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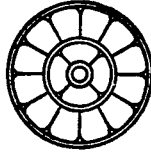
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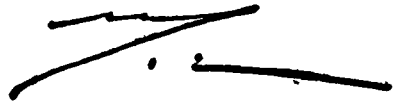


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 4

"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 BIRTH CENTENARY OF THE MOTHER

THE Mother's Birth Centenary, which fell on February 21 this year, was celebrated in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry by nearly 9,000 people from all over the world. But what marked the occasion unforgettably was not only the enthusiastic concourse of her disciples and admirers and the happy hushful visit to the room in which had been spent the last years of the most extraordinary being who had assumed a woman's form in terrestrial history. The distinguishing feature was also the powerful sense of that form still permeating the atmosphere and the rare inner experience that overwhelmed those who were attuned to this perception.

The Divine Light which the Mother had manifested during her life-time persisted even after she had left her body. Under its guidance her spiritual children could continue on the great path it had shown to them. But her departure from physical existence had made a difference to their feeling of the Divine Delight with which she had charged their spacious days and profound nights. Along the road of the future illumined by her, the soul went searching for those eyes which had seemed to hold eternity in their depths and for that smile which had appeared to turn the whole long ravail of time into an endless labour of love.

There was expectation of some revealing sign from her. In dreams and visions she manifested herself to several of her followers. But what was an ever-living Presence to the inner self was yet a mysteriously haunting Absence to the physical consciousness. It is this outer loss that has been counteracted in an indescribable way by the Birth Centenary. One feels irresistibly urged from within to say, "The Mother has taken birth again."

It was as if a veil had been removed and the reality of the subtle world from where, along with Sri Aurobindo, she watches and guides us had projected its bliss and beauty most concretely into our body's self-awareness. One may even affirm that it was as if she had put one foot forward from that world into our earth-air and we could touch it not only with our inner consciousness but also with the very brain-mind that deals with the physical world. A vast opening took place in hundreds of us, blending the body-sense itself with her radiant being. With every beat the heart went feeling, "She has come back."

We could not see her. But a new life began under her subtle closeness. The entire being was conscious of an ecstatic melting—the sign of a reshaping of us within the crucible of her dynamic love.

There can be no loss any more. Her hands seem to touch and bless us with the same tender compulsion as before towards a perfect future. All the wonderful hours we had spent with her in the past re-lived—not as merely revived memories but as a new world of strange sensations filled with the warm creative beatitude that was the Mother with whom we used to have daily contact.

With implications undreamt-of by him whom Sri Aurobindo called not only "A perfect voice of sweet and serious rhyme" but also "Critic with judgment absolute to

all time", we may well express our fundamental experience of the Mother's Birth Centenary with the phrases forming the *grand finale* of that poem of the modern spirit's ceaseless searching:

All things that pass
Are symbols alone;
Here into Fullness
Each failure is grown;
Here the Untellable
Crowns all endeavour,
The Eternal Feminine
Leads onward forever.

K. D. SETHN.

FINDING YOUR SOUL

From a Talk by the Mother

IN order to find the soul you must go in this way (*gesture of going deep within*), like this, draw back from the surface, withdraw deep within and enter, enter, enter, go down, down, down into a very deep hole, silent, immobile, and there, there's a kind of ... something warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still, and very full, like a sweetness—that is the soul.

And if one is insistent and is conscious oneself, then there comes a kind of plenitude which gives the feeling of something complete that contains unfathomable depths in which, should one enter, one feels that many secrets would be revealed ... like the reflection in very peaceful waters of something that is eternal. And one no longer feels limited by time.

One has the feeling of having always been and of being for eternity.

That is when one has touched the core of the soul.

9 April 1958

SOME LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

(In the Conversations with the Mother there is a mention of concentrating on the heart. Rama Reddy wants to know where that heart is in order to concentrate on it.)

SRI AUROBINDO: The reference is to the heart-centre or heart-lotus, *hṛt-padma*. This centre is in the breast, in the middle.

27-3-1930

(X has a great mind to get admission into the Ashram. Please let him know how he can be admitted and what the rules are.)

SRI AUROBINDO: Krishnayya may write explaining that the Ashram is not a public institution with rules etc. which anyone satisfying the rules can enter.

Only those are admitted who are already Sri Aurobindo's disciples and who are considered ready for the Ashram life.

30-3-1930

(I have been in the habit of performing the yearly after-death ceremony, śrāddha, for my mother. This year, when I ponder over it, I feel confused. What is the real significance of the ceremony? Is the performance obligatory? If so, how long? And under what conditions could it be dispensed with? Is it not inconsistent on the part of a Sadhak—and to some extent a hindrance too—to do so, because a Sadhak is expected to forget all such relationships and to live only in the Divine?)

SRI AUROBINDO: If you feel no enthusiasm for the *śrāddha*, it is better definitely to stop it. Once on this path there is no meaning in it any longer, —for the reason you yourself give. The *śrāddha* is...¹ entirely in the vital plane and if help has to be given to those who have passed into other worlds of consciousness, there are better ways of doing it.

4-1-1932

(For the last one week my eyes are burning and at times they become red and start watering. In 1930 Dayashankar recommended the use of sun-glasses. In 1931 they broke in the Pranam Hall and I gave them to Nolini, requesting him to submit the matter to you. Somehow I have managed without them till now. May I have your sanction for new ones?)

THE MOTHER: Glasses are more harmful than useful. Ask Nolini the method to cure rapidly the eyes and to keep them always fit. He has a small booklet which he can show you.

27-4-1933

¹ Word not decipherable.

THE MOTHER: Be perfectly faithful and sincere towards your true self. Allow no deception to creep into your consecration to the Divine.

1-1-1934

SRI AUROBINDO: You must tell him that I never give interviews and do not see even my disciples. As for joining the Ashram it is not possible. Admissions are not made in this way. It is a special path of Yoga and only those specially called to it are admitted as disciples of Sri Aurobindo, and all of these even are not allowed to join the Ashram. Moreover, at present no admissions are to be made, as the numbers are too large and accommodation is growing insufficient.

30-3-1934

SRI AUROBINDO: If the book deals with politics, it is not admissible that the name of anyone in the Ashram should be publicly associated with it in any way.

30-10-1935

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no use their coming here as people are not received in the Ashram on such grounds viz. as wife or child of a sadhak. Sadhaks are supposed to leave their family ties behind when they come here. But they are free also to return to their family if they wish.

2-7-1936

SRI AUROBINDO: You can tell X that the Ashram is not supported by public subscriptions but by what is given by disciples and private sympathisers. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo's publications cannot be given free, they are sold and the proceeds counted among the available resources just as is the case with the publications of the Ramakrishna Mission.

19-9-1936

OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of March 1978)

6

The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and the Procession of the Avatars

(a)

“WHEN anyone writes about me, all the hair on my head stands up. Don’t think I am merely being modest. I know where I come from and who I am. But it is the Truth that is important. Stress on the Person seems so much to narrow it.”

This is what the Mother told me when I was on a visit to Pondicherry from Bombay. It referred to an article I had written on her in a Bombay newspaper. Having learned my lesson, I took the proper measures when I projected an article for her eightieth birthday in 1958. I announced my plan to her. She opened her eyes wide. At once I added: “Yes, I’m going to write on you but I’m not going to show you my article before publishing it.” She looked at me incredulously. Pranab was present and he looked both surprised and amused. I explained: “If I let you see it beforehand, you won’t let me say all that I want.” The article in question is the one entitled: *The Mother—Some General Truths and Particular Facts*. It was based on notes taken a few years earlier by a young sadhak after an interview with the Mother and it also incorporated a few talks of mine with her as well as a number of philosophical reflections relevant to some of the occasions and topics recorded.

When it was published and the Mother glanced at it, she spoke to me about a certain incident I had reported of her girlhood. The incident concerned her falling from an elevated place and landing below quite safely on her feet as if she had been carried and taken care of. She said: “There is an inner story to it. What happened outwardly might have been possible even for one who had some control over his body by gymnastic and athletic practice. At a convenient time I’ll tell you the inner story.” Unfortunately the chance never came for the narration. I find that the Mother, in one of her talks to the Ashram children, has related the same incident but more or less in the way I had done. No special inner story accompanies her account. I wish I had pressed her to tell it to me, instead of deciding to wait on her convenience.

It is not in my power to guess what remained unspoken. But perhaps I may try to reflect a little on those words of hers in connection with my Bombay article: “I know where I come from and who I am.” They remind me of another statement she made: “If people don’t know that I have come from above, they don’t know the very first thing about me.” This is, of course, a private declaration of one who was con-

scious that she was an Avatar. But do we understand Avatarhood in its various bearings?

Sri Aurobindo interprets as a parable of evolution the Hindu idea of the procession of the ten Avatars. Vishnu the Supreme Godhead makes a progressive series of incarnations, so that—to take for our immediate purpose the human portion of the traditional sequence—He who was Vamana, (the Dwarf Avatar, the Divine in the primitive and mainly physical human stage) becomes afterwards Parasu-Rama (“Rama of the Axe”, the Divine in the kinetic or vitalistic phase of humanity) and then Rama, son of Dasaratha (the Divine as the Mental Man, the embodiment of Dharma, the perfect Moral Consciousness) and, again, Krishna (the Divine as the “Overman”, openly exemplifying a more-than-mental Consciousness, what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, the world of the Great Gods) and, later, Buddha who shoots beyond the cosmic formula to the sheer Transcendent but to that Transcendent’s absolutely immobile aspect (Nirvana, an indescribable Permanence void of all that we know as existence, or, in positive Vedantic nomenclature, Nirguna Brahman, Silent Quality-less Eternal Being) and, finally, Kalki who will come to set right the balance by bringing the Transcendent’s power to base on the Transcendent’s peace a new earth-order, a terrestrial Heaven. In this tale of evolutionary humanity we would identify Kalki with Sri Aurobindo (the Master of the Integral Yoga, the Yoga not only of liberation but also of the perfect divine dynamism, the Supermind, the all-transformative Truth-Consciousness manifesting as Superman).

But, if the Mother is as much an Avatar, the supramental feminine counterpart of Sri Aurobindo, what Divine Incarnations was she in the past? When we think of Sita, Rama’s wife, or of Radha, the chief feminine figure in Krishna’s Godlike play, *līlā*, on earth, we do not bring in the designation “Avatar”. They are the closest to it and yet there is a line of demarcation. If the Mother was Sita or Radha, she could not be said to have made an unambiguous Avataric appearance in history. Far more doubtful would be such an appearance in any other woman prominently connected with God’s work in the world. The Mother is supposed to have been Mirabai as well as Joan of Arc, but neither of these, for all their wonderful achievements, can count as Avatars. Much less, though still glorious, the births attributed to her as Hatshepsut of ancient Egypt, Cleopatra at a later date and Elizabeth of England. As Mona Lisa, she was a mysterious inspirer of the greatest art, but nothing more. Her present birth seems to be her first manifestation of Avatarhood. It could be that Avatarhood was not needed by her in the past and some other role short of it was sufficient, or the possibility is that the Avataric appearance is the culmination of a long series of births in which the being plays the part of the Vibhuti, one who is missioned and impelled by the Divine without the instrument’s awareness of the source of its great destiny and who, for all its greatness, is still, as Sri Aurobindo¹ says, “the Divine working within the ordinary human limits”.

¹ *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo: Letters to a Young Disciple*—Nagin Doshi (Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry 1974), p. 285.

Since the Mother stands on an equal and exactly complementary footing with Sri Aurobindo, and since her manifestation as an Avatar now is without a preceding Avatar-series, how should we think of Sri Aurobindo's having such a series behind him for himself? Would there not be a disequilibrium in their historical functions and achievements? There is also the fact that from Sri Aurobindo's letters we can derive the certitude of at least two Vibhuti-figures of him in the past: Augustus Caesar and Leonardo da Vinci. Should we not take all his previous births to have formed only Vibhutis, just as the Mother's evidently did?

Going by a certain set of his correspondence with his disciples, we would be inclined to say "Yes." We may string together and interpret a number of his statements in it. When asked: "What is the incarnation? From what plane does it take place?", he¹ answered: "An incarnation is the Divine Consciousness and Being manifesting through the body. It is possible from any plane." This must imply either that the Supreme Godhead takes hold of a desired plane and brings its characteristic to earth in a sovereign shape or, better still, that He has a station of Himself on every plane and incarnates from there according to the needs of evolutionary history. Thus He incarnates as Rama from His station on the plane of Mind, and as Krishna from the Overmind plane. Similarly His incarnation as Sri Aurobindo is from His Supermind station. The common factor in all these incarnations is the Supreme Godhead himself. We have a pointer to this Godhead when Sri Aurobindo,² after equating Krishna with the Overmind Divinity, continues: "Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards the Ananda." This at the same time indicates the aspect of Bliss (Ananda) as a speciality of Krishna and echoes the ancient Indian spiritual vision of the Divine Bliss-Self (Anandamaya) as the creator and supporter of all things. The Bliss-Self, acting from one plane or another and incarnating from any plane, is the Supreme Godhead behind all the incarnations and the unifier of them all.

