the principles laid down by physical science for the care of the body.

Now, according to what Sri Aurobindo teaches us, this is not a final realisation, nor is it the ideal to which we want to rise. There is a higher state than this, in which the consciousness, though it still remains principally mental or partially mental in its functioning, is already open to higher regions in an aspiration for the spiritual life, and open to the supramental influence.

As soon as this opening occurs, one passes beyond the state in which life is purely physical—when I say “physical” I include the whole mental and intellectual life and all human achievements, even the most remarkable; I am speaking of a physical which is the summit of human capacities, of an earthly and material life

in which man can express values of a higher order from the mental and intellectual point of view—one can go beyond that state, open oneself to the supramental force which is now acting on earth and enter a transitional zone where the two influences meet and interpenetrate, where the consciousness is still mental and intellectual in its functioning, but sufficiently imbued with the supramental strength and force to become the instrument of a higher truth.

At present this state can be realised on earth by those who have prepared themselves to receive the supramental force which is manifesting. And in that state, in that state of consciousness, the body can benefit from a much better condition than the one it was in before. It can be put into direct contact with the essential truth of its being, to the extent that, *spontaneously*, at every moment it knows instinctively, or intuitively, what is to be done and that it can do it.

As I say, this state can now be realised by all those who take the trouble of preparing themselves to receive the supramental force, to assimilate it and obey it.

Of course, there is a higher state than this, the state Sri Aurobindo speaks of as the ideal to be fulfilled: the divine life in a divine body. But he himself tells us that this will take time; it is an integral transformation which cannot be achieved in a moment. It will even take quite a long time. But when it is accomplished, when the consciousness has become a supramental consciousness, then action will no longer be determined at every moment by a mental choice or be dependent on the physical capacity: the entire body will spontaneously, integrally, be the perfect expression of the inner truth.

This is the ideal we must keep before us, for the realisation of which we must strive; but we must not delude ourselves and think that it can be a rapid transformation, miraculous, immediate, marvellous, without effort and without labour.

However, it is no longer only a possibility, it is no longer even only a promise for a far-off future: it is something which is in the making. And already one can not only foresee but feel the moment when the body will be able to repeat integrally the experience of the most spiritual part of the being, as the inner spirit has already done, and will itself be able to stand in its bodily consciousness before the supreme Reality, turn to it integrally and say in all sincerity, in a total self-giving of all its cells: "To be Thyself—exclusively, perfectly—Thyself, infinitely, eternally... very simply."

29 May 1957

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 20, 1940

P: Hitler has simply poured abuse on England in his speech and says the usual things. If England doesn't accept peace, she will be destroyed.

SRI AUROBINDO: How? He talks only of air attack. By aeroplanes he can destroy a good deal, no doubt, but the same can be done to Germany.

S: He didn't want to attack the British Empire, now he will if the British don't accept peace. He is a man who wants to live in peace and has no territorial ambition.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, he didn't want anything outside Germany. Now in Europe, there is no democracy left except in Yugoslavia. Only in Asia democracy remains, Persia being the true democracy.

S: Turkey?

SRI AUROBINDO: Turkey doesn't claim to be democratic. If England didn't stand in the way Hitler would settle first with Russia, then proceed to Asia and then to India.

S: Russia may not like Japan's living with the Axis.

SRI AUROBINDO: Inwardly she won't. Japan wants to make a non-aggression pact with Russia like Germany. But she has nothing to offer to Russia while Germany gave Russia a free hand in the Baltic and half of Poland.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: I have read Hitler's speech. In many respects this man is a mountebank and yet he has become so successful. Of course, it is not his success, but of the force behind him.

N: Some people in the Ashram find his speech full of reason and everything he has said is true according to them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Everything true? Don't they read the papers? Don't they see his speech is full of misstatements and misrepresentations?

N: It is true in the sense that whatever he has prophesied he has carried out.

Look at Poland and Norway. And since he has succeeded everywhere, he will succeed also against England. England will make peace.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is another matter. What about his lies about the British Expeditionary Force, which he claims he has destroyed?

N: People seem more to believe Hitler than others.

SRI AUROBINDO: And these people pretend to do Yoga? The French themselves have said that the B.E.F. was rescued—the majority of it, and people who have returned from Flanders have written to us about the evacuation. If this Asuric influence acting through Hitler is being cast on the Ashram too, it is dangerous.

P: What about his seeking friendship with Britain or his love of peace? Are they all true? And because he has succeeded so far, will he succeed always? Is he omnipotent? Greater than the Divine?

SRI AUROBINDO: Omnipotent and omniveridical? Then, as he says himself, has Providence guided him and given him success? I have not seen any other person who has followed with such extraordinary fidelity the Asura. Three things of the Asura he adopts strictly: 1) If you go on telling lies long enough with assurance, people will believe you. 2) You must adopt treachery and appeal to the basest passions of the people. 3) Care only for success without regard for truth. There have been men who have done that with some pretence to truth. But Hitler speaks openly of his method of falsehood and yet people believe him.

N: Except for the air attack, what else can Hitler do against England and how far will the air attack be successful?

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know. Aeroplanes can destroy tremendously and if the industrial areas are destroyed, it will be a great blow.

JULY 25, 1940

(For 4 days there was practically no talk. Then Bhaskar's radio news said that Germany was making intense preparations to attack England.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Bhaskar doesn't give the source of his news. He says that such intense preparations are going on that the universe is moving towards destruction. (*Laughter*)

S: The universe? Nehru also speaks in terms of planets. The *Sunday Times* has given the news that somebody in America has discovered some submarines which can be made into tanks. There is a humorous story along with this news.

SRI AUROBINDO: That may be Germany's new weapon to attack England.

S: Is that an accomplished fact?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is an America-and-*Sunday-Times*-accomplished fact.

(Here Sri Aurobindo related the humorous episode of the tank with much enjoyment by all.)

P (*after some time, smilingly*): Have you read in the *Sunday Hindu* the article saying that there are Hindu tribes in Arabia?

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Yes. It is like the Tamil Christ and Madrasi Virgin Mary.

S. What is that?

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, you don't know? A Tamil scholar discovered that Christ was a Tamil belonging to Madras and he found out all the Tamil equivalent names for Christ, Mary and even the streets.

P: Here also this man says Araba=Arava, Saracen=Surasen, Ansari=Anusari. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: That was the fashion at one time. It was Colonel Todd, I think, who said that Krishna was Hercules who is also called Heracles. He derived the Greek name from Harikula. (*Laughter*)

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: It is now known what is Bhaskar's source of the coming German attack on England. A detailed document was found in the pocket of an American reporter who had died in France. It told of the German plan to attack England from Belgian and French ports, supported by aeroplanes, smoke-screens, etc. The Germans will land at various places. In that case they may have some chance of success.

P: Yes. Otherwise how is it possible, I don't see.... So they are putting to trial Daladier and others?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is Laval acting out of revenge. Poor Deltos also is to be tried. Laval was ousted from politics in all the Ministries. His photo in the paper shows the face of a criminal. And the paper says he began as an errand boy and ended as a millionaire.

P: This action of his may also be to satisfy Hitler.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and revenge and fear of these people as well.

NIRODBARAN

OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the Mother's Birth-Centenary Issue of February 21, 1978)

4

The Mother and My Last Darshan of Sri Aurobindo

I HAD come from Bombay with my wife Sehra and some friends on a visit for the Darshan of November 24 in 1950. Sri Aurobindo was reported to have been unwell. But he gave a long Darshan, with a short break after some hours. He kept himself in a tolerable condition in the following days—until the late evening of December 2, when the Ashram's Sports-demonstration was over. His condition worsened on the 3rd; and when the Mother returned from the Playground she found him running a temperature. The same night I was scheduled to leave for Bombay. The Mother had previously informed me that she would see me before I started for the station. On finding Sri Aurobindo with high fever she cancelled the appointment. However, about an hour before the departure-time of my train she sent word to me that she was waiting and that I should come at once to meet her. This was clearly a gesture of extreme Grace. I was called to the foot of the staircase, north of the present Samadhi, which leads up to the corridor outside the Mother's room on the first floor.

On reaching the place I saw her seated in a chair with a table-lamp beside it. She looked calm and radiant as ever, as if nothing in the world troubled her. I sat on the floor, put my head on her feet and received her blessing. I spoke of the editorial I had written for the next issue of *Mother India*, at that time a fortnightly of Bombay: "The Chinese Dragon."

She said: "Don't write anything implying war for India. No such thought should be expressed. You can discuss, if you want, the possibility of war between China and America."

I replied: "All right, Mother. But Sri Aurobindo never asked me to refrain from such an implication."

"Yes, I know. But, although our aims are alike, our approaches can be somewhat different at times."

I could easily understand this. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had necessarily different kinds of personality for the special individual work each had to do. In matters of high politics, Sri Aurobindo, with his grand background of past national leadership, could take the responsibility for certain gestures which the Mother would hesitate to make, being no particular figure in the political sphere. Even on the spiritual level, their modes of operation could be dissimilar. As the Shakti, the Divine Executive Power, she could be at times most dynamic and relentless but at other

times most tender and considerate. Careful and conservative too she could be when the Force in her moved her not to be a breaker of norms and forms.

Now she continued: "After a short time Sri Aurobindo will resume reading your articles."

I was happy to hear this. A few more topics came up and then I took my leave with a long blessing-touch on my head.

Throughout the train-journey I kept thinking of Sri Aurobindo's resumption of work not only in relation to my editorials but also in connection with his own Yoga of physical supramentalisation. With my fellow-passengers I even discussed, in terms of such a transformed body, the way in which Sri Aurobindo's Yoga differed from all other Yogic paths. What a surprise I suffered when I reached Victoria Terminus at about noon and the man who had been asked to receive me handed me the express telegram my friend Yogendra had sent from Pondicherry to my Bombay address that very morning: "Sri Aurobindo passed away 1.26 a.m."

I repeatedly asked myself: "How could the Mother tell me that in a short while Sri Aurobindo would start reading my articles again?"

As I have recounted elsewhere, I emplaned the same night with two friends and arrived at Madras early the next morning and at Pondicherry by taxi round about 11.00 a.m. I need not repeat the story of the experiences while Sri Aurobindo's body lay incorrupt for five days. When, on the 19th, before leaving for Bombay I had my interview with the Mother I asked her several questions besides wanting to know why Sri Aurobindo had passed away. The sequel to the latter inquiry I have related more than once before. What I may record now are some statements of the Mother and a few of my own communications to her.

I: "Why did you tell me in the evening of the 3rd of December that Sri Aurobindo would take up his usual work with my editorials? Two days after this he passed away."

Mother: "It was not certain that he would leave his body."

This was a strange declaration. It could mean either that Sri Aurobindo, for a reason of his own, kept secret from the Mother his decision to depart, or else that the uncertainty lay not in the Mother's consciousness but in Sri Aurobindo's own because he was working out momentous possibilities one way or the other. From the snatch of conversation between Sri Aurobindo and his attendants on the 4th of December, the second alternative seems unlikely. He was asked: "Aren't you using your Yogic force on yourself?" His reply was: "No." Astonished, the attendants stammered out: "Why?" He answered: "Can't explain. You won't understand." The conclusion that he was acting out a decision already made dawned also from the Mother's words soon after his departure: "When I asked him to resuscitate he clearly answered: 'I have left the body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way.'" Thus the first alternative should hold.