The second issue is whether the Avatar is a sheer descent from above, taking hold of some developed human being and using his outer personality for his manifestation. Sri Aurobindo's reply³ is: "That would be a possession not an Avatar. An Avatar is supposed to be from birth." Here the third issue arises: Does the Avatar, in being born as such, follow in general the same conditions as attend the birth of any man? What these conditions are as well as what the Avatar does we gather from Sri Aurobindo⁴ "Each soul at its birth takes from the cosmic mind, life and matter to shape a new external personality for himself. What prevents the Divine from doing the same? What is continued from birth to birth is the inner being." Evidently the Avatar is not only a descent from above but also an "inner being", a soul, evolving from below, an individual psychic entity passing from life to life with a new mind, vital being and body at each birth in order to compass a manifold experience.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 208.

³ *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, p. 279 ⁴ *Ibid*

The next problem is expressed in the query put to Sri Aurobindo about himself and the Mother: "We believe that both you and the Mother are Avatars. But is it only in this life that both of you have shown your divinity? It is said that you and she have been on the earth constantly since its creation. What were you doing during your previous lives?" The answer¹ was: "Carrying on the evolution." The words suggest that the earth's evolution was carried on by the activity of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in a form other than Avatarhood. The suggestion becomes quite explicit when Sri Aurobindo² says about their past personalities: "... there is no reason why the Mother and I should cast off the veil which hung over these personalities and reveal the Divine behind them. Those lives were not meant for any such purpose..."³ Your reasoning would only have some force if the presence on earth then were as the Avatar but not if it was only as a Vibhuti."⁴ Both these answers were given to questions involving what was the biggest puzzle to the disciple's mind: "... how is it that even Sri Krishna, Buddha or Christ could not detect your presence in this world?... If you were on the earth constantly it would mean that you were here when those great beings descended. Whatever your external cloak, how could you hide your inner self—the true divinity—from them?"⁵ The sense is that neither Sri Krishna, Buddha nor Christ—in spite of being Avatars—were past births of Sri Aurobindo. And in view of the advent of several Avatars before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and in view of the affirmation that no Avataric manifestation in the past could be equated to past forms of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, it was pertinently asked: "Since you and the Mother were on the earth from the beginning what was the need for Avatars coming down here one after another?" The response⁶ was absolutely definitive: "We were not on earth as Avatars." The conclusion seems inevitable that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were Avatars only in their present lives and that none of the other Avatars could be said to be they. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came as Vibhutis at the time of those Avatars, and worked veiled either where these Avatars were or at some other place which served as the right context for whatever they had to do.

The veiled work, whether at the time of some Avatar or at another phase of history, can be affirmed from the Mother's answer on January 23, 1960 to a student's inquiry about Sri Aurobindo's earlier births: "It is said that Sri Aurobindo in a past life took an active part in the French Revolution. Is it true?" She wrote back: "You can say that all through history Sri Aurobindo played an active part. Especially in the most important movements [of history] he was there—and playing the most important, the leading part. But he was not always visible." The sense here is surely twofold. First, even when in the forefront of events the one whom we know now as the Avatar in the form of Sri Aurobindo did not manifest Avatarhood every time. Secondly, even when he was the moving spirit he did not invariably occupy the forefront.

The Mother did not directly refer to the French Revolution. But Sri Aurobindo's

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 282. ² *Ibid.*, p. 283. ³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 282, 283. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 285

presence in it was disclosed to me by Amrita. Amrita said: "Sri Aurobindo told us that he could still feel the edge of the guillotine across his neck. The memory was so vivid." Such a vividness of memory was once admitted by Sri Aurobindo himself to me in another context. He wrote that he had a psychic memory of Dilip as Horace: what was *sous-entendu* was his own birth as Augustus, who was Horace's patron and whose essential role in Europe's evolution Sri Aurobindo went on to outline to me just as he outlined that of Leonardo.

To return to our theme: the picture that emerges of Avatarhood would be as follows. There are various lines of Avatarhood. Each line has a separate soul developing from below and presided over by the Divine stationed on one plane or another. This soul passes through various lives as world-helping Vibhutis until the time arrives for the presiding Divine to descend from above into it and constitute the Avatic manifestation. Once that manifestation has occurred, the line concerned has reached its climax, and its work has culminated. The line of mental Avatarhood ended with the appearance of Rama. Krishna marked the close of the line of the Overmind Avatar. The *grand finale* of the line of the Supramental Avatar was Sri Aurobindo. All these Avatars are different in regard to their evolutionary lines and are one and the same solely in the Supreme Godhead whom they basically are but who has diverse plane-poises or at least starting-points on diverse planes.

The Mother has employed a terminology of her own in speaking about the soul passing through several lives and about the presiding divinity. In her talk of May 21, 1958, while discussing the Ramayana story symbolically, she distinguishes Hanuman as representing "the evolutionary man" from Rama "the involutory being, the one who comes from above". She explains: "The evolutionary being is the one that's the continuation of the animals, and the other is a being from higher worlds.... But in the evolutionary being there is that central light which is the origin of the psychic being and which will develop into the psychic being, and when the psychic being is full-formed, there is a moment when it can unite with a being from above which can incarnate in it. So this being from above which descends into a psychic being is an involutory being—a being of the Overmind plane or from elsewhere."

The Mother's explanation provides a truth which holds for all souls. Every soul and not only that of the future Avatar finds its consummation by receiving into itself its own archetype from the higher worlds. An archetype of it exists on all the planes above, just as the Divine has his station on each of them, but at any period of history the one which it will receive will depend upon the plane from which the Avatar has come down for that particular period. In general all souls, including the soul meant to be the Avatar, are on a par: all have their corresponding "involutory" beings. But we have to visualise on every plane a central involutory self which is the destined Avatar's and around it the other involutory selves. If there were not a general parity, the Avatar's pioneering life would not be significant for the rest of embodied souls but constitute a shining freak rather than a guiding light for all

Nature. The temporary difference is that the Avatar is conscious, overtly or covertly, of his divinity, he is aware both of the plane from which there is the divine manifestation and of the Supreme Godhead who has that plane-poise, whereas the Avatar's followers have to develop the divine consciousness. However, we must add that even the Avatar has to go through a sadhana before he becomes the Guru, for otherwise he would not be the true meaningful pioneer in human evolution. On the other hand, it is very necessary for the disciples to remember, side by side with the Guru's example-setting sadhana, the fact of his descent from above, the dynamic truth of Avatarhood stressed by the Mother.

In relation to the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Avatarhood, the earlier Incarnation that was Krishna has a specially sympathetic and intimate reality. Krishna, the Overmind divinity incarnate, who declared in the Gita his own transcendent Godhead no less than his universal form and his individual Mastership, and who in the self-disclosure at Brindavan let loose the intensest power of the soul's love for and surrender to the Supreme Beauty and Bliss in terms of the very body's sensation—this Krishna is called by Sri Aurobindo "the guide of my Yoga"¹ and was the name which the Mother in France instinctively gave to the lightward leading presence of Sri Aurobindo in her occult experiences before she ever heard of the Yogi of Supermind. Sri Aurobindo has declared that the work done by him and the Mother is a furtherance of Krishna's and that the descent of Overmind into their physical beings on November 24, 1926 prepared the descent of Supermind and Ananda.² He has termed the Overmind's descent the descent of Krishna,³ with whom, as the result of that event, he "realised identity"⁴ and thereby moved towards the descent of his own supramental status.

(b)

We may cast a glance at this Krishna who, from among the past spiritual figures, has a unique place in Sri Aurobindo's general scheme of the spiritual life. How does he emerge from the Gita which is the authoritative scripture on both Avatarhood and Vibhutihood?

No doubt, Krishna says that he comes from age to age to uphold the Dharma, but does he make it quite clear anywhere in the Gita that the long line of births preceding his Avatarhood at the time of the Bharata War counted any Avatar-life, say, as Rama who in the Hindu procession of the Avatars is held to have come before him? Actually Krishna mentions no name of any past Avatar as once having been himself. Rama is indeed mentioned but solely in the phrase: "Among the warriors I am Rama" (X.31). Rama is listed only as a pre-eminent warrior who, like other pre-eminent figures, is regarded as a Vibhuti of Krishna.

Even the Vibhuti-idea which Krishna illustrates at great length is nowhere given

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 209.

² *Ibid.*, p. 208

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

a directly personal connection with his own past births. In dilating on Vibhutis, he alludes (X. 37) to himself as being a Vibhuti at the very time that he is Krishna the Avatar, meaning thereby a Vibhuti to be whoever is outstanding in any category of the Divine's work in the world during all periods. He equates himself to being in varied ways the most pre-eminent in every category. And when he speaks in this style he refers not merely to past top echelons but also to contemporary ones: "I am Vasudeva [Krishna] among the Vrishnis, Dhananjaya [Arjuna] among the Pandavas, Vyasa among the sages, the seer-poet Ushanas among the seer-poets" (X. 37). Here the second and third names are of Krishna's own contemporaries who would have their proper lines of earlier births, which would have no identity with Krishna's line proper. How should we gauge the strange situation before us?

A Supreme Person — "Purushottama" in the Gita's own language—may be conceived, whose self-expressions, both as Avatars and as Vibhutis, may be along several birth-lines, only one of which is the line represented by the figure face to face with Arjuna and with Vyasa as Krishna. The Godhead speaking as Krishna in the Gita may be thought of as having a beyond-Krishna status which finds tongue in an utterance like the one we have just cited. Such a status is in fact attributed to himself by Krishna among the diversity of statuses which he claims as his. Sri Aurobindo¹ recognises it in his comprehensive phrase: "the Krishna of the Gita who is the transcendent Godhead, Paramatma, Parabrahma, Purushottama, the cosmic Deity, Master of the universe, Vasudeva who is all, the Immanent in the heart of all creatures..."¹ And such a status would be capable of issuing a multiplicity of Avatars who do not run on a straight single line. Significantly, Krishna, instead of corresponding to the popular Puranic idea of himself as an incarnation of Vishnu running on a straight single line with other incarnations of that member of the Divine Trimurti, makes this member a Vibhuti of his by saying: "Among the Adityas I am Vishnu..." (X.21). Evidently, to Krishna the Adityas, solar sons of the Infinite Mother-Goddess Aditi, are a class of supernatural beings, and Vishnu is its outstanding exemplar or Vibhuti. Like Rama the warrior, he occurs in the Gita's Vibhuti-chapter. All in all, the Gita's doctrine of Avatarhood apropos of Krishna looks far from being as simple as one might imagine from the common Indian notion of the theme.

From all the enumerations connected with it, this doctrine does not counter in any way the picture emerging from the hints we have picked up in Sri Aurobindo about the background of his own Avatarhood and the Mother's.

(c)

And yet there is another side to the medal, equally stamped with the Gita and Sri Aurobindo.

It is true that Krishna does not name for himself any specific past life—Rama, Parasu-Rama, Vamana or any other—as a manifestation of Avatarhood.

¹ Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother, p. 209.

But he definitely mentions a chain of his own past births: "Many are my lives that are past and thine also, O Arjuna; all of them I know but thou knowest not, O scourge of the foe" (IV. 5). And he associates his supreme divinity with them when he declares: "Though I am the unborn, though I am imperishable in my self-existence, though I am the Lord of all existences, yet I stand upon my own Nature and I come into birth by my self-Maya" (IV. 6). This declaration he follows up with those two ringing famous unforgettable statements: "Whensoever there is the fading of the Dharma and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loose myself forth into birth. For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right, I am born from age to age" (IV. 7,8). It appears impossible to deny that, if not in all, at least in some of those "lives that are past", Krishna "the Lord of all existences" has loosed himself forth into birth as an Avatar.

Precisely such is the interpretation by Sri Aurobindo of Krishna's several assertions about himself in the Gita. In the expression "many are my lives that are past", especially when coupled with these succeeding words—"and thine also, O Arjuna"—Sri Aurobindo¹ finds "an air of reference to" Krishna's "various lives", and he adds: "In that case all these many births could not be full incarnations,—many may have been merely Vibhuti births carrying on the thread from incarnation to incarnation." Sri Aurobindo² touches on the same subject when he writes: "...it must be remembered that Krishna speaks of many lives in the past, not only a few supreme ones, and secondly that while he speaks of himself as the Divine, in one passage he describes himself as a Vibhuti, *vr̥ṣṇinām vāsudevaḥ*. We may therefore fairly assume that in many lives he manifested as the Vibhuti veiling the fuller Divine Consciousness. If we admit that the object of Avatarhood is to lead the evolution, this is quite reasonable, the Divine appearing as Avatar in the great transitional stages and as Vibhutis to aid the lesser transitions."

Thus the popular notion of Krishna coming every time as the Avatar is not accepted by Sri Aurobindo. He ascribes a large number of Vibhuti-lives to him, yet he does speak of these lives as bridges between a small number of Avataric ones. So, to Sri Aurobindo, the Gita's Krishna comes as an Avatar more than once: not only at the end of his birth-series but also in the course of his sequence of lives Krishna manifests Avatarhood.

One more letter of Sri Aurobindo seems to link up, though rather indirectly, with the Gita's Krishna who is "born from age to age". Here Sri Aurobindo brings in the topic of the life-series of an Avatar undergoing a process similar to the natural one through which the life-series of each of us passes. The Avatar is not simply a descent from above: there is an evolution of a soul-centred mould, physical-vital-mental, in which at certain critical points the descending Avatar Self is revealed. The letter³ runs:

"...each being in a new birth prepares a new mind, life and body—otherwise

¹ *On Yoga* II, Tome One (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1958), p. 409.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 405-06. ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 409-10.

John Smith would always be John Smith and would have no chance of being Piyush Kanti Ghose. Of course inside there are old personalities contributing to the new life—but I am speaking of the new visible personality, the outer man, mental, vital, physical. It is the psychic being that keeps the link from birth to birth and makes all the manifestations of the same person. It is therefore to be expected that the Avatar should take on a new personality each time, a personality suited for the new times, work, surroundings. In my own view of things, however, the new personality has a series of Avatar births behind him, births in which the intermediate evolution has been followed and assisted from age to age.”

This passage has a particular significance because of the phrase: “In my own view of things...” Sri Aurobindo is speaking *in persona propria*, not merely expounding a traditional doctrine as when, dealing with the list in the “Hindu procession of the ten Avatars”, he¹ writes: “It was not my own view of the thing that I was giving.” But there seems to be a bit of a puzzle in what he says in the wake of that important phrase. From the words “a series of Avatar births” we should be disposed logically to conclude not only that the one who is an Avatar has repeated Avataric appearances in the past but also that every past birth was Avataric. Knowing that Sri Aurobindo was himself a Vibhuti on several past occasions and that he took the Gita’s Krishna too as having been so, the words cannot be understood in this sweeping sense. Such a sense is hardly borne out by the explanation offered for the term “births” and referring to their following and assisting “from age to age” (the exact Gita-turn of speech) “the intermediate evolution.” This explanation would convey that the line of births possessed by one who is the Avatar is marked at the same time by a new personality on every occasion and by a high age-to-age function of each personality, a function which unlike the role of ordinary people’s personalities in their various births is always of a leader of the evolutionary process which has gone on in the interval between birth and birth.

The characteristic Aurobindonian vision which we have noticed in relation to the Krishna of the Gita would, therefore, be best articulated if we took something to be missing in the final sentence. Do not the words “intermediate evolution” point to a period between the Avatar-births and remind us of those we have already quoted: “the Divine appearing...as Vibhutis to aid the lesser transitions”? The vision in question suggests the sentence to read: “In my own view of things, however, the new personality has not only a series of Avatar-births behind him, but also births in which the intermediate evolution has been followed and assisted from age to age.”

Once a repetition of the Avatar-birth, along with a multiplicity of the birth as Vibhuti, is acknowledged, we cannot help asking what Avatar-birth in the past could have been Sri Aurobindo’s. Considering the close association he has emphasised of Krishna with himself and of Krishna’s work with his own, we are led immediately to affirm that the most luminous anticipation of Sri Aurobindo’s Avatarhood was the “blessed Lord” of the Gita: the latter presided over and prepared his further mani-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

festation, the passage from the epiphany of the Overmind to the apocalypse of the Supermind, the firmer and more matter-permeating descent of his earlier *point de départ* of earthly expression until, as Sri Aurobindo has said, an "identity" between them was made manifest not only within but also in the most external field.

The identity can be guessed from some remarks of Sri Aurobindo's about the spiritual light characterising his inner being: "The pale whitish blue light is 'Sri Aurobindo's light'—it is the blue light modified by the white light of the Mother...¹ A whitish blue like moonlight is known as Krishna's light or Sri Aurobindo's light".²

In a letter³ dated August 14, 1945 to Dilip Kumar Roy, who was greatly under Krishna's spell, we have a more explicit personal note:

"If you had an unprecedented peace for so long a time, it was due to my persistent inner pressure; I refuse to give up all the credit to my double, Krishna."

A little earlier letter (June 18, 1943)⁴ to the same disciple is even more explicit in a personal vein:

"If you reach Krishna, you reach the Divine; if you can give yourself to him, you give yourself to me. Your inability to identify may be because you are laying too much stress on the physical aspects consciously or unconsciously."

This, of course, does not mean that a cult of Krishna *à la* Vaishnavism ensures the results of the Aurobindonian yoga: if it did, the appearance of a new Avatar would be otiose. What it means is that a natural devotion for Krishna does not jar with that Yoga and may even help the sadhaka provided the supporting background and upholding basis is life in the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother within the dedicated soul.

Yes, the Mother no less than Sri Aurobindo. The utterance to which we have alluded more than once—about Sri Aurobindo's work and Krishna's—occurs in a letter of July 11, 1933 to an aspirant—Narayan Prasad—brought up in a Krishna-charged atmosphere and relates to her rather than to the Master:⁵

"The struggle in you (between bhakti for Sri Krishna and the sense of the divinity of the Mother) is quite unnecessary; for the two things are one and go perfectly together. It is he who has brought you to the Mother and it is by adoration of her that you will realise him. He is here in the Ashram and it is his work that is being done in this Yoga."

How intimately the Mother is linked at the same time with Krishna and with Sri Aurobindo becomes astonishingly plain when we have Sri Aurobindo's reference to an experience of the Mother at a period when she knew hardly anything about matters Indian, historical or legendary. The reference also leads us on to probe certain complexities in the procession of the Avatars. We have the query: "When Ramakrishna was doing Sadhana, Mother was on earth physically for the first eight years of her

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78

² *Ibid.* By the way, this light has a special bearing for the present writer. For, when the Mother was giving significances to the various flowers offered to her or given by her she told him that the flower special to him was the one signifying "Krishna's light in the mind".

³ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 268-9

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

childhood, from 1878 to 1886. Did he not know that Mother had come down? He must have had some vision at least of her coming, but we do not read anywhere definitely about it. And when Ramakrishna must have been intensely calling Mother, she must have felt something at that age." The reply¹ on July 11, 1935 is:

"In Mother's childhood's visions she saw myself whom she knew as 'Krishna'—she did not see Ramakrishna

"It was not necessary that he should have a vision of her coming down as he was not thinking of the future nor consciously preparing for it. I don't think he had the idea of any incarnation of the Mother."

The complexities of Avatarhood to which this reply directs us are suggested by the mention of Ramakrishna. In connection with "the Hindu procession of the ten Avatars", Sri Aurobindo marks the distinction the Gita draws between the Avatar and the Vibhuti—the one conscious of the Divine born in him or descended into him, the other embodying some power of the Divine but without the consciousness of an inborn or indwelling Divinity—and then proceeds to comment:²

"If we follow this distinction, we can confidently say from what is related of them that Rama and Krishna can be accepted as Avatars; Buddha figures as such although with a more impersonal consciousness of the Power within him. Ramakrishna voiced the same consciousness when he spoke of Him who was Rama and who was Krishna being within him. But Chaitanya's case is peculiar; for according to the accounts he ordinarily felt and declared himself a bhakta of Krishna and nothing more, but in great moments he manifested Krishna, grew luminous in mind and body and was Krishna himself and spoke and acted as the Lord. His contemporaries saw in him an Avatar of Krishna, a manifestation of the Divine Love.

"Shankara and Vivekananda were certainly Vibhutis; they cannot be reckoned as more, though as Vibhutis they were very great."

Adverting to several of these names again and bringing in one new name, Sri Aurobindo writes that he fully accepts "Chaitanya's position as an Avatar of Krishna" and that the "outbursts of the splendour of the Divine Being [in him] are among the most remarkable in the story of the Avatar". Then he adds: "As for Ramakrishna, the manifestation in him was not so intense but more many-sided... I would not care to enter into any comparison as between these two great spiritual personalities: both exercised an extraordinary influence and did something supreme in their own sphere....³ He was certainly quite as much an Avatar as Christ or Chaitanya....⁴ Mahomed would himself have rejected the idea of being an Avatar, so we have to regard him only as the prophet, the instrument, the Vibhuti. Christ realised himself as the Son who is one with the Father—he must therefore be an *amśa avatāra*, a partial incarnation...⁵ As for the unconscious Avatar, why not? Chaitanya is supposed to be an Avatar by the Vaishnavas, yet he was conscious of the Godhead behind only when that Godhead

¹ *Ibid.*, p 474.

² *On Yoga*, II, Tome One, p 411

³ *Ibid.*, p 412. ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ *Ibid.*

me in, front and possessed him on rare occasions. Christ said 'I and my father are one', but yet he always spoke and behaved as if there were a difference. Ramakrishna's earlier period was that of one seeking God, not aware from the first of his identity... and supposing the full and permanent consciousness, why should the Avatar proclaim himself except on rare occasions to an Arjuna or to a few bhaktas or disciples?"¹

From all this we may arrive at a few conclusions about Avatarhood. First, there are full Avatars and partial ones. Secondly, even among partial ones—Chaitanya, Christ, Ramakrishna—there is a difference. Each of them is equally powerful an avatar as the other two, but the first-named is clearly an Avatar of the line of Krishna, which Sri Aurobindo belongs, the rest may have a different line. Thirdly, since Sri Aurobindo and Ramakrishna were contemporaries and since the Mother saw the former and not the latter as Krishna, the latter evidently belongs to a line which is not the same. Fourthly, since Sri Aurobindo was present as the Vibhuti Augustus Caesar when Christ lived, the line of Christ too must be dissimilar.

So we come to the vision that the Purushottama has more than one line of Avatarhood and that two general categories may be distinguished: the central Avatar and the peripheral Avatar—the central expressing the Divine Plenitude directly, the peripheral conveying it indirectly—the central conveying a sense of totality in various manners, the peripheral a sense of particular qualities—the central coming in periods of great evolutionary transitions, the peripheral in those of a less crucial character. When the peripheral Avatars are on earth, the line along which the central is manifested may show itself either in Avatarhood or in Vibhutihood, depending on whether the age concerned is crucial or not. Our own age Sri Aurobindo has considered crucial and we should not be surprised that Ramakrishna and he were co-present—Ramakrishna his intense synthesis summing up the world's and especially India's past spiritual—and rendering the inner ground ready for the novel leap forward that is Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga of Supramental Descent and its labour towards even physical transformation. A testimony to Ramakrishna's relation in the inner domain that leap is an admission by Sri Aurobindo² in a letter, most probably of 1913 Motilal Roy in the course of a comment on the Ramakrishna Mission:

"What you say about the Ramakrishna Mission is, I dare say, true to a certain extent. Do not oppose that movement or enter into any conflict with it. . . Remember that we derive from Ramakrishna. For myself it was Ramakrishna who personally came and first turned me to this Yoga. Vivekananda in the Alipore Jail gave me the indications of that knowledge which is the basis of our Sadhana. The error of the Mission is to keep too much to the forms of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and not keep themselves open for new outpourings of their spirit,—the error of all Churches and organised religious bodies."

It should be obvious that the central line of Avatarhood covers Rama, Krishna, Sri Aurobindo and, in a somewhat odd way, Chaitanya. Obviously, too, we cannot

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

² *Supplement*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Pondicherry, 1972, Vol. 27, p. 435.

cling to the inference we originally drew that Avatarhood comes only as a culminating life just once along any line. Indeed, the Mother seems to have brought 'for her divinity in a recognisably Avataric form in her present life alone, but Sri Aurobindo surely produces the impression of having had openly Avataric lives in the past. Supposing our impression to be accurate, how are we to reconcile it with his statement "We were not on earth as Avatars"?

We have to note that merely in one letter Sri Krishna is named by the disciples apropos of his wonder how Avataric personalities whom he designated "portions" the Divine could have failed to know that the Divine's very self—that is, the Being of the Supermind-plane—was constantly on earth and hence in their time as Vibhuti. The detailed questions and answers touch only on Buddha and Christ. We have Sri Aurobindo saying: " ..If the Mother were in Rome in the time of Buddha, how could Buddha know as he did not even know the existence of Rome?¹ .. So if the Mother was present in the life of Christ, she was there not as the Divine Manifestation but one altogether human. For her to be recognised as the Divine would have created tremendous disorder and frustrated the work Christ came to do by breaking its proper limits."² It is on the heels of these replies that Sri Aurobindo explains that the Mother and he were not present in an Avataric shape on the earth-scene. Sri Aurobindo must have overlooked the single occasion on which the disciple wrote of Krishna by name. There is no letter of his in which, naming Krishna, he has allowed the impression that he could have been somebody else when the magical flute-player of Brindavan and the majestic charioteer of Kurukshetra was in the midst of men, the glorious figure about whose "historicity" Sri Aurobindo³ has said that if we accept it "there is this great spiritual gain that one has a *point d'appui* for a more concrete realisation in the conviction that once at least the Divine has visibly touched the earth, made the complete manifestation possible, made it possible for the divine supernature to descend into this evolving but still very imperfect terrestrial nature."

(d)

We may round off our discussion with a piece of occult insight by the Mother. She has spoken of Avatarhood not only in terms of the highest Superconscious but the source but also in those of the deepest Inconscious which is the seeming opposite of the Divine. Within that Inconscious she has seen the Divine Himself, plunging there by His own will and lying hidden as a concrete Being who is the initiator of evolution. She⁴ has suggested this mysterious figure to be the subject of the two lines in *Savitri* where Sri Aurobindo describes the end of the symbolic night preceding the symbol dawn:

¹ *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, p. 283

² *Ibid.*, pp. 284-5.

³ *On Yoga II*, Tome One, pp. 433-4.