Then the sole reason one can think of is that the Mother had not accepted the

idea of Sri Aurobindo's departure and would have tried to stop it if she had known anything before it was too late. We may recollect the talk they both had some time in April of the same year. When Sri Aurobindo said that one of them might have to go in the interests of their work, the Mother immediately offered to do so. Sri Aurobindo turned down the proposal and added that if necessary he would go. The Mother had to acquiesce. Perhaps a finer explanation for the Mother's unawareness of the precise time he had chosen for his withdrawal is that, although she had fully accepted his terrible resolve, he did not want to create any unpleasantness for her and she did not wish to cause any difficult situation for him. He knew that she preferred her own going to his and she knew that he was bent on departing rather than let her do so. Hence a veil was drawn tacitly by him over what was to take place on the 5th of December.

To resume the account of my conversation with the Mother:

I: "At the last Darshan I observed that, when you saw me approaching both of you, you bent your head towards Sri Aurobindo and said something to him. What did you say?"

Mother: "I told him: 'Amal is coming.'"

I: "Why did you have to tell him that? He could surely know it by himself".

Mother: "His eyes had become so bad that he could not have seen you standing before him. Of course, he could contact your consciousness but not physically recognise you and have the outer relationship."

It is curious that the Mother should have told Sri Aurobindo about me on this particular Darshan and never before. I remember especially the Darshan on August 15, 1947. I had come to the Ashram after several years. When I approached Sri Aurobindo, I saw him looking at me as if he did not recognize me at all. I was very upset as well as deeply benefited because it knocked the bottom out of my ego and the result was a very painful but most liberating transcendence of the idea of my own importance. Now, listening to the Mother, I realised that Sri Aurobindo could not see even at close quarters. Some people have come to believe he was completely blind. But from what Nirodbaran has told me, this is not true. Nirod described to me how Sri Aurobindo had to take a table-clock close to his eyes in order to see what time it was. Most probably here was a case of advanced cataract in both eyes. The eye-trouble must have started round about 1945. In that year he sent the last letter he wrote to me in his own hand, and the writing was shaky and the lines not quite straight. Studying a few late notebooks of his, I have seen that he wrote some of his prose and poetry in the rough without being able to judge correctly the breadth of the page or the space needed between the lines.

However, his super-shortsight could not be the only explanation of the Mother's telling him about me on November 24, 1950. Why had she not done the same either on August 15, 1947 or any of the two other occasions before the last Darshan? All actions of the Divine Incarnate have, whether the outer mind is allowed to know it or not, a truth-impulsion. Always at the right moment the right thing for the soul

is done. On the present occasion, as never before, Sri Aurobindo smiled at me and, as I was told by Sehra afterwards, he kept smiling in my direction even when I had turned to go away. The Mother also referred to Sri Aurobindo's smiling at me all the time I was there. I am convinced that, through the word the Mother put in for me, I was blessed with a special final act of Sri Aurobindo's Grace, a sweet intimate farewell.

Eleven days after this, he took the drastic step of giving up his body in order to achieve a tremendous breakthrough in the process of the Integral Yoga, so that the Mother could confide to me later. "As soon as Sri Aurobindo left his body what he had called the Mind of Light was realised in me." The Mind of Light, as she defined it afterwards, is the physical mind receiving the Supramental Light. The nature of the victory won may be gauged from the two opening lines of the poem I wrote in 1954, lines which the Mother declared to be absolutely revelatory of the state of consciousness she had realised:

The core of a deathless sun is now the brain,
And each grey cell bursts to omniscient gold.

5

The Exercise of Divine Power

According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Divine Power which is all the time present in the world as well as beyond the world and especially the Divine Power as embodied by them for a new manifestation could do a lot of impossible-looking things. I know from my own experience how it could get us over the supposed necessity of acting in conformity with Nature's "laws" operative in the physical world and the living body.

Once I had a fall very badly hurting my left knee and resulting in a large collection of water over the joint. I went through a whole night of acute pain. My inner appeals to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother brought on some alleviation now and again but no appreciable relief. Soon after sunrise, my friend Ambu who used to be a great help to me in the early days of my stay in the Ashram came to enquire how I was. I told him of my restless night and gave him a note for the Mother to be taken immediately to her door and to see that it got into her hands as soon as possible. Shortly after this the pain was completely gone.

A still more serious occasion was when, during a long visit to Bombay I developed myocardial weakness and passed through an initial phase of severe collapse on the 8th of May 1948. I have told elsewhere the story of what followed. Here I may touch on a few points. There was a sudden breakthrough into the psychic consciousness, which in Yogic terminology is the consciousness of the deepest heart or the inmost being, a breakthrough which seemed a surprising metamor-

phosis of the terrible prolonged sinking feeling in the middle of the chest as if I were passing inexorably out of life. I was inwardly calling to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for help but also acted in a "realistic" manner by calmly telling my wife that there appeared to be not much hope of my surviving. I believe it was the sustained intensity of my cry to my gurus that widely opened up the depths of my being and took unexpected advantage of the sensation of the life-force falling as though abysmally away from the cardiac centre where, in the Upanishads' view, the whole complex of the living human consciousness with all its various radiations has its hub.

After the doctor had come and given an injection of atropine and morphine and advised complete rest, instead of the anticipated drowse a profound tranquillity and inner awakening took place which seemed to look Wordsworthianly into the heart of things and felt the whole universe as a Divine Being, charging even the most ordinary physical objects like the tables and chairs of my room with a wonderful spiritual presence. Towards nightfall I read several parts of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. In the middle of the night during a state of calm in-drawn-ness lines of poetry started to get composed in front of my eyes. In the morning I was still in a state of poetic sensitivity and creativity. Actually for three months the flow of poetry continued, constituting the book entitled *The Adventure of the Apocalypse*. Day after day, although the doctor had advised me not even to raise my head from the pillow if I could help it, I used to sit up and write poems in a condition of thrilled inspiration which made my heart go like a race-horse. All the time I felt the force of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo behind the poetry and, with every act of offering the surprising results to them, the room within me of receiving their presence grew ever wider. In spite of my flagrantly disobeying the doctor's strict orders, on his visit each morning he found me better and better and was pleased both with his own treatment and with my supposed obedience to his orders.

I used to send to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother every day the two or three poems that flowed out spontaneously with a strange burden of occult symbol and spiritual sight. I would also send bulletins of my progress in health and told them of the absolutely shocking unmedical behaviour of mine which still kept me improving. I stressed my utter faith in their curative powers passing within me like a subtle electricity through the constant production of poetry. The Mother wrote to me: "My dear child, I quite agree with you that there is a power other and much more powerful than that of the doctors and the medicines and I am glad to see that you put your trust in it. Surely it will lead you throughout all difficulties and in spite of all catastrophic warnings. Keep your faith intact and all will be all right."

From Nirodbaran, who used to be in close touch with our Gurus on many fronts, I have heard of cases of advanced tuberculosis which a doctor would sternly segregate and copiously treat, being made light of by the Mother, allowed to move freely in the Ashram and completely cured within a short time. What the Mother and Sri Aurobindo principally did was to deal with the occult forces which are behind all the diseases and with their spiritual light reinforce the life-power of the body, more easily

when one had faith but often even without conscious co-operation by the patient. They believed that the spiritual consciousness could achieve all kinds of undreamt-of results and that there were interconnections between physical events and spiritual movements. But they also had a poised scientific mind ever testing their own experiences and guarding against too much credulity. Thus when a disciple proposed an intimate relation between a certain earthquake in India and the work of Sri Aurobindo in his birth-centenary year, the Mother very coolly denied it. I remember also a short talk between the Mother and one or two sadhaks who had brought some miraculous stories of dematerialisation. I think it was Ravindra of the Dining Room who spoke of a report about an Indian saint who was said to have disappeared from a closed room and left in the place of his dematerialised body a heap of flowers. The Mother heard this account and some other tales very quietly and then said: "Everything is possible. I know of spiritualistic mediums who under rigorous scientific conditions dematerialised and rematerialised. But every reported incident is not necessarily true. Such things don't occur very frequently and under all circumstances." When she was pointedly asked whether we should credit the particular phenomenon mentioned about the saint's disappearance and the substitute-appearance of flowers, she said: "Its occurrence is not impossible but I don't think it really happened."

In their own spiritual overridings of natural limits Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were careful to define the nature and the range of the powers their mission demanded of them. When there was a question of Sri Aurobindo employing the power of what he has named the Supermind, he always disclaimed the direct use of it. He repeatedly said that what he was directly utilising was the Overmind power. Not that the Supermind was still unrealised inwardly, but that he had not yet, at the time involved, established it as an active force from the station of physical consciousness he had taken up for the specific world-work he had come to do. The Mother once told me that she hoped to cure the damage infantile paralysis had done to one of my legs, but that the cure could be effected only by the Supermind when it had been brought into the very substance of her body. So the marvellous cure was to be on some far future day.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were wonder-workers in many respects but they were not miracle-mongers and they were perfectly honest and clear-headed. Moreover, their central job was to bring about a radical change in our inner and outer beings—a drawing forth of the hidden God-lit soul, the widening out of the mind into an infinite peace, the raising of the consciousness into realms of light overhead, the calling down of the spiritual Reality from beyond the human status into our whole psycho-physical organism to bring about an integral transformation. Whatever supernatural capacities would come automatically into play in the process of their Yogic concern with individuals and the world at large, these they would exercise without hesitation. Theirs would also be responses of miraculous Grace and the constant assurance of more-than-human help on tap, as it were, yet never an emphasis on spectacular disclosure of powers nor any indiscriminate claim for themselves and for other workers in the spiritual field.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

THE MOTHER—EARTH'S GOLDEN MOMENT

SOMETIMES there come golden moments in the progressive movement of the earth-evolution. It is when some new Principle or Element descends into the earth-consciousness to make it more receptive, open and plastic for the progressive Self-manifestation of the Spirit. Or, when there descends the Supreme Power Herself to overcome the forces of the darkness and bring the new Light and Consciousness upon earth.

Such a golden moment the earth has lived recently. The Divinity descended in the form of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, His spiritual collaborator, to make the Supramental Descent possible into the earth's being. Their coming upon earth is an answering movement of the Divine Grace in response to the call and prayer that rise from the soul of the earth, when there happens to be the crisis of the inner law and men turn their backs upon the Light and Truth. They were born in two different cultures and societies. Yet we find them carrying the same Divine Passion in their hearts and souls to uplift this fallen race to the Spirit's distant blissful heights and set a new Law of living here, the Law of Truth and Love and Harmony, which will enable the earth to bring a divine fulfilment and manifestation in itself. Though they are no more in their physical forms, they are felt quite vividly guiding and helping and arranging whatever is essential and indispensable for our progress and development. We find them whispering in our hearts whenever there comes a shadow of any doubt or we feel helpless in the whirlpool of the difficulties, inner or outer, that arise from the battle with the hostile forces who stand in the way of a seeker, when he is about to achieve the final victory in his Sadhana.

“The Birth and Mission of the Flame”

The embodiment of the Supreme Shakti, known as the Mother, came in a human form with a definite mission to give a practical form to the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and prepare the earth for a complete Supramental Manifestation. She was born in Paris in a rich banker family and brought up in the midst of plenty. The life around Her was attractive and full of luxuries, yet was not to Her taste. Her only interest was how to get the leverage which could lift the whole world to the purity and peace and happiness of the Divine. She was always found to be concentrated and in-drawn. Even in Her childhood She was conscious of Her Divine Personality and knew She had a special role to play on the earth. She experienced that the soul of man is under the titanic grip of the powers of ignorance and falsehood and the earthly nature ruled by the forces of the Inconscience. She realised also that to pull the world out of its present pitiable condition a collective effort would be needed and that it would be effectuated through a special system of Yoga which aims at the total transformation of the whole of human nature, from its mental, vital and emotional parts down to the most material. The old Yoga that aims at the salvation and liberation of the inner being and leaves the outer untransformed and believes that the final attainment

can only come through a withdrawal from the world of activities, cannot be of much use to fulfil this end.

When She was eighteen She attained the full union with the Supreme in all the parts of Her being and this She could do without losing contact with Her body. Her *Prayers and Meditations* are a few collected records from the communications She had with the Lord in Her Soul. It is notable how She managed to live in the state of consciousness in which She could receive guidance from the Lord at every step while living in the midst of a society in which life is occupied with mostly material needs and comforts and enjoyments. In Her consciousness She was absolutely identified with the whole suffering world and was constantly offering it to the Lord and asking His boons for the well-being of men and earth. Her life came to be totally dedicated to the ideal of Sri Aurobindo, whom She had at first sight recognized as the Lord Himself in a human form. On the next day after His Darshan She says, "It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance—He whom we saw yesterday is on earth—His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be established upon earth."

The Daily Life and Activities

Like many fortunate ones I too got the golden opportunity to live with and serve Her. We all know Hers was an extraordinarily dynamic personality. Throughout Her life She had been fighting with the forces of ignorance and falsehood to drive them away from the earth atmosphere and establish here the kingdom of God. In other words, Her life was a ceaseless flow of manifold activities that served as an intermediary between this plane and the Supramental to bring down the Supermind's riches here for the fulfilment of the earthly life. In so many ways She tried to prepare us so that She might pour into us the infinite Love and Light and Knowledge of the Divine. Several times a day She would come down to give us Blessings, observe our activities and hold meditations. Throughout Her life She was available to everyone of us for guidance, except in the last few years when it became absolutely impossible for Her to continue Her daily activities in the same manner owing to Her exclusive absorption in inner work. For days and nights She concentrated on us and kept us in Her Consciousness. She had full faith in each of us and loved us all equally. Once She wrote to one of Her devotees: "No child of mine can ever be a zero." To another She said, "There is a special personal tie between you and me; between all who have turned to Sri Aurobindo's and my teaching, it is well understood, distance does not count here, and this tie between you and me is never cut. There are people who have long ago left the Ashram, in a state of revolt, and yet I keep myself informed of them, I attend to them, you are never abandoned. In fact, I hold myself responsible for everyone, even for those whom I have met only for one second in my life."

She was a sweet Mother to Her children, a watchful Master to Her disciples, an

apparent Divinity to Her devotees and a kind and compassionate guide and adviser to all the rest. Her unshakable adherence to the ideal of Sri Aurobindo, Her extreme one-pointedness to the mission of Her Soul, Her spirit of tolerance and forgiveness, made a room for Her in the hearts of people in every nook and corner of the world.

We say She was this and She was that and try to explain Her many-sided personality in various ways. But can the finite grasp the Infinite and words express the Ineffable? Who could know and say what She was and stood for? The Supreme Mother stands above all the beings and Vibhutis and incarnations. She stands above even all our knowledge, understanding and conceptions. No human intellect can ever calculate Her ways of action, She is the Spirit of an absolute freedom, bound by nothing, not even by freedom.

The Dream

There was a dream of Hers, which is under progressive realisation:

“There should be somewhere upon earth a place no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the Supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries....Where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for material pleasures and enjoyment....

“The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal....

“Yet, this dream is on the way of becoming a reality. That is exactly what we are seeking to do at the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo on a small scale, in proportion to our modest means. The achievement is indeed far from being perfect but it is progressive....”

The Mother was all the time conscious on all the planes of Existence. By repeating Her name or calling Her inwardly, even at midnight, we were saved from the attacks of the forces of the dark worlds. I still cannot forget the night when in 1952 I was caught, surrounded and finally attacked by a large number of them. They wanted to kill me. And if I had not the saviour word with me, that is the Name of the Mother, which springs from my soul spontaneously, I would not have been saved on that night. It did not take even one second for Her to receive the call and answer it.

Her passing away is an occult mystery for the present human mind, because it is an event which has not entirely occurred in this world alone. The greater part of it took place in the subtle-physical world which exists next to our world. And what we saw with our physical eyes was a shadow and not the reality of it. If we want to obtain the full knowledge of the event we must transcend the present state of our consciousness, which is ignorant and blind, and have an access into the subtle-physical world. Till then we stand far from the real truth of Her passing away and its actuality. Then we shall see that Her passing is not a leaving of the body but a withdrawing from it, a

shifting of the centre of Her world-wide action from the physical to the subtle-physical world, because from there one can act more intensely and in an everlasting manner when one can no longer act from the physical plane as before.

She knew all the fine arts and had full mastery over all their aspects. Her playing at the piano was charming. It could create the vibrations of a flaming intensity in the atmosphere that helped the soul to carry its thirst upwards. She used to say that through music the soul can rise to the heights of the Spirit more easily. She had a great aesthetic sense and we find Her life a direct expression of the beauty and harmony of the Divine. In Her teaching She says that in the physical world the Divine manifests through beauty. She was a Master of occultism and had learnt the whole process of it systematically. Once She told someone, "There is nothing in occultism that is not known to me." But for us Her advice is that a seeker should never have a desire for it. In Yoga it comes automatically with the Self-Knowledge, but, whether one wants to develop it or not, that is an altogether different question. When She met Sri Aurobindo first, on March 29 in 1914, She was seeing things in the Supramental plane, things which were to manifest but somehow were not manifesting. She referred it to Sri Aurobindo and their meeting ended resulting in the touch of all those marvellous things upon earth.

Gracious Actions

Once I got the privilege to meet an elderly Sadhak who was in charge of building-construction at the Ashram in those days. He told me the following incident. "When I was hesitating to take the responsibility to construct the sea-side wall of the Park Guest House the Mother gave the contract to some Madras company. They tried for two years and one night disappeared when they could not succeed because of the constant interruption from the sea-water. Then the Mother called me and said, 'This evening I am coming to the Park. You will meet me there.' She came and asked me how I could finish the construction. In a simple way I told Her that if there was no water I could complete it within a week. On this She said, 'Take me to the spot and show me up to where you want the water to remain.' I went into the sea up to knee-level. She concentrated for a moment and said in a definite tone, 'Bring your easy-chair tomorrow and put it here. I give you a week's time to erect the foundation above the water level and so long as your chair will be on this spot the water will not come.' And to the surprise of all of us, it did happen in the same manner. After a week I came to inform Her and offer Her what had been achieved by Her grace and with full success."

My first experience with the Mother took place a few weeks after I had joined the Ashram. It is a long story but I shall relate it quite briefly. In those days there was a rule that no one should go for a sea-bath without the Mother's permission. But I did not pay any heed to it thinking there was no need to take any permission as I knew swimming. When I came to the sea the life-guard told me, "Do not go for bath to-day, the sea is quite rough. If at all you have decided to swim, then do not go

far, be careful." I entered the sea and after a few minutes was caught by the current. It did not allow me to return. I became nervous. All my limbs and joints started paining. I gave up all hope and believed that I would soon be drowned. I called the Mother with all the intensity I could command. No sooner did I call than there came three or four waves, one after another, and threw me back to the shore. As I reached the shore the life-guard came to me and said in surprise, "Just now you were so far inside the sea and in seconds you are out. How is it, where did you learn to swim? I have never seen such a swimmer. You know, the Mother came here for a walk. She left the tennis-court and came this side just for a moment."

Four days later at the time of distribution of groundnuts I told the Mother I wanted to go for a sea-bath. At once She said, "No, you can't." But after giving the groundnuts to four or five persons She came back and asked me, "Do you know swimming?" I humbly replied, "Yes, Mother." On this She said, "All right, then you can go."

Outwardly there was only this much exchange of words between the Mother and the child. But there was a lot behind, which we could read in each other's eyes.

An unbelievable fact in the life of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is that they never desired their personal Supramentalisation or Divinisation for its own sake. Had they done so they would have achieved it long ago. They were exclusively concentrated on establishing a permanent link between this plane of ours and the Supramental, so that the earthly life might become a direct manifestation of the Supramental Light and Peace and Harmony. To know and understand the action of the Divine Embodiment we must have the eye of the Soul, the inner eye, anything that stops short will certainly mislead us and finally tend to make incorrect, unworthy and untrue statements that would indeed be considered as an act proper to a sightless mind. There are the Divine Mysteries that are never disclosed to an ordinary human mind until it goes within and learns to transcend itself.

SUKHVIR

A REQUEST

Our subscribers are requested to write their full addresses along with their numbers in BLOCK letters to us at an early convenient date. We propose to re-check all the addresses and thus minimise delay and loss through postal delivery.

We also request our patrons to always write in BLOCK their names and addresses in the money-order coupons whenever they send their subscriptions.

UDAR REMEMBERS

XIX

As our Sweet Mother's Centenary Year has just started I will give a short remembrance which I feel to be very appropriate.

One day I asked The Mother about Sri Aurobindo's return. I said that I could not imagine Him as a baby born to some earthly mother and being put across her knee and spanked on his bottom. The Mother replied, "No, Udar. He will not come back in that way. He will come in the new way, the supramental way, projected into this physical material world as a complete being. This being would be perfect and not age and not eventually die as has been the case so far. So let us wait for that to happen." This immediately brought to my mind these lines from *Savitri* (Book 3 Canto 3, p. 325, Cent. Ed.):

In these new worlds projected he became
A portion of the universal gaze,
A station of the all-inhabiting light,
A ripple on a single sea of peace.

Then I asked The Mother about Her own transformation and to this She said that there were two possibilities. The first was that this present body of Hers would be transformed. But for this to happen it would take from 200 to 300 years and so first the body must be made to exist for this period. The process of the cells of the body must change. Their process of ageing and decay must be prolonged to give enough time for the transforming forces to act.

The other alternative would be for Her to leave this present body and come back, as Sri Aurobindo will, in a new Supramental body.

"Which alternative would be chosen is entirely with The Lord to decide," The Mother said. "It is The Lord's Will that will prevail."

So now, in this wonderful year, let us all remember this and pray for Her to come as well as for The Lord to do so—to come quickly. If we all pray very hard, They cannot refuse.

UDAR

THE IMAGE OF MAN

HIS FOUR FACETS

Facet I: The Man in Revolt

REVOLT resulting from dissatisfaction is man's first significant image. Perhaps from this we get the world's initial spurt of transcending its given limits and making a dash for progress. It is the nomad in man, the iconoclast, the restless nature in him that has been the architect of his future greatness and has lent to earth a larger horizon, a greater height and spurred in him the drama of impossible El-dorados.

The revolt finds its ample expression in diverse ways, in many modes, in literature, in religion, in social thinking and in philosophy.

India never overtly gave voice to this revolt except perhaps in a Buddha, in Nihilism, in a Charvak, in Hedonism. Her revolution never expressed itself in bloodshed and yet, strangely, it is India who has been the fosterer of new ideas, revolutionary thoughts and epoch-making events.

Not so the urge in the West. One of the first recorded rebels in Greek myth was the Prometheus of Aeschylus in the drama *Prometheus Bound*. This drama is part of a trilogy whose second and third members are lost to posterity and yet in the surviving remnant we get a vivid picture of revolt against fate, against the tyranny of Zeus, the despot of the Hellenic pantheon. "Prometheus," says Maurice Friedman, "has always been the rebel *par excellence* and the 'Promethean' the very symbol of rebellion."¹

The cause of this rebellion can be summed up thus: "It is Prometheus who helped Zeus overthrow his father Cronos and gain dominion over the heavens, but now Zeus punishes Prometheus for helping the race of man that Zeus had planned to destroy."²

It was against this betrayal that Prometheus, the titan, rose, his body vanquished, tyrannised over by the agents of the Lord of the heavens, but his spirit strangely free and unbending under the stark load of autocratic repression.