⁴ *About Savitri with Some Paintings*, published by Huta (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1972), p. 14.

The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.¹

In elaborating upon her vision she mentions in her talk of May 28, 1958 “a very old tradition”, more ancient than the Vedic and Chaldean and constituting their origin. Explaining this tradition she² recounts:

“... it is said that when, as a result of the action of the adverse forces—known in the Hindu tradition as the Asuras—the world, instead of developing according to its law of Light and inherent consciousness, was plunged into the darkness, inconscience and ignorance that we know, the Creative Power implored the Supreme Origin, asking him for a special intervention which could save this corrupted universe; and in reply to this prayer there was emanated from the Supreme Origin a special Entity, of Love and Consciousness, who cast himself directly into the most unconscious matter to begin there the work of awakening it to the original Consciousness and Love.

“In the old narratives this Being is described as stretched out in a deep sleep at the bottom of a very dark cave, and in his sleep there emanated from him prismatic rays of light which gradually spread into the Inconscience and embedded themselves in all the elements of this Inconscience to begin there the work of Awakening.

“If one consciously enters into this Inconscient, one can still see there this same marvellous Being, still in deep sleep, continuing his work of emanation, spreading his Light; and he will continue to do it until the Inconscience is no longer inconscient, until Darkness disappears from the world—and the whole creation awakens to the Supramental Consciousness.

“And it is remarkable that this wonderful Being strongly resembles the one whom I saw in vision one day, the Being who is at the other extremity, at the confines of form and the Formless. But that one was in a golden, crimson glory, whereas in his sleep the other Being was of a shining diamond whiteness emanating opalescent rays.

“In fact, this is the origin of all avatars. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended directly from the Supreme to perfect this work of preparing the universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety.

“In every country, every tradition, the event has been presented in a special way, with different limitations, different details, particular features, but truly speaking, the origin of all these stories is the same, and that is what we could call a direct,

¹ *Savitri* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972), p. 3.

² *Questions and Answers* 1958 (The Mother's Birth Centenary Library, Pondicherry, 1977), Vol 9, pp. 332-4.

conscious intervention of the Supreme in the darkest matter, without going through all the intermediaries, in order to awaken this Matter to the receptivity of the Divine Forces.

“The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive.

“And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme.”

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

NEAR THE SHORE TEMPLE : MAHABALIPURAM

Rocks, holding form and faith,
Lie in chipped magnificent charm.
The soil, the sea and the shore
Share the glory of legend and history.
Art and heart defying Time's tide
Spill wordless wonder all around;
Minds probing the stones for truth
Are lost in grand relics and ruins ;
The gulls, the waves and the trees
Mingle their notes in a wild hymn
To those hewed divinities
That consecrate the desolation.

G. VISWANATHAN

UDAR REMEMBERS

WILL now write about our Sweet Mother's new rooms, on the second floor. This is how it all started. She had no bedroom, not even a bed to sleep on for over forty years. She never actually slept. She would just 'retire' from 2 to 4 a.m. and all were asked not to disturb Her during those two hours. Mother would be working with one of us up to 2 a.m. and then start again with others at 4 a.m. For those two hours, She would sit in Her chair in what was perhaps a meditation rather than sleep and so I say that Mother had not slept for over 40 years.

Then, one day, we suggested that She should have a proper bedroom with a bed and other furniture in it, where She could retire when She wanted to, and be quiet. The money for this work was forthcoming and eventually Mother agreed. Then Her bedroom with the attached bathroom was designed, the one She used up to the end. Mother liked this room very much and used it happily but it meant Her having to go up and down stairs.

After some time this going up and down stairs became too difficult for Her and She stopped coming down altogether. There was then no Balcony Darshan or even the usual Darshans because for these She would have to use the stairs. The Balcony Darshan had been given from the balcony to the north of Pavitra's room. As a result of this stoppage, the sadhaks could not get even to see Mother, except for those few who had to go to Her for the work. So everyone was sad about this and it went on for quite some time.

Mother had been presented with a wonderful Wurlitzer Electric Organ on which She would play regularly. It was kept in Pavitra's room. This also She could not use now. Then one day I said to Her that unless She played on the Organ from time to time it would get spoiled, and none of us would like to play on Her Organ. So Mother asked me what was to be done and I suggested that we bring the Organ up to Her new room. She refused to agree to this as She said that there was no space for the instrument in Her room: it would upset the balance of the furnishing of the room. So then I suggested that we build a special room next to Her bathroom as there was enough place on the terrace for it. Mother agreed to have a small room, specially for the Organ, and we set about to design it.

Now my Aunt Mary had given to Mother a beautiful carpet, an Aubusson, which she had herself received from the Maharaja of Mysore. Mother liked the carpet very much but did not know where She could use it. So we decided to put it into the Music Room that we were designing. We then did a strange thing: we designed the size of the room to fit the carpet instead of getting, as is usual, a carpet to fit a room. This made the room quite large and then there was still some space left between the end of the room and the eastern extremity of the building. That space, we felt, could well be used for a covered balcony which could be carried round to the south side also. This change we kept rather secret and did not even inform Mother about it. It also meant quite a bit more expense. So Dyuman, who had to

find the money for all the work, was annoyed at this additional expenditure which had not been sanctioned by Mother, and he expressed himself quite strongly.

When all had been built I informed Mother that everything was ready for Her to see, and She came to see. She liked very much the large Music Room in which we had already installed the Organ. Then She looked out east and saw the balcony and She said: "Udar! what is this you have done? A balcony! Do you expect me to start giving Darshans again from here?" I replied: "Mother, I expect nothing but only that You are happy with what we have done. So please come out and see this Balcony." And Mother came out. In the meanwhile, we had sent word around that Mother might come on the new balcony, and so there were people all about on the street and on each surrounding terrace, etc. Almost the whole Ashram had turned out and they all had a Darshan of Mother, after such a long time. Mother gave a real Darshan, standing some time looking at all as She did whenever She gave Darshans. All were so happy and Dyuman came to me and embraced me warmly and said: "Udar, forget all I said before. Our people have had Mother's Darshan at last. This is worth all that has been spent and even more; I am very, very happy." This brought tears to my eyes because I am very fond of Dyuman and was not happy that he had been angry with us. Now it was all wonderful.

This, then, is how the new Balcony came to be and Mother gave Her Darshans on every Darshan Day from there. The Music Room was also very useful to Her, not only for Her to play the Organ but also to give Her interviews: She could be quiet and undisturbed there. So on every count it was a very happy thing brought about by Mother's Grace and by Her Love.

UDAR

THE HELP OF SRI AUROBINDO

DURING the night of January 23 I dreamt that I was in a big room in the same place as Sri Aurobindo's room is at present. Many people were there. Some of them I knew, and others were strangers.

Sri Aurobindo was there seated on a chair or something else which was on a higher level than we. He was holding a volume of one of His own Centenary books. He was giving to each one an appropriate volume to study as a help to their sadhana.

As I could not find the Mother, though I looked everywhere, I asked someone about it, and I was told: "Sri Aurobindo has said that as the Mother had worked very hard and suffered a great deal, He wants Her to take rest, and He is Himself attending to all the work now. He has a personal relation with everybody in the same intimate way as the Mother, and is attending to the true need of everyone individually."

No sooner was the word "intimate" uttered by the person who was telling me these things than I felt a subtle hand touch my chest—and I understood that it was Sri Aurobindo's hand and what He meant was perhaps that He was working in me through my psychic being. His touch gave me a sweet feeling of joy and devotion.

After this, I passed on to receive my volume and woke up. I looked at my watch and found that it was exactly twelve o'clock midnight. Twelve, as I learnt later from a friend, is Sri Aurobindo's number.

I made my "pranams" to the Lord and prayed that we might all be worthy of this supreme Grace and help, and learn to do our sadhana more sincerely.

LALITA

HOW I WAS DRAWN TOWARDS SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

THE WORKING OF THEIR GRACE

IN 1918, when I was eleven, I went to my maternal uncle's place. He had built a new house. On the walls were hung the photographs of national leaders. On the second or third day, at about 10 a.m., my maternal uncle said, "Well, Bhanabhai,¹ do you know all these great men? Come on." So saying he took me near the wall and said, "See, here is Gandhiji, here is Vallabhabai Patel", and he went on reciting the names of the leaders. When we came near the photograph of Sri Aurobindo with Mrinalinidevi, he said enthusiastically, "Do you know him? He is a great revolutionary, Arvind Babu. He is manufacturing bombs in Pondicherry against the British Government." This was my first contact with Sri Aurobindo. It was strange talk, and little did I dream at that time that a day would come when I would accept him as my Guru, the incarnate Divine.

In 1924 I was studying at Poona. In the month of December, my father informed me that grandfather had expired. When I learnt this a question arose in my mind, "Why should one die?" For eight days I could sleep very little. The moment I went to bed the question stared me in the face. The same question had arisen when my mother had left her earthly home in 1917. I was too young. I could not find the solution.

Then came the year 1928. C came to visit D, a common friend. We—D, C, and I—went for a walk in the evening. All of a sudden C said, "Well, D, have you heard about the fall of Arvind Ghose? He has a lady friend and he drinks." This was the second time that I heard about Sri Aurobindo. Again the talk was rather strange. Some days later D and I visited C's place. He was reading. D asked, "What are you reading?" C replied, "I am reading *Essays on the Gita* by Arvind Ghose. These great men make a mountain out of a molehill." C spoke as if he knew much more than Sri Aurobindo. Vanity of vanities. This was the third time that the name of Sri Aurobindo fell upon my ears.

Came the year 1930. I was cleaning my dead-stock room. I came across *Uttara-para Speech*. It contained Sri Aurobindo's photograph. I read the title of the book and saw Sri Aurobindo's picture in it, but as I was not interested I put the book aside. It was a mystery how the book had found a place in my dead-stock room.

The year 1932 started. My friend D went to Pondicherry for the first time in August for the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. By the end of the month he came back. On the 12th September he received *Conversations with the Mother*. When I went to his place on the 13th he said, "I received an excellent book yesterday from Pondicherry, I would like to read out some portions to you." He began to read the

¹ Sister's son

first chapter of the book. While reading we came across the following sentence:

“You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant—sleepless, as the adepts say. .” I was enamoured of the word “sleepless” so much that I decided then and there that I must have the book. In the evening of the same day or on the next I wrote to Nolini Kanta Gupta. I do not exactly remember the words, but I wrote to the following effect:

“I am not a student of Philosophy or Religion, but I want to know the Truth. Please send *Conversations with the Mother* if possible. Please convey my respectful Pranams to the Master and the Mother.”

After posting the letter an idea struck me: “What relations have you established with the Master and the Mother that they should send you the book?” And I decided that I should not take it ill if the book was not sent. In fact I did not get the book then.

In the month of October the same year B, an inmate of the Ashram, came to stay with D. When I went to D’s place in the evening he introduced B to me, saying “Here is my friend B, he is a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.” D introduced me to B saying, “Here is my best friend.”

The year 1933 arrived. D was going to Pondicherry for the August Darshan. Before starting, he told me, “Darshan time is generally from 7 a.m. to noon. If you like, you may sit before the photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and meditate and, if you like, write to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for their blessings.” D had given me small snaps of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

I wrote to them, praying for their blessings and I also said: “I would like to have your photos.”

In answer I received a letter from Nolini Kanta Gupta dated 17-8-1933, saying: “The Mother and Sri Aurobindo ask me to communicate to you their blessings. Mr. D will take with him the photos you have asked for.”

This was my first direct contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

B came to D’s place in September 1933. During our talk, I told him my experiences. He was pleased and advised me to ask for *Conversations with the Mother*. I wrote to the Mother for the book and then forgot all about it. After fifteen days or so, on 13-10-1933, I received by registered post the book, bearing a number and the Mother’s autograph, with my name written by Her. I was so charmed that I covered the book with velvet. The book was not for public sale at that time but for private circulation only. It was put up for public sale in 1940, if I am not mistaken.

Whenever B came to our place, he brought with him some books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I read the books he brought with him. On reading Sri Aurobindo’s books, I found that He was positive that Death was not a necessity and that man died because he had formed the habit of dying. When I read this, the question that had arisen on the death of my mother in 1917 and on the death of my grandfather in 1924 was answered. Up till now all saints and sages and even Avatars had said that whoever is born has to die. Here was Sri Aurobindo declaring that “Death was not a necessity”. Naturally I found in Sri Aurobindo a haven of safety.

In April 1934 B came to our place. He had copied down the revised chapters of Karma Yoga in *The Synthesis of Yoga*. He said that he would allow me to copy the chapters if I obtained Sri Aurobindo's permission. I wrote to Sri Aurobindo, praying for permission to copy the chapters. I also wrote that I was born a Jain and that current Jainism taught that it would be a sin to eat potatoes and onions and everything that was termed "Kandmul." I expressed my desire to know whether it was a sin to eat these things and whether onions increase the guna of tamas (inertia) or not. In reply I got a letter dated 9-5-1934 from Nolini Kanta Gupta to the following effect:

"Sri Aurobindo says:—

- (1) You can copy the revised chapters of Karma Yoga.
- (2) You can copy whatever you find useful to you.
- (3) There is no sin at all in eating the things you speak of. The only objection to eating much onion is that it is supposed to stimulate the guna of rajas, not that of tamas; but there are other foods not forbidden that also do that."

In September 1934 B was at our place. At that time the Prayers and Meditations of the Mother had not been published. The sadhakas copied them down from type-script with the permission of Sri Aurobindo. The same was the case with the Messages. B had copied down the Prayers and Messages. He asked me to get the permission of the Mother if I wanted them. I wrote to the Mother. In reply I received a letter dated 14-9-1934 from Nolini Kanta Gupta: "Sri Aurobindo says in answer to your prayer to the Mother that you can copy the Prayers and the Messages."

In 1935, I suffered from a growth of bone in the tip of the third finger of my right hand. In Gujarati it is called a "khiti". The pain is unbearable. One weeps and groans. My doctor advised an operation. But that meant cutting down a portion of the finger. I did not like it. I used to apply hot onion in the hope that the skin would burst and relieve me. Nothing happened.

On the fourth or fifth day, I went to a celebrated Ayurvedic practitioner, a Vaidya, and asked him to give me or prescribe a paste, by applying which I might be relieved of the pain. The Vaidya said, "You are an educated man. Don't you know that in the body the skin of the finger tips is the toughest? You have to get yourself operated upon." I said, "I do not want that." He said, "Then suffer. You shall have to get yourself operated upon in the end. So if you seek my advice, go to a doctor immediately and get the operation done." I refused. I came back home disappointed. Then an idea struck me: "Why not write to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and seek their protection?"

It was not possible for me to write with my right hand; so I wrote to Sri Aurobindo with my left. I stated my condition, the Vaidya's advice, the doctor's confirmation of it and my decision not to get operated upon; I prayed to Him to do the needful. I wrote, "I rely on You and the Mother alone." I finished the letter at about 11 a.m. Then I put it before the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for half an hour. At 11.30 I went to the post office and posted it. Hardly four and a half hours had passed when, with the letter still in the post office, the miracle happened. The

skin burst and the bone came out of itself. At that time a Vaidya from a nearby village had come. He gave me some powder. I applied the powder and the finger was healed. In this way the Grace of the Gurus acted.

Now the year 1936. My brother and I separated in June. We had gone to our native place. When I returned to my place of business, I had only Rs. 40/- in cash with me. My wife said, "Rice, wheat and dal have to be bought." At that time we could get the goods on credit. So these things were bought on credit. I had still to pay Rs. 260/- to the landlord. My wife said, "What will you do? We have no money." I said, "Why worry, the Mother is there. I expect two things to happen and we shall get the necessary sum." The first thing happened, but the second did not and so I did not get the money. On the 18th June the landlord came and asked for the rent. I said, "Please come on the 1st July." When the landlord had gone, my wife said, "Your expectation has not come true. You have promised the landlord to pay on the 1st; how are you going to pay?" My reply was: "That is Mother's business." Days went by and the 29th June came. My wife asked me, "As yet there is no sign of money coming; what will you do?" I said, "Mother will send the necessary amount" And actually it happened. During the later part of the 29th I got Rs. 260/- the necessary sum Not a pie more, not a pie less. The landlord came on the 1st July and I gave him the amount. From that day my wife has an unshakable faith in the Mother and the Master.

The period between 1933 to 1936 was a golden period. By the Mother's Grace, I became conscious of my nights. I could remember my dreams in detail. In sleep my self was divided into two parts. One part acted in the dream, the other watched. If the active part was doing something which ought not to be done, the watching part interfered and stopped the other from doing the undesirable thing. At times I would wake up to ease nature. Then the dream would stop. But the moment I went to sleep again the dream would start from the point where it had stopped.

Even though I do not know the Sanskrit language and have no aptitude for poetry, I used to recite Sanskrit slokas in sleep for the whole night and sometimes I used to recite lines after lines of English poetry for the whole night.

During this period, I wrote a very long letter to my uncle's son, explaining to him what Sri Aurobindo's Yoga was.

From the first, on seeing the Mother's photograph, love had welled up in my heart and I adored Her as the Divine Mother. I wrote in my diary a phrase in Gujarati, which would run in English: "Let the Mother be pleased and automatically the Lord will be pleased."

This was in 1934. Once when I was sitting before the photograph of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother at about 10 p.m. I saw that the pupils of the Mother's eyes were moving. There was a living Presence.

Once I was sitting before the photograph and reading *The Mother*. I came across the following sentence: "...and it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical

Nature and annihilate difficulties." I stopped reading, closed my eyes and began to ponder over what I had read. After some time, the picture of Gangavataran flashed before my eyes and the meaning became clear.

The year 1937 brought several spells of despondency, abysses of despair, lethargy, inertia and its brood. The lower nature welled up. I did not like to sit for Puja or meditation. I felt dry. Nothing pleased me. On 28.2.1937 I heard the following: "The Divine is not a thing to be trifled with."

B and D came to our place in April. B said, "Let us read something from *Conversations*." I began to read Chapter 4. We came across the following:

"... for then, if you are without the Divine, the very source of your action disappears; knowledge, power, all are gone. But so long as you feel the powers you use are your own, you will not miss the Divine support."

I did not understand the last two lines.¹ I asked B to explain them. He was not able to do so. B asked D to explain. He failed also.

As I was passing through a period of despair, I wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo on 16.4.1937 describing my condition. With the letter I enclosed a copy of the letter I had written to my uncle's son. I also prayed to Sri Aurobindo to explain the lines quoted above.

I received a note from the Ashram on 30.4.1937:

Sri Aurobindo says in reply to your letter of 16.4.1937:

"Very often the earlier stage of the sadhana is successful, because there is an opening of the mind to the first workings of the Force—afterwards the lower vital consciousness and the physical rise up and if these are not ready or inclined for the sadhana, it ceases. The sadhaka has first to purify and open them and call the Force to work there and make all ready until he can bring the true consciousness and experience there. Yoga implies a long and difficult work and one must be ready to accept the necessity of years of preparation and purification and increasing consecration before the greater results can come."

As regards the passage in the *Conversations* Sri Aurobindo says:

"It means that in the full spiritual consciousness the sense of separate existence and my and mine disappears. All depends upon the Divine and exist only by the Divine. The ordinary consciousness does not feel or miss this Divine support, because it takes as its own the knowledge and power that are given to it; it is quite satisfied with that and is not aware of the Divine Existence behind it or the Divine Force and Knowledge."

(To be continued)

VALLABH SHETH

¹ Editor's Note—The "conversation" concerned was quoted in this January's *Mother India*, followed by the editorial note: "The last phrase may prove ambiguous, if not carefully read"

MANIFESTATION OF THE SUPRAMENTAL

PRELUDE

STANDING on the last horizon
I saw a golden gate opening.
It had no bolts, no hinges—
Only a huge lid that looked like a sun.

Amazed I watched on, forgetting my very self.
The opening lid made no sound,
Only a movement of light.
Then gushed out air the world had never breathed before.

THE MANIFESTATION

O Power Supreme! long-awaited Birth!
Thou comest burdened with lotus dawns
To the wearied limbs of patient earth.

Calmly thou comest, O lovely Light,
To plant the Sun's immortality
And the Moon's solid tranquillity.

Behind thee I glimpse the eternal pace
Of thy royal Master's radiant feet.
The Finite shall kiss the Gnostic Grace!

Soon wilt thou burst the inconscient Cavern
And release the iron crusts of our world.
Denied to the Gods, to Man thou art given!

NAGIN DOSHI

JIVANMUKTA, BODHISATTVA AND SUPERMAN

THE quest for a superhuman realisation is as old as the spiritual history of mankind. If something divine is like a seed hidden in the inmost layers of man or above him—whether we call it soul, self or no-self—then its discovery is bound to have repercussions on his state or condition of being. Since ancient times we have the ideal of the sage, the yogin, the mystic who is in contact with the Ineffable which is beyond the reach of ordinary humanity. But how can we know that someone really has such an attainment and what precisely is the consciousness he is living in? It was Arjuna who asked a similar question to his divine teacher Krishna:

Arjuna said: What is the sign of the man in Samadhi whose intelligence is firmly fixed in wisdom? How does the sage of settled understanding speak, how sit, how walk? (Gita II, 54)

It is a fundamental question and Krishna does not hesitate to answer it. But, as can be seen in the following, his description of the 'established sage' points rather to an inner state than to outer signs:

The Blessed Lord said: When a man expels, O Partha, all desires from the mind, and is satisfied in the self by the self, then is he called stable in intelligence.

He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows and amid pleasures is free from desire, from whom liking and fear and wrath have passed away, is the sage of settled understanding.

Who in all things is without affection though visited by this good or that evil and neither hates nor rejoices, his intelligence sits firmly founded in wisdom.

Who draws away the senses from the objects of sense, as the tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell, his intelligence sits firmly founded in wisdom. (Gita II, 55-58)

At the end of the second chapter of the Gita the state of the man who has abandoned wishful thinking and ego-sense is called 'brahmi sthiti' (firm standing in Brahman, brahmic realisation) which, in Sri Aurobindo's words, is a "reversal of the whole view, experience, knowledge, values, seings of earth-bound creatures."¹ To the sage in brahmic realisation the life of dualities, which is the bright day of common man, resembles a night of troubled sleep and his luminous status of higher being is a night to the unenlightened. Obviously, the term 'brahmi sthiti' must be closely related to 'jivanmukti' (liberation while living) with which we are concerned here. In fact, it is a synonym of the latter term but it has a more psychological tinge, as T.V. Kapali Sastry, a high authority on the Gita, has pointed out.²

If we take up the interesting simile of the tortoise drawing in his limbs into the shell, we may feel reminded of the buddhist term 'paravṛtti' (turning back, revulsion) which is decisive in the making of a Bodhisattva (one whose essence—sattva—is perfect knowledge—bodhi). Through 'paravṛtti' (revulsion) evil outflows (asrava) are stopped and dualistic discrimination (vikalpa) comes to an end. Thus the process of revulsion leads to a state of liberation, inner freedom or extinction (nirvana). There are henceforth no more waves in the store-consciousness (alaya-vijnana) which shines in its pristine purity of non-duality. A few passages from the Lankavatara-Sutra will serve to elucidate the-point:

... Nirvana is the Alayavijnana where a revulsion takes place by self-realisation. (II, 18)

When the self-nature and the habit-energy of all the Vijnanas... go through a revulsion, I and all the Buddhas declare that there is Nirvana, and the way and self-nature of this Nirvana is emptiness, which is the state of reality. (II, 38)

After achieving a revulsion in the abode (of the Vijnanas), Mahamati, they (the Bodhisattvas) will gradually realise the Tathagatakaya (Boddha-body), which is endowed with the powers, the psychic faculties, self-control, love, compassion, and means... (II, 7)³

It is not difficult to note the similarities. The basic characteristics of the Bodhisattva and the Jivanmukta are detachment and equality. The human 'monkey-mind' is stopped from jumping from one object to another. Resting in itself, it does not discriminate any more in terms of good and evil, pleasant and unpleasant, etc. It regards everything with an equal eye:

Sages see with an equal eye the learned and cultured Brahman, the cow, the elephant, the dog, the Pariah. (Gita V, 18)

The Lankavatara Sutra has it that the world is experienced henceforth (after the revulsion) as neither real nor unreal, like a mirage. It gives the impression of being real, but the enlightened one knows that it is a kind of illusive self-projection of the Mind (chitta). (I have presented here the position of the Yogachara-school in Buddhism).

Let us examine now how the Jivanmukta is related to the outer world. Swami Vivekananda has given an excellent illustration of the mind which sees the world as illusion (maya) :

I was once travelling in the desert in India. I travelled for over a month and always found the most beautiful landscapes before me, beautiful lakes and all that. One day I was very thirsty and I wanted to have a drink at one of these

lakes; but when I approached that lake it vanished. Immediately with a blow came into my brain the idea that this was a mirage about which I had read all my life; and then I remembered and smiled at my folly, that for the last month all the beautiful landscapes and lakes I had been seeing were this mirage, but I could not distinguish them then. The next morning I again began my march; there was the lake and the landscape, but with it immediately came the idea, this is a mirage. Once known it had lost its power of illusion. So this illusion of the universe will break one day. The whole of this will vanish, melt away. This is realisation.⁴

Vivekananda explains further that the object-world will disappear if all Karma is ended, or, when some Karma remains, it will continue for some time like the potter's wheel after the pot is finished. But when 'this world' comes, it is known to be a delusion and it will therefore no more have any trapping force.

When a man has reached that state, he is called *Jivanmukta*, living-free, free even while living... He is like the lotus leaves in water, which are never wetted by the water. He is the highest of human beings, nay, the highest of all beings, for he has realised his identity with the Absolute, he has realised that he is one with God.⁵

We have so far gained some insight into the psychological condition of a liberated being. We do not know yet, however, what prompts this being to take active interest in a world whose illusory character has been realized. The urge to liberate others is innate in the nature of a *Bodhisattva*, and in the same way we can assume that most *Jivanmuktas* (that is, those who are of the '*Bodhisattva*-type' rather than the exclusively self-concerned '*Arhat*-type') extend their realisation to a number of persons who become their disciples. What is their motivation, then?