There were others like Oedipus and Antigone who were victims to tyranny, tyranny not of the gods but of fate, and in this lies the essence of Greek tragedy. It is this aspect which is singularly absent from Indian myth and literature. In India heroes combat, side by side with the gods, to overthrow the demons and titans, the powers of obscurity, while in Greece men and women in spite of their valour, their courage, are destined finally to succumb to fate, proving the littleness of man, his servility to unseen powers.

Aeschylus, who culled his creation out of a distant Hellenic past, "found in man the centre of gravity of the world, in man whose mind, experience and action are implicated alike in his and in those far-off influences that descend to him from suc-

¹ *The Problematic Rebel*, p. 33.

² *Ibid.*

cessive generations of ancestors. He had some inkling of the complexity of causes underlying human events. He could, in the *Prometheus* at least, find the central germ of tragic action developed from within."¹

We shall quote two examples from this celebrated fragment of the triple drama, to give an impression of the colossal tragedy which forms the background of the revolt that is its theme.

"Behold me," exclaims Prometheus, "an ill-fated god, immanacled, the foe of Zeus, me who have incurred the enmity of all who resort unto the court of Zeus, by reason of my too great love for mankind."²

His rebellion is a silent and passive one. Zeus sends his messenger to fix terms with the fallen hero, to which he answers back defiantly and with pride, "Therefore let the lightning's forked curl be cast upon my head and let the sky by convulsed with thunder and the wrack of savage winds; let the hurricanes shake the earth from its rooted base, and let the waves of the sea mingle with their savage surge the course of the stars in heaven; let him on high hurl me down to black Tartarus with swirling floods of stern necessity; do what he will, me he shall never bring to death."³

The Semitic position is apparently different. Man is endowed with a free-will which exacts that, by obeying the law or disobeying it, he bear the consequence. But basically the Biblical and the Hellenic positions are not dissimilar.

Job, like Prometheus, rebels against an autocratic tyranny. The former's revolt had a cosmic bearing while the latter's strife marked an entirely individual turn, a protest against the repression of personal liberty. Prometheus, a Titan, was immortal and was in some way parallel to Zeus, as a superhuman entity, if not in position. Job, on the other hand, is keenly aware of his utter dependence upon the Hebraic godhead. Therefore his revolt is against the 'creator who made him and the creation he is set in.'⁴ If he had been a half-conscious beast, perhaps his suffering would not have been so keen.

There is another point of difference: Zeus is not the creator, he is in the line of the gods and as such is in the fold of the cosmos. But the Semitic god is the creator and, as such, transcends his creation and is an overseer and overlord of all he created.

With the advent of Christianity, the hectic phase of open revolt was over. At least there is no record of this struggle, until from the dark ages emerged the clandestine, disputable and perhaps none-too-respectable figure of Faustus. There were two or three versions of this myth, or *Faustbuch* as it was termed in Germany, which described this man as a necromancer who sold his soul to perdition.

The image that surfaced is one that stood against dogmatic religion, throwing overboard the concept of sin and virtue, a hedonistic cult standing aggressively against piety and suffering. In fact it was the same idea of progression of revolt and

¹ *Aeschylus*, Vol. II, ed. & tr. by Herbert V. Smyth, pp. XII-XIII.

² *Ibid.*, p. 227. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁴ *The Problematic Rebel*, p. 13.

an alienation from the original power. The Promethean substance of sympathy for mankind was replaced by a personal deviation in Job, but in Faustus we are shown man's cardinal failing which resulted in the struggle of the Right and the Wrong, the Christian and the Pagan, the Moral and the Sensual.

What Marlowe recreated was not a pagan man of wisdom, but a man of the renaissance alive to the waves of Hedonism as opposed to the medieval cult of sin and its retribution. "Faustus sought to conquer [the world] through knowledge. Thus Marlowe exhibits in this play an aspect of the indomitable spirit of man and the renaissance claim to freedom and its attempt to triumph over nature and interpret the riddle of the universe and the meaning of man's being."¹

Takakhav adds further: "In Marlowe there is no complexity of action. It is practically a one-man play and it is at the same time rather placed in an epic setting."²

Marlowe has attempted to depict the futility of theological learning, and Faustus, at the end of his life, disgusted and frustrated, turns to black magic which yields, at least dramatically, very interesting results: the appearance of Helen, whose face "launch'd a thousand ships / And burn'd the topless towers of Ilium"; Faustus's journey through Europe; the shaming and ridiculing of some of the ecclesiastical personalities and practices.

All these adventures come to Faustus for having sold his soul to the Devil, which can be taken as a symbol. After twenty years as stipulated, he must be damned beyond redemption.

The last part of the play reveals the cruel pangs, the struggle and the hectic cross-currents of the forces of Evil and Good. They cost Faustus his life and negated all his early human wisdom. This part of the legend Marlowe has absorbed into his play and has attempted to satisfy the theological populace of the time and justify the earlier digressions of the hero.

Goethe, who came a couple of hundred years later, brushed away all these traces and created a classic drama, the result of his fifty years of labour. "Faust begins where Doctor Faustus leaves off."³ The taint of the medieval heritage lingered in Marlowe. But in Goethe there is a progression of the theme and the image conjured up by the renaissance genius is turned into a classic figure, subsequently made all the more living by the musical creation of Mozart. Goethe achieved something universal. Faust represents the hallowed microcosm, the King of his little domain, a posture and attitude which itself was a revolt against God, the Macrocosm.

Or, rather, "He became a type of humanity aspiring towards perfection. In a way he represents Goethe's own personality and prizes these activities in life as a man of science and letters or a lover of mankind which Goethe himself was in all his career."⁴

¹ Marlowe's *The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. by N.S. Takakhav, p. 40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³ *The Problematic Rebel*, p. 42.

⁴ *The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus*, p. 49.

Faust in its second part reveals the true greatness of Goethe. A. G. Latham in his introduction to *Faust* comments: "The *Faust* in its entirety is indeed altogether unique. Its composition synchronises with the whole period of productiveness of a life gifted with a length and fullness of experience such as are rarely vouchsafed to mortals. From its inception in 1769 to its consummation in 1832 it reflects the thoughts and moods of one of the greatest minds of the time, and one of the most universally gifted minds of all times. It is the masterpiece of the poet who re-created the literature of a nation and re-inspired the literature of a continent."¹

Faust is a work of epic dimensions and the contrast between Marlowe and Goethe is glaring. While Marlowe's *Faustus* is a solitary hero dominating the drama, Faust has a wider background with the primal powers of God and Mephistopheles taking wagers either to mislead or to keep Faust on the right path, with a host of characters like Martha, Gretchen, Valentine, the witches and other characters thrown in, with the sordid drama of infatuation, remorse, murders, imprisonments and escapes forming the web and woof of the great human tragedy. That is why Stephen Spender observes, "Goethe is sometimes described as the last man to have the qualities of a Renaissance genius. He certainly has claims to be universal. He is a poet who could, to the credit of the aristocrat who was ruler of the little state of Weimar, be described as a poet among princes."²

Another image of a rebel we find in Shelley pursuing again the theme of Aeschylus. His great work, *Prometheus Unbound*, was not so much a complementary work as a work revelatory of the rebel-poet's idea of an ideal world.

Shelley's idea of a revolutionary society found expression elsewhere too in his short pieces, *Ode to the West Wind* and more vividly in the longer *Triumph of Life*.

An eminent critic comments: "He was burning with enthusiasm to change the world and he knew the way the world could be changed. It was his duty to make men reasonable by stimulating their imagination. In his early days he confused political enthusiasm with poetical inspiration."³

Prometheus was a symbol of human reason rising up against the autocratic rule of passions. The elements, the earth spirits are symbols too of sub-rational entities lending support to Reason. "*Prometheus Unbound* is far and away the most successful of those poems in which Shelley attempts to celebrate the triumph of reason and liberty."⁴

Further, comments Stephen Spender, "The history of Shelley's development is the gradual taming of his 'known ideas' by his increasing experience. He died before the conflict—which may have killed him—was resolved. Yet out of this conflict was created his greatest poetry in *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Triumph of Life*."⁵

¹ *Faust*, Parts I-II, p. xxxvii.

² *Great Writings of Goethe* by Stephen Spender, p. vii.

³ *Shelley* by Stephen Spender, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Listen now to Prometheus in Shelley:

Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
I had, and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day, whether the sun
Split my parched skin or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair
While my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.¹

We can almost discern a picture of a social and political unrest in these lines:

The nations thronged around and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, Liberty and Love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven,
Among them there was strife, deceit and fear.
Tyrants rushed in and did divide the spoils.²

But the curse of Jehoyah does bind Prometheus, and his dream becomes a reality when we hear Demogorgon summing up the Promethean greatness thus:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death and night;
To defy Powers which seem omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change nor falter nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.³

From the ideal to the practical, from the socio-political domain to Life as it is, goes the voice of Dostoevsky. The revolt is no longer an ethereal issue, but becomes an intimate matter, bringing things to our doorsteps. He declares, "All man wants is an absolutely *free choice*, however dear that freedom may cost him, whatever it may lead to."⁴

This may be considered as a communist doctrine, at least on the surface, implying the liberation of the proletariat. But there is an innate difference when Dostoevsky posits, "The whole meaning of human life can be summed up in one state-

¹ *Selected Poetry of P.B. Shelley* (Oxford Univ. ed.) p. 73.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴ *The Problematic Rebel*, p. 131.

ment that man exists for the purpose of proving to himself every minute that he is man and not an organ-stop."¹ He is dead against human society being turned into what he terms the "ant-heap" which is "the closed, collective society of organic unanimity" governed by communist dictatorship, the natural outcome of forgoing personal freedom at the altar of communal liberty.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Idiot*, *The Letters from the Underground* we come face to face with the negation of this epitomization of the person and the negation of the universal authority as a restricting factor to individual growth. This was his revolt which has two aspects: an inner factor or personal freedom and an external freedom from dictatorial oppression.

But Dostoevsky is a masochist, a rebel against his own failings and in turn he is a tormenter, a worshipper and an atheist. He wrote to a friend, "The hero is at different times of his life an atheist, a believer, a fanatic and sectarian, now again an atheist."²

Emphasising this point of individual growth he writes, "Nevertheless, I felt certain that man never wholly rejects adversity in the sense of chaos and disruption of his schemes, for adversity is the mainspring of his self-realisation."³ Here the term "self-realisation" bears no philosophical or yogic implications. It merely expresses the pragmatic goal of personal freedom.

In Nietzsche the revolt assumes a poignant and crucial turn. He is categorical in his views and the image of the superman that he conjures up has gone a long way to influence the European mind in general and the German race in particular. He heads the Existentialist way of thinking and is indeed a prophet who misunderstood his own prophecy and gave a wrong motivation to his vision with disastrous results.

He says, "All that proceeds from power is good, all that springs from weakness is bad."⁴

He announces, "I teach you the superman, Man is something to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass him?"⁵

Or, "What is ape to man? A laughing stock, a thing of shame. And the same shall be man to the superman, a laughing stock, a thing of shame."⁶

Again, in a similar vein, but strangely symbolic, "Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the superman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous trembling and halting. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal."⁷

Nietzsche fired the imagination of Europe with this vision of courage, adventure, the glory of supermanhood, which turned out to be a whip belittling women, belittling all human factors of sympathy, love, compassion—a superbeast, a super-

¹ *Ibid* ² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³ *Letters from the Underground* by F. Dostoevsky, p. 41.

⁴ *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, Introduction by Elizabeth Foster-Nietzsche, p. xxi.

⁵ *The Philosophy of Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra*, p. 6. ⁶ *Ibid.* ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

ego parading its stature of power across the globe.

Shaw too spoke of Superman. His concept was one of the perennial Don Juan flouting the Christian theory of hell and heaven, perhaps another miniature and insignificant version of the Nietzschean image.

Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, reveals the true as distinguished from the vitalistic Superman, "For what is Supermanhood but a certain divine and harmonious absolute of all that is essential in man? He is made in God's image, but there is this difference between the divine Reality and its human representative that everything which in the one is unlimited, spontaneous, absolute, harmonious, self-possessed becomes in the other limited, relative, laboured, discordant, deformed, possessed by struggle."¹

This is the supreme image of man not in revolt but in transformation and synthesis. It is not expected nor possible to reach this great altitude just at present. Yet this essay would be incomplete without mentioning Sri Aurobindo.

The credo or the mouthpiece of the modern man in revolt is the atheist Existentialism propounded by Sartre as opposed to Christian Existentialism whose champion was Kierkegaard in the 19th century.

Atheist Existentialism can be understood under these four following heads:

- (a) In man existence precedes essence, a doctrine opposed to the idealist viewpoint;
- (b) Man chooses his essence;
- (c) Liberty without limits; and
- (d) Responsibility.

"In philosophical terms," says Jean Foulque, "every object has an essence and existence; an essence, that is to say, a constant sum of properties; an existence, that is to say, a certain effective presence in the world."²

Sartre declares about the second axiom: "Man first *is*, only afterwards he is *this* or *that*—man must create for himself his own essence."³ In other words, "we are men, what men shall we be? It is only within limits that a door remains open on liberty."⁴

Sartre clarifies further, "Man is simply a situation... entirely conditioned by his class, his salary, the nature of his work, conditioned even to his emotional attitudes and ideas."⁵

About the axiom of liberty, "Conscious deliberation is always faked. In fact motives and incentives have only the weight of my projects, that is, the free production of the end in view and the known act to be carried out—their partners as it were..."⁶

Responsibility is the final hypothesis. Without this element neither liberty nor existence has any true value and may lead to chaos; therefore, "man's responsi-

¹ Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Edition, Vol. 16, pp. 278-9.

² *Existentialism* by Jean Foulque, p. 62.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 64

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

bility extends far beyond what, from a common-sense point of view, he could have chosen freely. Nothing eludes it; if chosen freely, it includes not only the inner, personal activity but also external events: I am deeply responsible about the war as if I had declared it myself."¹

It is in Kafka, the inner rebel, a rebel not of action but of attitude, that we get a glimpse of the unrest that stirred the European mind between the two global wars. He questions everything, all set values and ways. In *The Trial* he postulates that "there is a right way of life and the discovery of it depends on one's attitude to powers which are almost unknown; what he sets out to do is to find out something about these powers, and the astonishing thing is that he appears to succeed."²

Edwin Muir remarks, "*The Castle* may be taken as a sort of allegory akin to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, with a difference. While Bunyan's mind is primitive and naive, Kafka's is subtly skeptical."³

Kafka says, "There are two cardinal sins from which all others spring: impatience and laziness. Because of impatience we are driven out of Paradise, because of laziness we cannot return."⁴

Kafka represents a cynical and none-too-obtrusive pointing at the discovery of man's true vocation and his path. His revolt is subtle, his knowing is profounder and his attempt to discover a solution remains often an attempt at its best, there being no evidence of his discovering the goal. This led to his inner frustration which cost him his own life. He was forever dissatisfied with his *milieu*, his way of living which expressed itself in allegoric but forceful stories both of men and animals.

He is so totally dissatisfied with all he wrote that he tried to persuade his friend Brod to destroy everything he had produced. This request was of course not granted. He probably felt he had no message to give to the world, without realising that he had created a line of thinking, a departure from the current way of thought. He says, "The decisive moment in human development is a continuous one. For this reason the revolutionary movements which declare everything previous to be null and void are in the right, for nothing yet has happened."⁵

The cynical tone is obvious. Or there are moments of prophetic clarity, as here: "Our art is dazzled blindness before the truth; the light on the grotesque recoiling mask is true, but nothing else."⁶

Albert Camus is a contrast to Kafka as well as to other idealist thinkers. He is a fighter to the finish, in words, in literature and in action. His *Outsider* and *Pest* typify the Existentialist viewpoint. The image he brings to us is of one keenly dissatisfied with his environment and the people around him. He is not a retiring cynic but a bold announcer of rebellion. And the Second World War and Occupied France offered an opportunity to his militant spirit.

¹ *Ibid*, p. 70.

² *The Castle* by Franz Kafka, ed. by Edwin Muir, p. 7.

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ *The Great Wall of China* by Kafka, p. 142.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 142.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 151.

A commentator remarks, "Over and above intellectual and political leadership, he provided the moral guidance the post-war generation needed..."¹

Camus writes to a German friend during the war, "This urges me to say that your Europe is not the right one. There is nothing to unite or inspire. Ours is a joint adventure which we shall continue, despite you, with the inspiration of intelligence."²

He further asserts that... "civilisations are not built by rapping people on the kauckles with rulers. They are built up by the confrontation of ideas, by the blood of the spirit, by suffering and courage."³

The revolt of the human spirit thus expresses itself in many ways, on diverse levels of consciousness. If Prometheus is the forger of a new path, Faust reveals the rebellion against the set dogma which finally spells disaster to him. If Nietzsche announces the superman, it is Camus who stands staunchly against the forces set free by this aggressive faith in supernation. Others like Shelley or Kafka, have been visionary rebels, which meant frustration, strife, resulting in their deaths. What Dostoevsky expresses is not mere image but the result of his suffering as a down-trodden individual.

But the greatest rebel is Sri Aurobindo and his veridical image of Superman is the manifestation of his truth-vision.

ROMEN

¹ Justin O'Brien in Introduction to Camus's *Resistance, Rebellion and Death* p X.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18. ³ *Ibid*, p. 42

HOME

A GIRL in the sunshine
 Bends down and picks
 A flower, a poet takes note.
 She becomes a part of his world,
 A child of his page.
 He takes from her what
 She doesn't offer,
 What she isn't aware of yet:
 Her existence is a song....
 And because she doesn't understand
 He doesn't ask. He simply takes
 Of her presence, as a father
 Would his daughter; he takes home
 A picture, a poem.

BILLY KEMMETH

THE HEAVING HENNA

A TANGLED green of quiet rest
When the wind drops, a concert hall
Of chirping chorus and a gust
Of cadence in a sudden squall.
Mewing babies scramble up
To twist and wrestle in twiggy ease.
And when I looked at the calm cup
I learnt the henna's secret peace.
Within her knotted world of space
There is green room for chore-running.
A hive of stingers at her face
Make merry honey, close-humming.
The gyral jasmine twines her head
To top her crest for an azure look;
Then her crown is a scented bed
Which buzzing lodgers early book.
Consecrating queen of the soil
The witching hour there wrings its hand
In death. Your benison boughs foil
The tryst of spooks that fail to land.
Drawer of stealthy fingers that pluck
At your soft heart where tinted thrill is—
Rooted fairy god-mother Luck
To every passing Amaryllis.

G. VISWANATHAN

LONELY ARCHER

LONELY archer with a myriad aim,
Roaming this wild planet in search of game,
Seeking shadows and their fame
Through dark hallways of lust and shame,
Covered with smiles and chivalry...
One night of glitters and dim delights
Lightning tore my armoured pride,
Shining its truth inside my cloud.
Nothing to pretend, nowhere to hide,
I recognised the beast of my quest
Within the boundaries of my flesh.
I opened my helpless arms like a cross
And fell on my arrow with victorious trust.
The hunt was over, the search renewed.
Naked in my destiny's garden I stood.
So I learned to plow and remembered to bow.
Growing from the compost of my selfish escapade
Blossoms of Love and Devotion, fragrant with Wisdom and Might,
These I offer to Thee, Brother of Eternity...
In the silence of my soul's humility and sincerity
As a Crusader of Joy,
 Knight of Light,
 Warrior of Immortality.

BIHAO

TOWARDS LIGHT

SEVEN-rooted a great
Luminosity beyond
Space and Time for ever
Calls and possesses me, all myself.
But many shall come to know—
Their innermost self pouring out,
When deeper has been their fall and their joy—
Glad divine-eternal embrace!

O nuptial bacchantic sudden dawn!
Give Truth!
My spring-water-reeds through wavering joys—
Unmarred.

Come here,
Master!

We are unable, indeed,
 But strive for Thy Breath!
Around shall be emptiness, around us!

ASTRID

WORKING IN AUROVILLE

WE are baking, Lord,
In your Indian oven.
These white, snow-fed bodies
Are ready to be eaten,
Hot off the earth,
Popped into a god's mouth.

The sun surges up from the sea,
Blighting the windless morning
With tumultuous invasion and assault
Upon distant northern dreams.
Scurrying frantically, like uncovered ants,
We throw up battlements of sticky desire
Against that remorseless warrior who,
Undaunted, passes through the paltry gates,
Smacks his lips, rubs rough hands,
Comes upon us where we wait.

Then fire must battle fire!
With an inner flame mounting up
From the altar of our being
To meet that down-pouring powerful sun,
And grapple joyfully with the source
Of energy's kindling force,
The ecstatic spontaneous combustion.

GORDON

AUROVILLE AS A PROJECT OF HUMAN UNITY

I

IN the march of human civilisation each age brings its own ideals and aspirations or cultural needs and they express themselves in literature, philosophy, sculpture, painting, music and architecture. A township representing such a need is a most daring act, but also a powerful aid to the realisation of the need and the ideal.

The world is today tending to become more and more a real one-world, but this is happening primarily as a practical necessity, political, economic, etc., rather than as a deep spiritual need of present-day humanity. Right through the years of the First World War Sri Aurobindo felt that a sense of oneness was the real need of humanity and that when it came it would take us across the age of competitive nationalism and open before us an era of collaborative living and high spiritual fulfilment.

Since then much has happened that makes for one-world. The League of Nations was a fine first attempt at world-unification. But it was perhaps too unrealistic. However, the U.N.O., coming after another World War, though it was shaky for a while, has now stabilised itself and the need for it is universally felt.

Still, oneness or unity in mankind is as yet entertained as an extremely difficult thing. But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother hold that if a Higher Spiritual Descent can be yogically achieved then such oneness and unity can come upon man unexpectedly. If egoisms become a little modest under a Higher Pressure, the thing can become a reality at any time. At the moment such egoisms, national and otherwise, are pretty strong, but, all the same, regional and continental and other larger groupings are coming into being and an overall world-organization is felt more and more to be a necessity.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as Masters of the occult and the spiritual, strongly feel that the present upsurge of national egoisms is the consequence of an intensified Higher Pressure and that Human Unity which will initiate a new era for man is very much in the offing.

Auroville as a township is an outer symbol of this fact and it is wonderful how the ideal has already evoked a wide and deep response in the world as a whole and a large number of people are seeking to be re-created as the right members of a future united humanity. The building of the township is really a process for creating the future personality and provides rich opportunities for the training of such a personality.

It is India's privilege to attempt this great thing of the future.

We all need to ponder over it and become participants in this adventure.

2

How Auroville seeks objectively to represent human unity and supply an appropriate environment for the cultivation and the practice of it, is a further question to consider.

It would be nice to look at the ground-plan or a model of the township for a while and try to feel it not piece-meal, analytically, but as a whole. Does it not strike one as a single, much varied and complex, circular unified fact with a strong dominant centre? And does not the whole thing carry an effect of movement, a dynamic character? The centre consists of a wonderfully designed globe-like structure resting on four huge pillars which arise in a lake. The global structure has a large hall, the hall of meditation. The entire structure and the vast gardens and canals around constitute the temple of Truth, the Matri Mandir, the temple of the Divine Mother, the Highest Power and Truth that guides and inspires the universe.