In order to solve the problem it seems that we have to leave behind all logic and philosophy and seek an explanation in two great terms: '*karuna*' (compassion) and '*lokasamgraha*' (holding together or supporting the world). '*Karuna*' stands for the inexplicable unmotivated graciousness of the *Bodhisattva* who enters the world "out of compassion to the world, for the benefit, weal and happiness of the world at large, both gods and men, for the sake of the complete Nirvana of all beings." (*Saddharma-pundarika Sutra*) '*Lokasamgraha*' is a term that occurs in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Why should Krishna, the Lord Himself, engage himself in mighty works? As he explains to Arjuna, there is nothing that he (Krishna) has not gained or has yet to gain. Nevertheless he acts. His only motivation is '*lokasamgraha*', holding together the world. For "whatever the Best doeth, that the lower kind of man puts into practice" (III, 21); therefore if Krishna himself would not ceaselessly engage himself in action, then "these people would sink to destruction...and I should be the creator of confusion and slay

these creatures." (III, 24)

Krishna and Buddha themselves have set the example for their followers. Incidentally, it is an interesting paradox that Buddha whose teaching or thought does not seem to contain any elements of world-dynamism, was yet—in Sri Aurobindo's words—"in his action the most powerful personality that we know of as having lived and produced results upon earth."⁶ The same paradox we find in Shankara, the archbishop of Mayavadins, who stormed through India preaching Illusionism, which—as Sri Aurobindo remarked humorously in an aphorism—made God smile in His Heaven. And last of all we have the great Vivekananda who left deep footprints in America and elsewhere.

Even the adepts of Mayavada delight in Krishna's Lila, as it seems. Or else we may say that all these spiritual giants anticipate something of Sri Aurobindo's Superman whose nature can only be understood in terms of a dynamic life-pattern and in close relation with earth-consciousness and earth-evolution. After all, we cannot deny that the activists of the 'Spirit-only' have contributed their share to the integral fullness of terrestrial life. Next we shall see how Sri Aurobindo sublimes the ideal of liberated man in his conception of Superman.

We may define the Jivanmukta as someone who in all his mortality yet holds somewhere an immortal ray of Light which constitutes his contact with Divinity. At his best he will radiate it to others and contribute to the well-being of the world at large through peace, stability and inner balance. Sri Aurobindo has described this so-far highest human-superhuman being in his poem *Jivanmukta* of which I quote the two stanzas before the last except for the short opening phrase of the latter:

Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the aeons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the unconscious darkness,

He acts and lives.⁷

The second stanza here is of special importance because we are told something definite about the purpose of the Jivanmukta's life. Not even to liberate other souls is his aim here, but to help and heal 'waiting Nature'; it is like a combination of the two terms discussed above: karuna and lokasamgraha. One should note the phrase 'casting down light on the unconscious darkness.' This is, in fact, the starting-point of Superman for whom liberation is not an aim, but a basis for all further work: the

work of earth-liberation. His attitude is decisively marked by earth-concern. He will bring about the healing junction of Spirit and Matter, and liberate the one in the other so that the two may join in a happy interplay. To achieve that end, he has to dig deeper than the Jivanmukta and face obstructions which were so far considered unbreakable. It is not a quick change on the surface of the earth either, that would satisfy his aspiration. Only a deep and transforming penetration into the earth-stuff itself, changing its very condition from heavy matter into luminous substance, will mark the fulfillment of his object:

When superman is born as Nature's king
 His presence shall transfigure Matter's world:
 He shall light up Truth's fire in Nature's night,
 He shall lay upon the earth Truth's grater law;
 Man too shall turn towards the Spirit's call. . .

The Truth above shall wake a nether truth;
 Even the dumb earth become a sentient force.
 The Spirit's tops and Nature's base shall draw
 Near to the secret of their separate truth
 And know each other as one deity.
 The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze
 And Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face.
 Then man and superman shall be at one
 And all the earth become a single life.⁸

In these passages of his epic *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo has given a beautiful description of the Superman and his function. One can easily discern the central importance of the terms 'nature', 'earth' and 'Matter' which are, so to say, spiritized. And since everything is seen as a manifestation of the Spirit, the world can no more be experienced as Maya (illusion), but it is felt to be the Lila (game) of the Divine fulfilling Himself in manifestation. Of course, some sort of Maya can be perceived in the Lila, that is, forces of falsehood working in creation, which can be discerned, because Superman's vision of oneness does not exclude discrimination of quality, level and origin of the various constituents of the whole. In the vision of Superman, Maya would therefore be a net of workings which are not directly based on and originated by absolute Truth, but belong to the realm of Ignorance and deceptive lower nature.

A final word should be said on the outer being of the Superman, his body. The more Spirit in Matter is unveiled, the more his body would assume the qualities of the Spirit, that is lightness, plasticity, flexibility, invulnerability and luminosity. The body would be a cooperative instrument of the expression of the Divine rather than a hindering obstacle to spiritual progress. It is difficult to predict what exactly would

happen but one can expect that all functions that tie man down to the animal world will be gradually transformed into higher spiritual processes of a more subtle character. Consciousness will be fused into the hardest core of the physical being and 'even the body shall remember God⁹.'

WILFRIED HOCHZERMAYER

NOTES

SABCL Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1972.

- ¹ SABCL, Vol. 13 (*Essays on the Gita*), p. 96
- ² T.V. Kapali Sastry, *Sri Aurobindo's Lights on the Teachings*, Madras 1966, pp. 49-50.
- ³ Lankavatara Sutra, tr. by D.T. Suzuki, London 1932.
- ⁴ The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Mayavati Memorial Edition, Calcutta 1972, Vol. III, pp. 9-10.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.
- ⁶ SABCL, Vol. 18 (*The Life Divine*), p. 29.
- ⁷ SABCL, Vol. 5 (*Collected Poems*), p. 576.
- ⁸ SABCL, Vol. 29 (*Savitri*), p. 709.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 707.

SLAVE

A FREE TRANSLATION OF NISHIKANTO'S KRITADAS (Mukti Ebar Chaibo na Ma)

LIBERATION or truce I do not seek of You, O Mother!
I seek of You my glorious bondage as Your prisoner.
Enchain the monster of my impatient life-force
In a thousand twists, and at its very source
Squeeze out my ego's vim in Your iron grip, O Mother!

Forgiveness, affection, love I do not seek of You, O Mother!
Drain out my teeming wants, my bartering hopes shatter.
Hurl back my dark demands' tumultuous roll,
Burn up the brutal core of my desire-soul,
Place me under Your feet as Your slave, free in surrender.

Victory or boon or refuge I do not seek of You, O Mother!
Crush my rebel selfhood with the victor's gracious power.
To live in the beauty of Your divine terror
In total submission I give my whole world of error.
Batter my crown to fashion Your anklets of jingling wonder.

ROBI DAS

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the month of March 1978)

CHAPTER IV

SADHANA OF THE BODY

“The body is the Key, the body the secret both of bondage and of release, of animal weakness and of divine power.”¹

SRI AUROBINDO

“We want the body to take part in Yoga.”²

THE MOTHER

THE present chapter will indicate the way the action of Yoga begins in the body. So long as the sadhana goes on in the mental and the vital, the keenness of the struggle is not felt so much as when the force begins to act in the body, for “the physical’s tendency to inertia is very great”.³ A far greater struggle awaits us when the sadhana descends into the subconscious and inconscient. There, one runs the risk of being lost in the sea of unconsciousness. If one is not ready to fathom the deeper layers of life, the dream of a divine life in a divine body will ever remain a daydream. Great riches come to light when one reads all that Sri Aurobindo has written about a divine body. Some of its details are beyond my ken. I shall confine myself only to the way the sadhana of the body began and what is the gain so far.

With this preface let me go back to the year 1932. Just on return home from the first visit to the Ashram that year I was laid up in bed, due to pain in the parts below the left hip-joint. P, through whom I had come, advised me not to take any medicine without the Mother’s permission. So strict a discipline was maintained in those days. Immediately I sent a wire. I was completely taken by surprise. The wire could have hardly reached the Post Office, when a current passed from the affected part to the bottom of the foot and all pain was gone.

Thus began my sadhana of the body and it continues to this day unabated, making me pass through “spiritual nights” and shining days.

There are many letters in *Tome II* in which the various aspects of the action in the physical has been elaborated. Had I taken the pains, studied and assimilated their implications, it would have acted as a shield—I would have learnt to nestle in the divine arms when assailed and assaulted. Some of the letters reproduced there so eminently fitted my case as if they had been addressed to me.

“Physical nature is slow and inert and unwilling to change; its tendency is to be

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 491.

² *The Mother’s Centenary Vol. V*, p. 172.

³ *On Yoga II, Tome II*, p. 320.

still and take long *periods of time for a little progress*. It is very difficult for even the strongest to overcome this inertia."¹ "Dullness and dispersion are the two sides of the physical resistance. They correspond to the inertia and the chaotic activity of physical Nature."² "These are things which come almost inevitably in one degree or another at a certain critical stage through which almost everyone has to pass and which usually lasts for an uncomfortably long time. It is the period of the darkest night before the dawn which comes to every or almost every spiritual aspirant. It is due to a plunge one has to take into the sheer physical consciousness. It is a period when doubt, denial, dryness, greyness and all kindred things come up with a great force and often reign completely for a time. It is after this stage has been successfully crossed that the true light begins to come."³

It is necessary to say a few words on the tremor the body felt at the touch of the higher force. It had begun even when I had been at my place after my first visit to the Ashram. It was incidental, since I did not know how to invoke it. I did not even feel the necessity to aspire for it. It was the Grace that did all for me. The after-effect of the first descent was so perplexing that I felt I had been belaboured by someone. Its frequency increased a few months after my accepting the Ashram life. From time to time, all of a sudden the descent occurred at night, producing different kinds of reaction. To the lower vital the shock appeared as that of a bombshell or a hurricane. Sometimes it produced a fearful sound resembling the rattling noise of wagons, rolling down from hill-tops. (Once while seated in the Ashram courtyard for meditation I felt a rainlike shower, a vapour white in colour which appeared very soothing.) Almost every time, whenever the descent took place at night, the body got inwardly illuminated by a kind of flamelike glow, piercing the heart of darkness. This process persisted till 1937 and stopped altogether later on. When I approached Sri Aurobindo as to why it had stopped he observed: "Why should there be always the same kind of experience? It was meant to break the old formations." (I do not remember the exact wording. The idea was this.) One important thing to be noted here is that despite the shocking experiences, the whole of me always welcomed the descent, because it gave me the joy of effortless meditation for days together. After many years the experience repeated itself, twice in 1976. At the time I felt I was struck by thunder.

Twice the body felt the touch of electricity in 1977, not due to descent but at the time of meditation.

It was in the year 1934, May 11, that the first letter on resistance in the physical was written to me:

"It is probably something in the physical, perhaps the subconscious, which is offering the resistance of inertia and dullness and the power flowed down into it to change it but has not sufficiently penetrated it."

In 1940 my work was changed and this brought a novel phase in my life. The new work entailed heavy responsibility demanding constant attendance. Those were the days when people did not like to take to bed easily. From the very beginning the

¹ *Tome II*, p. 529,

² *Ibid.*, p. 531.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

reaction, the resistance in the body on account of the descent took the form of pain and did not give me respite for long. It was by a sheer inner push that I was not only regular but very punctual in my attendance.

Unable to sit even in an arm-chair, I would fall flat on my bed on return home at 5 p.m. The moment the consciousness got gathered, I felt the flow of the Mother's Force almost invariably in the lower parts of the body with nothing in the upper. The pain used to be so acute that even turning sides on the bed proved difficult. Movement might disturb the free play of the force, so I remained in one position all through the night. The fear was that in case the force might retire, I would have to pass the night writhing in pain; so even to put on the switch I would not stir but pass the night in darkness and without food. So long as the action of the force continued, the intensity of the pain was not felt much; at times the force proved a healing balm and lulled me to sleep. But, pain or no pain, I would jump from the bed in the morning and be the first to join the work. This state of affairs continued for more than a year. The pain returned almost every evening. Why? Even after the constant action of the Mother's Force why did it recur?

The Mother has written a lot on the subject and drawn pointed attention as to why the dark forces find a foothold in our being. Maybe my body was prone to pain and had very little endurance but it was fear that opened the door. I was not conscious of all these defects and drawbacks in my nature. I simply kept quiet so that the action of the higher Force might continue uninterrupted and it is this that the Mother wants us to do at the time of stress and storm.

Decades later when the Mother's Centenary Volume V saw the light of day, the lines reproduced below (p. 94) revealed the situation in which I was placed in those times:

"...the forces attack only when there is something which responds in the nature, however slight it may be. There is a kind of affinity, something corresponding which attracts the adverse force by responding to it. So, if the attack comes, you must keep perfectly quiet and send it back but it does not necessarily follow that you got rid of that small part in you which allows the attack to come... , it is like a little signal for those forces which intimates to them: You can come, the door is open.

"But there is another part in the being that was watching when these forces arrived; instead of allowing them to enter, the part which sees clearly, which knows, which has power, which resists, says 'No, I do not want it', and sends them back. But you have not necessarily been cured of the little thing within you which permitted them to come. You must go very deep within, work within you persistently to be able to efface all possibility of calling. And so long as you have not completely effaced it, the attack will recur almost unexpectedly. You push it back once again and again it returns—until the moment there is no longer anything to attract it."

Does it not reflect my case?

Even after four decades of unceasing effort I have not been able to efface the resistance completely but there is a great change in the attitude. I do not allow myself to be

shaken or alarmed when there is pain. To cite a recent instance:

In December 1977 I got a pain in the right side of the right wrist. At meditation time the action of the Mother's Force started at that very spot and then it spread all over the hand with nothing in other parts. The next and the third day the same thing happened. Once I lost all sense of the right hand, it was so full of power with a glow of light, as it often happens during samadhi: in samadhi the consciousness is withdrawn and its impact is felt mostly by the mind, here I felt like that only in the right hand with nothing of the sort in the rest of the body. At one time I saw my right palm—I mean the part below the right wrist—steeped in light with no impact elsewhere in the body. As a result the pain has not aggravated as was the case between 1950 and 1960. So long as the action continues it comes and goes. I have not yet been able to find out how to efface it.

In order to check the recurrence of the pain on the fifth day I went to the doctor but, while I was seated, something whispered, "No medicine." Yes, why should I resort to medicine when the Force is so active and I returned without uttering a word to the doctor.

In this context a very appropriate quotation comes to mind:

"The principle of mechanical repetition is very strong in the material nature, so strong that it makes one easily think that it is incurable. That however is only a trick of the forces of this material inconscience; it is by creating this impression that they try to endure. If, on the contrary, you remain firm, refuse to be depressed or discouraged and, even in the moment of attack, affirm the certainty of eventual victory, the victory will come much more easily and sooner."¹

Let me go off the track for a moment and relate an incident of my life which will show how we ourselves attract the adverse forces and invite calamities.

Problems are an inevitable part of human existence and none can bypass them. I was asked to do a thing which some side of me vehemently resented. If the vital is strong it flares up, falls like a bomb on the opposing person or rises in revolt; if weak it suffers meekly or thinks of committing suicide or some such nasty thing. (The True Vital is a "divine warrior". Great things are possible when the vital becomes the instrument of the Divine.) Unable to do either, the unregenerate part of my vital courted disaster in order to teach the person concerned the lesson of his life. I was struck dumb to see the absurdity of my own nature: "Was I so mean?" I could not imagine. I bluntly refused to act in obedience to its dictates, but I lost all enthusiasm for work, all good things in me left me; the very spirit of surrender and sincerity evaporated in a split second. Until "the light of consciousness" is turned inward one cannot detect one's own defects. They lie hidden in a dark corner.

According to the Mother: "Always circumstances come to reveal the hidden weaknesses that have to be overcome."

There is no end to the moods of the vital. It changes its colour like clouds in the rainy season. But one has to put up with it. Ours is not the way of suppression. The

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 433-4.

Mother says in clear-cut words: "One can do nothing in the physical world without the vital."¹ This could be inferred from my case.

Here could be distinguished a difference between our way of life and that of the ascetics. To quote the Mother's words apropos of the vital:

"It is exactly here that the error of the ascetics lies... They so deaden it that it exists no longer. All ascetic methods are invented for abolishing and deadening the vital. For that evidently is the most convenient way of cutting off all connection with material life. One becomes worse than a vegetative kind of being.

"What is needed is that the vital, instead of serving its own ends, becomes an instrument of the Divine. This is quite possible."²

To take up the thread: as my vital was not aggressive it appeared as if dead. Even the word "suicide" stole into my ears. Had there been no trace of some higher elements in my nature, God knows what would have been my plight. No prayer rose to my lips. The heart was passive and lifeless. When I turned to the Light enshrined in the Mother's picture, these lines leaped from the heart:

"To those who have faith in God, all the happenings of their life are an expression of the divine will and they accept it not merely in peaceful surrender but with gratitude."³

The very next day I gave my willing consent without a word of protest. Even a month later, the sense of coercion was not replaced by the spirit of total surrender. Such is the crookedness of the vital. That is why Sri Aurobindo affirms:

"The purification of the vital takes a long time because until all the parts are free, none is quite free."⁴

To quote him again: "The body should reject illness as energetically as the mind rejects falsehood."

On writing to Sri Aurobindo why despite the constant working of the higher force in the body I was subjected to constant pain, I received from him a heartening reply which infused new hope:

"... you have made a great progress and ought to have sufficient peace and psychic support to go through the tedious physical period without becoming depressed or impatient. One has to pass through the inertia of the physical consciousness in order to change matter. Keep the aspiration or the will steady—or if neither comes keep faith and turn to the Mother, the higher consciousness will come down into the physical consciousness and prepare it for the final movement."

Though the final movement is not yet in sight, there is no clamour in the inner being for quick results. A quiet confidence, rather a conviction, is steadily growing: something abiding is in the making. I shall try to explain in the next issue why there is no sense of frustration any more in my life.

(To be continued)

¹ The Mother's Centenary Vol. V, p. 117. ² *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.

³ Reproduced from *Mother India*, August 1977, p. 675. ⁴ *On Yoga II, Tome II*, p. 438.

THE IMAGE OF MAN

HIS FOUR FACETS

(Continued from the issue of March 1978)

Facet II: The Romantic Man

MAN is not only the rebel, as we see in the history of social studies: he is also the romantic. His romanticism is no mere phase in literature; it is indeed a recurring image, an ever-renewing aspect in his being and temperament. But by romanticism we do not mean just a way of his being in love; we mean an aspect of him which mirrors his movement of beauty, heroism, nobility and sacrifice.

History keeps track of man's external events, his major trends, the physical expressions of his culture, development and progress. It is specially in that that we can detect as in a seismograph his inner course of life and emotions. In other fields it would be rather hazardous to detect its presence or trace its course.

In *Hyperion* of Keats we meet the image of a perfect individual, as the poet would conceive it. Perhaps in his *Endymion* we could have met a rounded beautiful piece of poetical creation. But it is *Hyperion*, though apparently incomplete and having its obvious defects, which brings us face to face with a remarkable hero.

The ideal romantic hero in Keats was one of beauty, opposite to Shelley's Prometheus, an entity of revolt and sacrifice. Muir remarks, "It is sometimes said that Keats could not finish the poem because he had expended all his powers in describing the nobility and beauty of the old gods, so that he was unable to make the new gods superior to them." (*Critics on Keats*, by K. Muir, p. 101)

The natural attraction of Keats was not a spurious phenomenon. It was his quest for the Beautiful and the Perfect that lured him towards Greece, though as a scholar he had no knowledge of Greek. The concept of the perfect hero was something greater than this Hellenic ideal. His poetic dream and his poetic concept remained unformed and amorphous and perhaps undefined. That is the true reason of his abandoning *Hyperion*. The pursuit of the Miltonic structure or his external dissatisfaction was only the apparent reason.

Perhaps if Keats had lived longer and his poetic development surpassed the romantic into something spiritual as was the case in Shelley or Blake, we might have had something unique. His inspiration intended this surpassing and his inner being aspired towards it; but, due to his lack of vision, the work remained a superb example of an incomplete *chef d'oeuvre*, like a grand unfinished edifice.

But the ideal remains nevertheless.

It would be futile to compare Keats to Milton with his mental grandeur, his glory of dynamism, his large sprawl of imagination. Keats's *Hyperion* was neither Satan the schemer, nor the rebel of Shelley, not even the prophet of Blake. He was

a dejected individual whose "glory had passed".

In theme, as far we can surmise, "The poem, if completed, would have treated the dethronement of Hyperion, the former god of the sun by Apollo." (Woodhouse, the publisher of Keats, as quoted by R. Sadasiva Aiyer in his edition of *Hyperion*, p. LXVI)

The theme is strangely reminiscent of *Paradise Lost*, the fall of Satan being echoed in the fall of Hyperion. But there is an intrinsic departure. While in the former the revenge, revolt and passion are the key, *Hyperion* is replete with one dominant note: despair. Satan reflects his diabolical qualities in aggressive vendetta; Hyperion, the god-like qualities of pardon whose natural consequence is despair. This dejection is perhaps the mirror of Keats's own frustrated personality. We have another analogy in Tagore. While Tagore harped on the theme of death and melancholy as something sacred, his hold on life was immense, his intrinsic urge to live and glorify his existence was insatiable. But Keats's melancholy was deep-rooted, and it reflected itself in *Hyperion*.

The beginning of *Hyperion* is superb, so unlike Milton; it is intensely lyrical. We are unable to check the temptation to quote the oft-quoted lines:

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat grey-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head,
Like cloud on cloud. (*Ibid.*, p. 1)

Also:

Blazing Hyperion on his orbèd fire
Still sat, still snuff'd the incense teeming up
From man to the sun's God. (*Ibid.* p. 6)

Book 2 of *Hyperion* recalls Milton's *Paradise Lost* where the fallen brood of dark Powers dispute and debate with high-flown passionate argument and rhetoric in parliamentary magnificence. But in Keats' the heroic cadence is absent, the organ-roll is muted; instead, lyrically melodic voices argue for and against revolt.

Again we are struck by Hyperion's image:

It was Hyperion:— a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view
The misery his brilliance had betray'd
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade

In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
 Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
 To one who travels from the dusking East. (Ibid., p. 25)

We are introduced to Apollo and the Mother of the Muses, Mnemosyne, in Book 3. Here Keats reveals a new glory in the godhead. There is an attempt here to outshine the account of Hyperion by description and imagery. Now, if Apollo did outshine Hyperion, there would be no justification for putting the latter on the hero's pedestal. This singular question must have vexed the poet, hence he first attempted a recasting, then wrote *The Fall of Hyperion* and finally abandoned the whole venture.

But already part of the poem had been published and Keats immediately hailed by critics, including Byron and Leigh Hunt, as a major English bard equalling Aeschylus.

These external ovations did not, however, fire Keats's enthusiasm; he found in Milton, whom he had adored and taken as a model, not a worthy poet after all. Not only that, he came to regard Milton with his violences as not a true English voice. Hence he turned away from him to Dante in his *Fall of Hyperion*. We find this frustration expressed in a letter to Reynolds, "I have given up Hyperion," he wrote, "there were too many inversions in it. Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour." (*A Life of John Keats* by Dorothy Hewett, p. 273)

Yet the poem as it stands cannot be ignored as an insignificant achievement. A modern critic posits that there was no sorrow in the admission of the fact of Apollo's superiority. There was a *rationale* in it, or, to quote Muir's own words, "The vale of god-making in *Hyperion* is the same as the vale of soul-making; and since, as Blake puts it, 'The poetic genius is the true man', Keats was writing of the soul in man. Apollo, though ostensibly a god, has to be deified because he represents both the poet and man." (*Critics on Keats*, "Meaning of *Hyperion*," ed. by K. Muir, pp. 101-02)

Another critic remarks, "In *Hyperion* Keats' treatment of myth is more like Spenser's than Shelley's. Spenser had made the war of the gods and Titans the vehicle of his deepest thoughts and feelings about the riddle of the one and many, the possibility of permanence in the middle of flux. From a world of medieval fixities, if I may repeat myself, he contemplated the melancholy spectacle of endless change and he arrived at a compromise half-Christian, half-scientific, the doctrine that all things work out their own perfection under divine control, until the process of change shall give way to the changelessness of Eternity." (*Mythology and Romantic Tradition* by Douglas Bush, pp. 120-21)

In the final analysis we get the image of Hyperion as one of mixed grandeur, the Greek coupled with the Romantic. It possessed no Miltonic grandeur but had instead the perfection of the Greek muse mingled with the melancholy of Romantic poetry—the undertone of Keats's personal tragedy.

In Matthew Arnold, the hero or the romantic image gets a different colouring, even his approach and attitude towards the hero are poles apart from Keats's. Not the ideal but chivalry was Arnold's dominating key; not soul-perception but life-presentation. We would like, in this case, to qualify life as a moral life of the Victorian era. Perhaps we might add that the Hellenic spirit that swept through Europe during the earlier decades which went to influence Shelley and Keats was a true romantic movement, while the Victorian era saw the aftermath of this triumphant movement or influence.

"Poetry's eternal enemy" Arnold held to be caprice. "In the choice of subject," he said, "the datum of the action signifies nothing, but the nature of the subject signifies everything." This theory explains the aptness of his own subject in *Sohrab and Rustum*. (*The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, Introduction, p. 20)

The underlying idea behind his poetry in general and *Sohrab and Rustum* in particular was: "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us." (*Ibid.*, p. 23) Also it could be added, "That in poems like *Sohrab and Rustum* and *Balder Dead*, which are in epic strain, Arnold practised his own principles of poetry is undoubted." (*Ibid.*, p. 23)

Arnold was affected directly or indirectly by three influences: the Classics, Goethe and Wordsworth. But he formed his own independent opinion, as he was an able critic as well as a poet. But we would not be far off the mark if we came to the conclusion that this critical faculty had an adverse effect upon his creativity, making his poems straight-jacketed, a thing that could not occur in Shelley or Coleridge.