Here is the heart of the town and it is intended as the primary inspiration in the hearts of the residents. This high and large truth of all existence, the Supreme and the Divine, is the fact that unifies us all and the same we aspire to realize consciously and make dynamic in life.

A unity, harmony and beauty being the inspiring motive, it is sought to be created in the environment as a constant inspiration for the residents. And the same inspires the incorporation of agriculture, industry, international living, science and technology into the life of the township. Today, these pursuits of contemporary life are much marred by the ordinary human impulses of greed, competition, jealousy, anger, fear, etc., and we shall need to re-create them in order that they may serve the cause of human unity and harmony. That is an enormous task of cultural re-creation, but it is needed for a new life of human unity.

The whole life of the township will comprise four zones or sectors, Residential, Cultural, International and Industrial. Each one of these will have interesting physical features, for which a fuller architectural account published by the Auroville Office should be availed of. But it may be mentioned here that the international zone will represent, in the respective national pavilions in concrete form, the life and culture of the various countries or distinctive areas of the world. Thus one would be able to feel a direct contact with the entire world.

This is just a broad general account of the architectural side of Auroville. Those interested in this aspect will need to refer to the literature that has been published by the Auroville Office or otherwise published, including some research papers done at some engineering institutes.

3

Latterly Auroville and its high inspiration and aspiration got into an unhappy form and we all much missed the great joy we had felt about it earlier. The cause of this is not hard to find. The cause is the same which Auroville in its very conception and nature aims at overcoming. Human unity in its essential spiritual form of spontaneously felt oneness is a very high ideal, a clear indication of evolving life, a necessary trend of universal Nature, but evidently this involves a constant persevering will to grow spiritually, a struggle against the forces of resistance and a consequent up-and-down movement in relation to them. The forces of resistance are basically the forces

of unconsciousness seeking continuation of the present state of things, unwilling to accept a change. Evidently this inertia of life, this egoism of nature has to go so that a wider life, a deeper unity, a larger vision may be realised.

Such self-assertion on the part of the resisting elements of life is a part of the process that seeks unity and a progressive liquidation of it would naturally evoke repeated emergences of it. One might say that its emergence is provoked by the forces that make for unity and that its due disposal would deepen and strengthen the work of unity. However, it will be necessary to retain this sense and feeling for the occult and the spiritual working, so that the process may cause the least suffering.

Let us hope and pray that the actual participants in the great adventure of Auroville as also its sympathisers, admirers and promoters the world over will understand the great and deep struggle that the adventure involves and be resolutely prepared to face the manifold resistances that might arise from time to time and never for a moment waver in the faith and the feeling that human unity is coming, it must come and all that resists it has to go.

A short sentence of Sri Aurobindo's is full of certitude and is a complete assurance. The sentence is, "...the unity of mankind is evidently a part of Nature's eventual scheme and must come about." (Birth Centenary Edition, Volume 15, p. 266)

And here are also a few explanatory sentences which show why and how the resistances must arise and the great purpose they serve. Sri Aurobindo says, "As in the practice of the spiritual science and art of yoga one has to raise up the psychological possibilities which are there in the nature and stand in the way of its spiritual perfection and fulfilment so as to eliminate them, even, it may be, the sleeping possibilities which might arise in future to break the work that has been done, so too Nature acts with the world-forces that meet her on her way, not only calling up those which will assist her but raising too, so as to finish with them, those that she knows to be the normal or even the unavoidable obstacles which cannot but start up to impede her secret will. This one has often seen in the history of mankind; one sees it exemplified today with an enormous force commensurable with the magnitude of the thing that has to be done. But always these resistances turn out to have assisted by the resistance much more than they have impeded the intention of the great Creatrix and her Mover." (*Ibid.*, pp. 557-8) Thus the resistances really bring a deliverance.

And the ringing words of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* too are a marvellous inspiration:

Whatever the appearance we must bear,
 Whatever our strong ills and present fate,
 When nothing we can see but drift and bale
 A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.
 After we have served this great divided world
 God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right...
 This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:
 A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:

His nature we must put on as he put ours;
 We are sons of God and must be even as he:
 His human portion, we must grow divine.

(BK. I, Canto IV)

The attempt at Human Unity, Auroville, represents a real need of man, his "inborn right" and it cannot fail. Let us have the faith and the courage that we shall not fail it either, whatever resistances might come up against us.

INDRA SEN

THE LOTUS DAWN

O LIGHT Immaculate! long-desired One!
 With ruthless love Thou comest
 To capture the world in a hushed tone!

Mighty Power of lightning steed!
 Ere the mortal mind realised Thee
 The hidden earth-spirit was freed!

Through thirty winters' blast and noise,
 When our last ray was flickering
 Two lonely Souls toiled in deep poise.

Eagle fire-winged! One sweep on earth
 By Thee broke age-old darknesses.
 Our life's lost paradise took birth!

NAGIN DOSHI

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the month of January, 1978)

CHAPTER III

WHIRLPOOL OF DESIRES

(4)

“No wish I harbour unfulfilled shall die.”¹

TOWARDS the end of 1964 one glowing afternoon during meditation the mind mused: [If the body dies today what desire would you feel unfulfilled?] Some part in me arched and searched if there was any desire for any worldly thing. There was no reply.

From the “food-desire” I passed to the conquest of all desires: in the words of Sri Aurobindo, “the endless circle of desires”. Here I speak of the final stage: The mind could open itself to the vision of God only when the soul would separate itself from the servitude of the body; without that it could not emerge into another dimension. The true life cannot open otherwise.

The question of the separation of the soul is dealt with in great detail in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Till 1948 the only book to which I turned for light was *Bases of Yoga*. From 1955 the hungry soul began to draw its sustenance from the *Bulletin*. Another 10 years had to pass before I could discover the spiritual food that lay stored in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. To put it in other words, I needed still more than a decade of grounding before my mind could perceive the light enshrined there.

My turning to it began from 1966 when it came as a birthday gift from the Mother that year. But the ideas and ideals contained in it were too high for my infant soul, yet the book invited new experimentation. The details of the evolution of yoga sadhana might appear too many but they are not even a fraction of what is demanded of a “seeker of perfection” in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga as enumerated in that book.

The chapter on the ‘Release from Subjection to the Body’ I read so many times that it was difficult to keep count, yet could not succeed in putting even one into day-to-day life. The consciousness was so engrossed in the body that no effort could bear fruit.

After a long and hard struggle a new light broke upon me through these words: The mind has this power of detachment and can stand back from the body not only in idea but in act... We must not care essentially about its sleep or its waking...its pain or its pleasure, its health or ill-health, its vigour or its fatigue, its comfort or its discomfort, or what it eats or drinks....”²

¹ *Savitri*, Vol. II, p. 153.

² *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 318-19.

The vital which made perpetual demand was no more aggressive. It could no longer exert its pressure on the body. If it tried coercion, the body refused to yield, refused to be "ill-treated by the vital and the mind".¹ Thus some signs of the body acquiring its consciousness were perceptible:

"...When one has developed this body-consciousness, one can have a very clear perception of the opposition between the different kinds of consciousness. When the body needs something and is aware that this is what it needs, and the vital wants something else and the mind yet another, and well, there may very well be a discussion among them and contradiction and conflict. And one can discover very clearly what the poise of the body is, the need of the body itself..."² "The instinct of the body is very sure. It is the vital and the mind which disturb it".³ During the meals no sooner did it have "what was necessary" than a voice spoke sufficiently clear: "no more", and the hand stopped, the stomach too gave its silent consent.

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga does not lay much stress on food. It wants us to "keep food-desire in a small corner."⁴ "Take what is necessary—not less not more and think no more about it."⁵ "Just as one should not overeat, so one should not diminish unduly—it produces a reaction which defeats the object".⁶

The following will further indicate why there is no stress on ascetic diet in the Ashram:

"As for sannyasis and food, sannyasis put a compulsion on their desires—they take ascetic food as a principle; but this does not necessarily kill the greed for food, remains compressed and if the compulsion or principle is removed, it can come up again stronger than before—for compression often increases the forces of these things instead of destroying them."⁷

Another quotation equally important:

"The Yogi eats not out of desire, but to maintain the body."

I found no difficulty in putting this principle in action. Food should be taken to keep the body fit, this I learnt here. Formerly the ruling concept was gratification of the palate. Now if tasty food comes of itself I relish it but there is no eagerness for it.

Let me dwell a little more on the point.

I have been clearly marking since 1964 that whenever concentration grew deeper there rose no sense of hunger. Of course, meditation is my first love but I try to balance the hours of silence with the hours of work. Often I have found that after heavy work or physical exercises the being opened more readily, more freely to the action of the Mother's Force than at other times. If the concentration acquired intensity, the body did not feel inclined to rush for Food. Off and on I was confronted with a choice "Food or meditation." If the body ran for the joy of food, I stood the chance of losing the joy of meditation. This brought an inner reaction. On the contrary if I exerted my will a little and gave myself to meditation the body would make nothing

¹ The Mother's Centenary Vol. V, p. 294.

² *Ibid.*, p. 295. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁴ ⁵ ⁶ *On Yoga* II, Tome, II, p. 561. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 564.

of hunger or thirst. Nearly 6 years later the lines noted below appealed to my consciousness. Perhaps the time had come for a leap forward.

“...the food we take can be reduced to a minimum without the mental or the vital vigour being in anyway reduced; even on the contrary they can be trained to a greater potentiality of vigour by learning to rely on the secret fountains of the mental and vital energy...”

This induced me to regulate the quantity of food. By degrees I brought it “to the minimum”. It kept the body light and always a bit hungry. The Naturopathists consider it a sign of good health. They claim it keeps one immune from luxury-diseases.

Despite reducing the quantity of food, the bowels were not moving freely. I seized this opportunity to free the body from dependence on solid food. From here my efforts to conquer desire took a new turn. I started to live on fruits and greens, without reducing my routine work. On the third day I felt very hungry. It told on my nerves also. When about to go back to my usual diet, there sprang a happy suggestion: “Why not learn to bear the pangs of hunger with a calm mind?” The whole of my being gave a willing consent. The body also seemed to welcome the idea. As soon as the consciousness found an access into the inner chambers there remained no sign of appetite. Not even once did the thought run to food. This emboldened me to prolong the experiment as long as the body did not get emaciated.

A few days later I felt very weak. It was a new factor. The mind went to food again and again. “The body must not be allowed to grow weak”: this suggestion had a quick effect. On August 24, 1977 the mind declined to sit for meditation. The body also followed suit. A burning sensation caused uneasiness. Just when I was going to succumb, a contrary suggestion caught hold of me. “Why not try to draw energy from some higher source, so eloquently propounded in *The Synthesis of Yoga*?” This turned the tide. I mustered inner strength to become composed, a state so necessary for a flawless concentration. After an hour I felt refreshed. No trace of weakness was left. The empty stomach, instead of causing hindrance helped the being to be more calm and collected. Thus began the sadhana to separate the mind from servitude to the body.

The body seemed to have adjusted to the new way of life,¹ for the loss in weight during one month was only one kilo but the experiment could not be extended more than a month. “Yogic life is a continuous struggle.”² *Dehāsakti*—attachment to body—cannot be conquered so easily.

Till now the forces had dallied with the vital and the mental, now it came down heavily on the body. That is another story. Its details I shall relate at the appropriate place.

A fear of nervous breakdown overtook me, so I thought to wait till the being was

¹ There comes a time when “the inner being does not need any food”. (*On Yoga, II*), Tome II, p. 566.

² Vivekananda.

ready to go further. The one immediate gain of this food-education was that the body did not look to food with a hungry eye even when it felt the pinch of hunger badly. No lurking desire for delicacies. Dependence on solid food is there but no eagerness. And it is on this that Sri Aurobindo lays stress:

“It is the attachment to food, the greed and eagerness for it, making it an unduly important thing in the life, that is contrary to the spirit of Yoga.”¹

In this context he has further said what sums up everything in one line:

“The proper attitude to food is equality.”²

This is yet beyond my reach.

A short survey of the upshot of all these efforts may not be out of place here:

During this period I had a series of fine experiences: I had seen my subtle body several times before. Now I saw an outline of my body in milk-white colour with several patches in the spinal cord but none of them was vivid. Next, I happened to see a serpent with several open hoods³ in the parts below the navel. A light of globular shape resembling the size of a cricket ball, came to my vision between the eyebrows, and another of the same size in the navel with an aura of white light. Several times the two were joined by a column of light.

Prayer has all along been the mainstay of my sadhana. We believe in the gift of grace. Buddhism holds them spiritually weak who rely on grace. It is pre-eminently a philosophy of self-effort. Whenever the consciousness is confounded, prayer helps to make the passage clear. Once at the time of prayer, I noticed a part of my *chidākāś* (mental sky) covered with clouds. Shooting rays of light came piercing the clouds by the power of prayer. At another time a lotus came into view in the midst of the mental sky. Lotus indicates, Sri Aurobindo observes, “fully developed consciousness in the places indicated”.⁴

Now at times there arises a hesitation in raising a prayer. Here should be noted a distinction between prayer and consecration. Through prayer we approach the Divine to get a thing done. In the latter, all is left to the will of the Divine. Once the spiritual part of me said, “No prayer for anything. Leave yourself in the hands of the Mother. Allow yourself to be moulded as she chooses.” When the heart started to pray a voice dissuaded, “You are imposing your will on the Divine.” Does it augur that I have reached the transitional period—from personal effort to total reliance on the Divine? More of this later on.

For more than a week I had no major experiences. While offering Pranam on the Vijaya Day (1977) a prayer shot forth from the heart for a Divine gift that might make the day memorable. All of a sudden I saw the Mother, seated on the chair which was placed in the Meditation Hall to celebrate the occasion. I saw her just as I had seen her on my birthday in 1972.

¹ Tome II, p. 560. ² *Ibid.*, p. 561.

³ Serpent (with six hoods) is the Kundalini shakti (*Practical Guide to Integral Yoga*, 1965 Ed., p. 261).

⁴ Tome II, p. 251.

The very next day there was such a blissful descent of the Mother's Force that it kept me overwhelmed for more than two and a half hours. All was so still within that there was not a single vibration either from the vital or the mind. This was followed by the descent of peace which came and gripped my consciousness. It looked there was no flesh or bone in the whole area of the head, instead there was a solid block of peace and silence.

"That was the gift of a revealing hour."

It might be rated in the traditional Yoga as *Devadvar* (door) to *mukti* (liberation) but in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga it is just the beginning.

"These are the ordinary normal experiences of the sadhana when there is an opening from above—the contact with the peace of the Brahman. 'How beautiful, calm and still all seems—as if in water there was not even a wave'—there could hardly be a better description of this experience....I suppose it is only a contact yet, but a very true and vivid contact if it gives rise to so vivid and true a feeling—a very good beginning".¹

Thus "the soil was prepared and watered" for the transplantation of the heavenly tree.

(To be continued)

¹ Tome II, pp. 249-50.

"IDEAL CHILD"

"Ideal Child", a small booklet containing words of the Mother, was first published in 1953 with these words from the Mother: "*Let this book reach every child.*" On the occasion of the Centenary Year, many devotees, parents and educationists have proposed to try to fulfil this wish of the Mother, by raising funds for printing and by arranging for distribution through educational departments, both in India and abroad, of this precious small book. Over one lakh of copies have already reached the students in Kutch district of Gujarat. Funds are being received for free distribution in Broach district of Gujarat, and for Bombay and Madras cities. Translations are also being made for publication in several Indian languages. The cost of 500 copies works out to Rs. 150. Those who would like to participate in this work may kindly send their contribution (*for any number of copies*) by cheque, demand draft or money order in favour of "Sri Aurobindo Society—Ideal Child" addressed to Shri Keshavji, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry-605002. (It is estimated that in India alone over 50 million copies are required involving a total cost of Rs. 1.5 crores.) (The retail price of this booklet is 50 paise, postage extra, and it can be obtained from Sabda, Pondicherry, 605002.)

THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of January 1978)

The Yoga of King Lear (Contd.)

II. The Division

As the story opens, the political conditions in Britain are precarious. Lear is an aging king, 'four score—and upward', with three daughters and no male heir. Sooner or later, power must be transferred to one or more of his daughters. The two eldest, Goneril and Regan, are sinister in nature and no division or assignment of power could satisfy them which left any authority in the hands of another or even with each other. Therefore any arrangement was likely to be followed by civil war and a struggle for absolute power. Through no man's fault or initiative, persons of extremely evil propensity were placed very close to power. This situation is an outer expression of the conditions of the social consciousness of the country. Until now Britain has been ruled by a powerful monarch who kept the country unified by his strength. There is no one of equal power to replace him. The solution which naturally suggests itself is a division into three parts, each to be ruled by a daughter and her husband and the national unity maintained by familial bonds. The change is necessitated by circumstance, but that circumstance reflects a compelling inner necessity. Something in the social consciousness is seeking to evolve beyond the limits of absolute power vested in a king. That evolution is what follows Lear's renunciation of power. All the resistances it meets, all the destruction it releases are a preparation of the consciousness and a working out of that which opposes the social progress.

As King, Lear represents in himself the conditions of the country which identifies itself with him just as he identifies himself with it. He is a man of great vital power, a commander of men, not only by virtue of his position, but by his very nature. He is generous, open and unsuspecting, though too choleric, vain, obstinate, passionate and domineering to be simply called "good". Beneath his vital personality of power lies an emotional being of exceptional depth and richness which, once released by madness, opens and universalises itself in sympathy with his fellowman. But as he is placed in life, Lear's emotions are too much dominated by selfishness, vanity and egoism to express real love or affection.

As the country has come to a transition point, so has Lear. In his old age, he feels compelled to put aside the mantle of authority and spend his last days in the comfort and warmth of his youngest daughter Cordelia's affection. There is in Lear an inner urge to renounce the satisfactions of power with which he is saturated and grow into the satisfactions of the heart. But there is also much in him which is so accustomed to

the privileges and pleasures of absolute power that to give them up would itself seem like death. What takes place is a working out of the forces within his being, compelling and resisting a shift in consciousness from the vital to the emotional center.

Lear announces a contest in which the kingdom is to be divided among his three daughters and their husbands according to each one's profession of love and devotion to him. Even the manner in which he expresses his intention forebodes a different outcome.

Meantime we shall express our *darker* purpose.
 Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
 In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent
 To shake all cares and business from our age,
 Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
 Unburden'd crawl toward death.

I.i.35-40

The scheme is intended not only to satisfy Lear's desire for affection but his love of absolute power as well. At the very moment he proposes to relinquish the powers and privileges of his position, he employs them to elicit assurances of devotion. Instead of commanding, he wants to be persuaded with flattery. He is trying to raise himself from the plane of power where things are ordered and commanded to the plane of emotions where things can be given and received but never demanded. But he does so by using the mechanism of power, the authority which commands. This insistence on using the lower means for a higher end leads to tragedy.

The elder two daughters have no difficulty fulfilling his request because they are incapable of true affection and driven only by mercenary aims. Only Cordelia, the one who is actually capable and full of tender feelings for her father, finds it difficult to flatter his vanity in return for a kingdom. When he comes to her, the only reply is "Nothing." The intent of that "Nothing" is certainly not to harm but it does immense harm. When Lear presses her further, she responds with a mental formula of duty which only further disappoints and infuriates the king.

Cord. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
 My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
 According to my bond; no more nor less.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia! Mend your speech a little,
 Lest you may mar your fortunes.

Cord. Good my lord,
 You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me; I
 Return those duties back as are right fit,
 Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
 Why have my sisters' husbands, if they say
 They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
 That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
 Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
 To love my father all.

Lear. But goes thy heart with this?

Cord. Ay, my good lord.

Lear. So young and so untender?

Cord. So young, my lord, and true. (I.i.90-106)

When she refuses to make public professions of love, vanity coupled with pride sparks the king's fury. In a moment of embarrassment and extreme outrage, he withdraws Cordelia's inheritance and disclaims all emotional relationship with her.

Thy truth, then, be thy dower!...
 Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
 Propinquity and property of blood,
 And as a stranger to my heart and me
 Hold thee from this for ever. (I.i.107-115)

His rashness and rage borders on pure cruelty and madness as the following lines reveal.

...The barbarous Scythian,
 Or he that makes his generation messes
 To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
 Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,
 As thou my sometime daughter. (I.i.115-119)

With one sweep Lear banishes Cordelia from his life. With another he casts out his most true and loyal servant, the Earl of Kent, who only seeks to save him from folly and the catastrophe to which it inevitably leads.

Kent. My life I never held but as a pawn
 To wage against thine enemies; nor fear to lose it,
 Thy safety being motive. (I.i.154)

With a third sweep Lear bestows all his power and property on his two eldest daughters and their husbands.

For Lear it is a complete renunciation: renunciation of power, security and social position; renunciation of true family ties and affection; renunciation of human fellowship, goodwill, and service. These three represent all that supports life, nourishes, strengthens and fulfils. With them resides the potential for great social happiness and cultured living. Without them human life is primitive, barbarian, empty. By rejecting them he abandons the encrusting protection they afford to each man at his

own level and puts himself in direct contact with forces of universal life and nature. Man grows by renouncing the lower for something higher, by giving up what he is to become something greater. Lear's triple renunciation of power, family and friends opens his entire being to the world around him and through an ordeal of suffering results in a growth which he could not otherwise have made.

But there is also in his renunciation a strong element of violence or offense to that which he renounces. In the plane of consciousness not only the renunciation but the offense too has its own result. In this division of the kingdom, Lear introduces a purely personal motive into an issue of national import. He allows an old man's pride and vanity to overrule a king's prudence. Having ruled the country as a sovereign monarch who identifies himself with the kingdom, he wishes to divide and dispense it as personal property based on his affection for his children and their devotion to him. A nation or community, like an individual, has a consciousness of its own which responds to man's attitudes and actions both overtly and through the subtler mechanism of life forces. Desdemona's elopement with a black Moor was an affront to the social consciousness of Venice which raised active resistance from that deeper level of life, resulting in her immediate departure from the country. So also Lear's action is a violence against the consciousness of the country. By allowing pride and passion to take precedence over national interests, he has sacrificed the country and put it into the hands of destructive forces. Hereafter the power and protection he drew from the kingdom is cancelled and he is left without its support. In the battle his own subjects and countrymen actually fight against his cause in defending their land from foreign invasion. The intensity of the consequences which follow is determined by the intensity of the plane in which man functions, not merely the intention of the doer. Here it is the plane of national life, therefore the intensity of consequences is very great.

Similarly Lear's curse on Cordelia for refusing to flatter him is an unpardonable offense to the consciousness of family, human relations, the bonds between father and daughter. His curse and rejection of Cordelia cancels all family bonds, all effective protection and nurturance; for, to be effective, such bonds require reciprocity. Once he cancels them, Cordelia becomes helpless to support him despite her deep wish to do so. Lear repeats the same error in his curse of Goneril who subsequently becomes the chief instrument of his suffering. Likewise the rejection of Kent is a rejection of the bonds of devoted service. Kent continues to serve but his loyalty no longer has the power to save.

III. Cordelia and Kent

The tragedy of Lear is made far more tragic and painful by the presence and suffering of the king's youngest daughter, Cordelia. While our sympathy for the king is somewhat restrained by his brutal cruelty towards others, there is nothing to dampen our emotional response to Cordelia's suffering and to prevent us from wish-

ing along with Tate, Johnson and Bradley that Shakespeare had given her a sweeter destiny. Nothing, that is, at first glance. Harley Granville-Barker justifies her irreconcilable fate thus: "the tragic truth about life to the Shakespeare that wrote *King Lear*... includes its capricious cruelty. And what meeter sacrifice to this than Cordelia?"¹ Yet in another passage Granville-Barker has come much closer to touching on the real explanation. I quote the passage at length.

It will be a fatal error to present Cordelia as a meek saint. She has more than a touch of her father in her. She is as *proud* as he is, and as obstinate, for all her sweetness and her youth. And, being young, she answers uncalculatingly with pride to his pride even as later she answers with pity to his misery. To miss this likeness between the two is to miss Shakespeare's first important dramatic effect; the mighty old man and the frail child, confronted, and each unyielding... If age owes some tolerance to youth, it may be thought too that youth owes to age and fatherhood something more—and less—than the truth...²

Again he sums it up:

Pride unchecked in Lear has grown monstrous and diseased with his years. In her youth it shows unspoiled, it is in flower. But it is the same pride.³

As in his portrayal of Desdemona, here too Shakespeare has presented a woman of beauty and culture. Her demeanor is gentle and refined though not lacking in strength or determination. Her emotions are deep, pure, loyal and enduring. Her mind is clear and idealistic. Desdemona is more of the heart, softer and more graceful, while Cordelia combines emotional goodness with a stoical will and courage born of idealism. Desdemona inherited from her father a certain narrowness and rigidity of mental outlook and an inability to see how others are affected by her actions. Likewise Cordelia has inherited from her father, who is a far more powerful figure than Brabantio, a very limited mental outlook which expresses itself because of her goodness as doctrinaire idealism and an inflexible will functioning in accordance with those ideals.

As Granville-Barker has pointed out, Cordelia possesses the same pride and obstinacy we find in Lear, only her emotions are purer, more cultured and refined than his. We have already quoted Lear's response rejecting and cursing his best loved daughter. In eloping with Othello, Desdemona infuriated her father to the point where he refused to have her re-enter his home and died of grief shortly thereafter. Though her intention was never to hurt him it comes as a mortal blow. Desdemona is only following the promptings of her heart and mind. When Cordelia refuses to make public protestations of love to her father, she too is only following

the promptings of her heart and mind. She would fain use her genuine affection for her father to win any worldly gain. The deeper emotions rebel at the very thought of public demonstration. To her the truest thing is not to speak, rather than flatter even by saying what is true. Lear is proud and vain. Cordelia refuses to be compelled to satisfy his vanity in front of the entire court.

But what is it in her that refuses? As Granville-Barker has said, it is the same element of pride and vanity inherited from her father, the same adamancy and obstinacy and wilfulness. Cordelia refuses to bring herself to the level of a bargain, to exchange her precious emotions for a piece of land. The very idea of the contest is repulsive to her. She decides to be silent and her silence has catastrophic consequences. Along with Granville-Barker we must ask if "youth owes to age and fatherhood something more—and less—than the truth." By remaining silent and then speaking only a dry mental platitude about divided duty to father and husband, surely Cordelia does not express the truth. For the truth is that she feels deep affection for her father but resents hypocrisy and mercenary professions. She acts on principle, a fixed narrow principle, but beneath the principle is the pride of one who refuses to have her emotions commanded and who clings unbendingly to her sense of personal dignity.

I yet beseech your Majesty—
 If for I want that glib and oily art
 To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend
 I'll do't before I speak—that you make known
 It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
 No unchaste action or dishonoured step,
 That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favour;
 But even for want of that for which I am richer—
 A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
 That I am glad I have not, though not to have it
 Hath lost me in your liking.

(I.i.224-233)

Cordelia's refusal, like Desdemona's elopement, is a violent blow to her father. Both have in them an element of unconscious and unintentional cruelty to which the limited mind and will are always prone. Cordelia like Lear can think only of her own position. She neither considers nor responds to her father's need. Her allegiance to truth has a touch of self-righteousness and arrogance. Bradley observes that "Fate makes on her the one demand which she is unable to meet."⁴ What Bradley calls fate can be seen on closer scrutiny to be an expression of a life principle. In *Othello* we saw the violent forces unleashed by the social consciousness of Venice against the transgression of its values and the natural defensive mechanism in social life which seeks to retard or destroy any attempt to rise above the common existence toward some ideal condition: in this case, the romantic dream of a perfect love. Life acted at the point of weakness—Desdemona's ignorant and blind initiative

which failed to evaluate her own nature realistically, the effect on her father and the world around her, and Othello's impure lower nature whose capacity for rage and jealousy necessarily negated the possibility of perfect love.

Cordelia, like Desdemona, is one of nature's higher creations. She embodies a high degree of emotional and mental purity. Like Desdemona she is born into a society far less cultured and pure, an atmosphere of low consciousness where evil has substantial scope for expression. Life moves to stifle the budding perfection in her nature and it does so by acting on the small grain of impurity in her otherwise sparkling character. What Bradley calls fate is the activity of life forces at this one vulnerable point, the pride she inherited from her father. Cordelia's assertion of divided duty and Lear's assertion demanding professions of affection are the same trait. The movement that arises to destroy him touches her also, for her act of relating to it by assertion. Because she takes the initiative to speak arrogantly and advance the movement instead of cancelling it, she loses the capacity to save her father later on.

The rejection of Cordelia, Lear's most loving daughter, is followed by the banishment of Kent. As a character Kent is a further and greater development of the qualities possessed by Horatio, Emilia and Macduff, but he is a character of a higher build. His is pure goodness expressed as loyalty and service. His role in life is service, not strength, to solace, not to save. His position, personality, and consciousness are those of loyal obedience. He recognises the authority in Lear and relates to it by selfless devotion. In his confrontation with Lear over Cordelia's disinheritance, Kent shows the same adamancy as the King. He has the strength to speak out boldly, not the strength for powerful or effective action in life. Out of his affection for Cordelia and the King he transgresses his natural role in the court and denounces Lear's action as madness.

Be Kent unmannerly

When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?

• Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak

When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound

When majesty falls to folly.

(I.i.144-8)

The immediate result is the order for his own exile from the kingdom and his donning a disguise so that he may continue his service to Lear.

It is noteworthy that none of the truly evil characters in the drama have yet taken a conscious initiative. Up to this point everything centers around the interaction of Lear, Cordelia and Kent and all the terrible sufferings which follow have their source in this encounter. To rightly comprehend the tragedy which follows, it will not suffice to blame Goneril, Regan, Cornwall and Edmund. We must see the true significance of the court and the direct relationship between it and all that follows. We must ask and attempt to answer to our own satisfaction a number of crucial questions. Why does Lear suffer so much, so constantly and without any relief except death? Why

is Cordelia caught in the same movement? Why is it that Lear and Cordelia are not finally given a few happy years together? These are the questions with which Shakespeare has most moved the hearts of his audience and most baffled the minds of his critics. We must discover the source of the great intensity and direction which finds expression in the action of the drama, and carries it to its inexorable conclusion.

(To be continued)

GARRY JACOBS

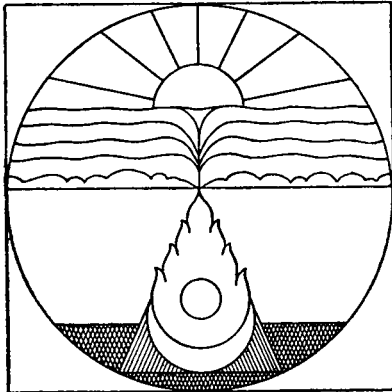
NOTES

¹ *Prefaces to Shakespeare* Vol. II, Granville-Barker, B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1963, p. 48.

² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴ *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A.C. Bradley, Macmillan & Co., 1965, p. 265.



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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

- **L'Agenda de Mère** 1964-1973, Volumes I-III. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. 1977. 254 pages. Rs. 30 (Fr. 30).

Agenda in French means the Memorandum book in which one writes down from day to day what one has to do. The book before us is the record of the Mother's Talks during the last ten years of her life on earth. It is not a complete record, but only a very small selection from the large number which the Publisher's Note assures us will come out in print in due course. This record the Mother describes as her *Agenda de l'Action Supramentale*. It may thus be taken as a series of signposts on the way to the total Supramental Change, including the divinisation of the material body.

The Talks included in these first three volumes (which are bound together as a single book in the present edition and cover the periods 1964-1967, 1968-1969, and 1970-73 respectively) have already appeared in the Ashram *Bulletin* serially, under the caption "Notes on the Way", with the full approval of the Mother, who occasionally made some additions and minor changes at the time of publication.

The *Agenda* has been described in the Publisher's Note as "Mother's Epic". The description is just. An Epic is marked by two main qualities: simplicity and grandeur—sublimity expressed in the most straightforward terms. Whether an Epic be written in verse or prose makes no essential difference to its character. If one were to venture a comparison—comparisons are always inexact—it may be taken as a counterpart of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. The *Agenda* will, it may be presumed, run to several volumes; and although it will not have the chance of being revised by the author as mostly in the case of *Savitri*, it will certainly retain the simplicity and majesty of a Kanchanjanga.

What will one expect to see in this Odyssey of the soul? All the Cyclops and terrors of an uncharted sea, all the magic isles that enchant the weary voyager, all the anguish and pain that Homer could imagine, but multiplied in their intensity and magnitude a thousand times over. There is an old Indian legend about the Great God Shiva: he swallowed up all the poison that came out of the ocean of Existence when it was being churned up for the sake of the Ambrosia, and his throat turned blue. The Mother undertook deliberately to poison her entire body, down to the soles of her feet, and bear the unbearable agony of the world-pain from which every mortal man before her, including the great compassionate Buddha, had sought relief in a flight into the Unmanifest. For the Mother there was no escaping into her own Beatitudes. If she did not bear and conquer here and now, in the very body, there would never be an escape for mortal man in any kind of Nirvana; he would have to come back again and again and carry his Cross till the end of Time.

This *Agenda*, one may hasten to add, is not a record of defeat. She has won for man the Victory, and the great adversary is quaking in his legs. The upward movement has begun, the Mother assures us, in spite of all we see around us with our

limited view. How long will it take for the Victory to be visible to the naked eye? The Mother does not prophesy. Perhaps something depends on mortal man, that is, on how long he will take to understand, appreciate and follow to the best of his ability the Way shown by the Mother, and the Master whom she serves. These Talks, like those that preceded them when the Mother used to speak to large gatherings, contain adequate hints on the Way.

There is one thing about these last Talks, which apart from their poignant personal note distinguishes them from the earlier ones and gives them a special flavour. They are truly intimate, even though she was very free with the children and older disciples to whom she addressed her Talks in the Playground during the fifties. One reason naturally is that now she was speaking in her private room upstairs—private, of course, comparatively, for there was no privacy in the strict sense of the word. Moreover, she was speaking not to a “class” but to a single disciple, who, besides being a Frenchman with whom she could use her language in a natural way, without any need to make it easy to understand, and who was equally at liberty to ask her any questions that occurred to him. It was a real *tête-à-tête*.

The Editor of these Talks is to be congratulated, not only for compiling the “Notes” scattered over the pages of a number of *Bulletins* and making them available in a handy volume; he deserves high praise also for the faultless printing and get-up, for, in a volume like this, which will certainly find a large body of avid readers in France and elsewhere among admirers and disciples, such features are a hall-mark of respect.

The Editor was gracious enough to make me a present of this volume on Christmas Day. It was the best Christmas present I have ever had. It will remain for quite some time to come the best Christmas gift the world will ever have.

SANAT K. BANERJI

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