The characterisation, as conceived by him in *Sohrab and Rustum*, aimed at Greek simplicity and austerity. The tragedy of the father killing, unwittingly, his own progeny, nevertheless, has no touch of inevitable Fate as in the Greek dramas. It was an episode from the *Shah Nameh*; Homer too has some similar episodes. Such stories, commented Arnold, "were purple patches united by a thread of narrative". "What they needed was the bracing and restraining influence of classical form. Sobriety of style and greatness of subject... The narrative (*Sohrab and Rustum*) is admirably shaped, the writing is always good and sometimes beautiful and our emotions are touched .. Yet *Sohrab and Rustum* is academic, it has the defects of a poem written to illustrate a theory." (*Mythology and the Romantic Movement* by Douglas Bush, p. 262)

As we have commented earlier, the tragedy is brought about by the characters themselves and not by the deeper issues of Fate as in Homer or Sophocles. This gives the poem a less profound turn and less intense implication.

The shortcomings of Arnold are further responsible, due not to the man as such but perhaps to the age of decorum and triviality that he belonged to. Therefore, "Arnold is neither a reactionary nor a revolutionary; he marks the period of time, as do Dryden and Johnson before him." (*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* by T. S. Eliot, p. 103)

Eliot comments further, "But the essential advantage for a poet is not to have a beautiful world with which to deal: it is to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, the horror, the glory." (*Ibid.*, p. 106)

This comment is apt; both the heroes in *Sohrab and Rustum* are images without an underlying, penetrating and profound sense sustaining their personalities. They are, if we may say so, skin-deep, without the third dimension of depth which lends reality to an image. The deeper traits of their natures, the complexities that are man's character, have not been touched. Only one aspect of heroism has been brought into focus, but the cross-currents of emotions, the feelings and their reactions to things and events which offer us a complete image of these men are singularly absent.

Elsewhere Eliot has commented on Arnold's underlying idea behind his poetry: "A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry against *life*; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life*." (*Arnold and Pater* by T. S. Eliot)

Sohrab and Rustum is neither a revolt against life nor an indifference towards life; it is an attempt at portraying the two great heroes, without revealing the cause of their greatness. A man of physical courage and strength was merely a physical hero, nothing more. A true hero is a man great in life, mind and emotions. Sohrab and Rustum are not such heroes: thus they contradict Arnold's own concept. For Life is an all-embracing phenomenon and not restricted to morality alone.

The poem itself possesses a uniform good quality but without any specially striking lines except the close—the description of the river Oxus.

To sum up, "Arnold strikes out the more serious notes of contemporary thinking. He fails, however, to look beyond to the future." (Sri Aurobindo Centenary Vol. 9, p. 142)

Tennyson marks a difference from Arnold and the image of Arthur which he brings to us is one of studied simplicity and artificial naturalness. His *Idylls of the King*, though a work of greater bulk than Arnold's, fails to satisfy us poetically, due to the image that is brought before us, which has neither the striking power nor the effectiveness of the picture painted. This failure might have been in the poet himself or could well have been due to the sources he went to for his inspiration: Malory and French and English medieval traditions.

The whole poem is split into episodes, told with the skill of a narrator, but not the inspiration of a poet. These episodes relate to the coming of Arthur, the witchcraft of Merlin, the exploits of Lancelot and others of the celebrated Round Table, Arthur's marriage to Guinevere and finally his passing in *Morte d'Arthur*, which incidentally is the best of the set. These numerous characters crowd his long narrative with their prim Victorian atmosphere, but never strike a major chord of poetic afflatus which could come anywhere near to Shelley or Keats or even Arnold.

Sohrab and Rustum too are physical entities, individuals with great material valour, but with a chaste dignity and classical nobility, while Tennyson's Arthur is amazingly valiant and nothing more. In spite of his superhuman courage, he is less

impressive than Arnold's heroes because we are not given a glimpse of Arthur's source of strength; thus he remains a myth and nothing more.

It may be pointed out that the *Idylls of the King* does not happen to be Tennyson's best and that his *Lotus-eaters*, *Oenone*, *Ulysses*, *In Memoriam* are better examples and representatives of his poetic genius. Sri Aurobindo comments: "*The Idylls of the King* miss both the romantic and the idyllic beauty and arrive only at a graceful decorated triviality. The grand old Celtic myths and traditions already strangely mediaevalised by Malory, but still of life and large humanity and colour are modernised into a baffling and disappointing superficiality and miss all greatness and power of life. There is no congruity between the form and symbol and the feeling and substance." (*Ibid.*, p. 136)

This study circumscribes itself, not to a detailed criticism of poetry, but to the image in question of an individual, a hero, a person. As such the greatness or the merit of a poet is not in question, but the effective image he puts before us. Hence our choice of the *Idylls of the King*.

But all of the Victorian age is not a failure, at least in other respects. In the realm of fiction, this age reveals strange vigour and creativity after the mundane, obscure and long-winded narrations of the eighteenth century and the initial decades of the next.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

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TWO ESSAYS OF A YOUNG STUDENT

The Living Samadhi

READING the title most of the readers will wonder why I call the Samadhi a living one. This is my inner feeling and approach towards the Samadhi. Some may look at it as a sacred block or a place of homage or a block of marble or a mere tomb. I agree with all of them yet I find it to be a vivid, talking, living and powerful samadhi. It is "a guiding star to every wandering bark."

It seems so small yet all the treasures of the world lie there, and they are revealed only to those who can open their inner gates with a soft ardent and true prayer; and this is the key to the lock of those treasures. But first one must dust and wash and keep clean our little safe to store and be worthy of these treasures.

The atmosphere around the Samadhi is replete with power, and it is ethereal.

Each one has different experiences and sees it from a different angle. Let me now tell you what I myself feel and think about the living Samadhi.

The living Samadhi is my sole faithful, consoling, trustworthy and best counsellor. Whenever I am in a depressed state, in difficulties, or in danger, I always go to my faithful friend and pour out all my sorrows from every nook and corner of my heart to it.

I can assure you that it will never leave me in the lurch. It is my everlasting friend that clears all the obstacles on my way and guides me to the right path of Truth and Light.

Whenever I enter the Ashram, the main building, I am so much pulled by a magnetic power towards the Samadhi, something from within pushes me to go and embrace it, to tell without reserve all my pangs and joys, successes and failures of the day. I go to the Samadhi with a heavy heart but return with a lighter one.

I whisper to it all my secrets and gaze at the steady flame that burns in eternity.

Whenever I place my forehead on the Samadhi I feel that I am in the soft, warm, cosy, peaceful lap of the sweet loving Mother. Some subtle streams of rapture thrill my nerves and run in my veins.

Then I feel myself soaring up high and still higher, in the blue, leaving the dark hell of miseries, falsehood, lust and attachments.

Friendship with the Divine

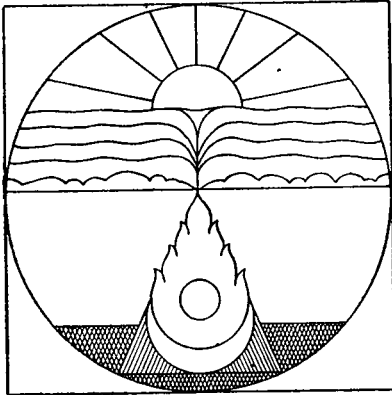
Human beings' friendship does not last forever. Today you are friends and tomorrow enemies. Even a whole life's friendship can be broken just in two minutes with a few harsh and insulting words. So sometimes I wonder what is the use of making friends with these human puppets who move according to their desires and cravings. Friends are servers of time. Just when your pockets are full they stick to you and at the time of crisis you are left alone, they just disappear.

Why do not human beings make friendship with the Divine? He is the best friend for all.

Oh! then how fine it would be. He is always ready to respond to the smallest appeal we make. It is He who will warn us against doing any bad or ugly act, He will give us courage to withstand low temptations and desires. It is to Him that we can reveal everything, say everything. He is the sea of compassion, He always pardons all the errors we make and even if one accuses Him He embraces one in His compassion. It is He who helps us not to fall down, but to walk straight to the goal. He is the lighted torch of our dark untrodden path. It is He who answers to our prayers. He is our true friend, He is constantly with us, not only when we are in comfort, but in our bad or unhappy days as well. In whatever condition we are, He receives us with open arms.

He is always with us to heal our sorrows and is there each time we need Him. When we call Him sincerely, He is always present to guide us, uphold us and to love us truly. So it is no use to keep friendship with human creatures. When the time comes, even the best friend betrays us. The best friend that will never fail us or will never run away in the hour of crisis is the Divine. As we progress and purify ourselves of our egoism, hatred, bad desires and jealousy, our friendship with the Divine becomes more and more clear and intimate. Finally we become a bright ardent flame uniting with the Divine.

UMA JOSHI



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SURRENDER ROSE

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl whose name was Surrender Rose. She was a happy girl, for she had a mother and father who loved her and, even better, an aunt who was extremely good at telling stories and cooking and ..almost everything else, as some people are. Of course nobody is perfect and this aunt was absent-minded. She was always losing her darning needles and her rolling pin and hairpins but she would never admit to carelessness and would say that the pixies had hidden them. Surrender Rose's parents considered this a failing in aunt Tulip but since they were fond of her they let it pass and though Surrender Rose wasn't a hundred per cent sure that pixies and fairies did exist she didn't like to poke fun at aunt Tulip as her parents sometimes did.

Occasionally she overheard her parents wondering whether it was a good thing for Surrender Rose to believe in pixies and fairies and sprites and so forth but they always ended up by saying that probably it wouldn't do any harm since Surrender Rose was still so young and that in time she would outgrow both these beliefs and her attachment to aunt Tulip, who might, in any case, go and live with her other sister once Surrender Rose was older. The idea that aunt Tulip might move away and the bewilderment caused by the wondering whether aunt Tulip or her parents were right about pixies and fairies were the only shadows on her happiness. They were faint because the possibility of her being much older, and thus of aunt Tulip's departure, were remote. So the days went by, one much like another, Surrender Rose helping her aunt in the garden, helping her to peel vegetables and learning sewing and taking lessons from her UNTIL...

All in one day Surrender Rose had the happiest and unhappiest day of her life. This is how it was as exactly as it can be told. Surrender Rose had just finished a piece of embroidery on a bag which aunt Tulip had been helping her to prepare for her mother's birthday. She had been doing chain stitching for the first time and as it had required a great deal of concentration she had got up, after finishing the first two flowers, to stretch and breathe in deeply at the window. There is nothing like breathing-in-deeply-at-a-window to replenish one's energy. Actually that is a manner of speaking, for there are many other ways and better, I dare say, but this one suited Surrender Rose's purpose admirably because there was a window handy and lots of fresh sweet-smelling air from the garden and in any case she felt like stretching just there. Also you could look out onto the rows of snapdragons and cosmoses and marigolds with a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, to say nothing of the fact that looking at flowers is sweet and soothing to the eye and spirit. And finally for the sake of distraction, if you wanted and needed it, you could see beyond the small cottage garden onto the road where people on foot and bicycle sometimes passed. And occasionally even a car, though rarely, for the road in front of the cottage was rather a

wide lane than a road. But the postman and the bread-delivery man and the milkman used it and they were all her friends. Well, on this particular day none of these passed as she stood stretching at the window. But she heard a rhythmic and unfamiliar sound which quickly grew louder. She leaned out to see what it was. It was a magnificent white horse mounted of course by a horseman. And then she forgot about the horse. The horseman was very young, a golden-haired boy dressed in white and gold. He was the most beautiful person Surrender Rose had ever seen. She stopped in the middle of her stretch, her eyes wide, so that when the boy happened to turn to glance at the cottage he caught Surrender Rose with her arms stuck out stiffly above her head.

Normally she would have smiled and finished her stretch comfortably but when the boy turned she realised that he was the prince, so she got stuck, for there is something about the word or idea "prince" which makes things stick in one's head and, in Surrender Rose's case, in her arms. But quite apart from this obstructing quality, as I have already said, she was looking on the most beautiful person she had ever seen. There was something very noble about this young horseman. Actually there usually is about a horseman and that is why there are so many equestrian statues but people seldom realise that the nobility is usually almost all in the horse. In nine cases out of ten, take away the horse and what have you got? I will say, though, that in this case the horse was very noble and the prince certainly seemed to match him. He had a great sweetness of face, regular features and clear grey eyes, which saw Surrender Rose as she had never been seen before.

Suddenly a strange, no, a terrible thing happened as he was looking at the cottage. He disappeared.

He had fallen off his horse. The horse had stumbled in a pothole in the lane and, good horseman though he was, he had lost a stirrup and slid down the left side of his mount. This happens to the best of horsemen, embarrassingly enough, but if they are good horsemen and good sportsmen they know this and take it in their stride. Our prince was both. He was soon up on his horse again and, smiling, he called out to Surrender Rose.

"Need to have your lane mended, little lady." By now Surrender Rose's arms were down but though the Prince's voice was very friendly she could find nothing to say. It was a long time before she could and by then the Prince was out of sight. This was all, absolutely all that happened except that Surrender Rose had fallen in love, inextricably, irrevocably and all the other adverbs which mean that you quite simply are bound for life.

Perhaps I shouldn't have mentioned this fact of Surrender Rose's having fallen in love yet, for she herself was not aware of it; so although it had at this point already happened as the clock goes, and I am certainly not speaking of something which was only going to happen in the future, the fact that it had happened had not yet reached Surrender Rose's mind. And if some wise and observant person had told her what had happened she would have been surprised, and if she had not taken time to consider

she would probably have denied it. Such a wise and observant person was her aunt, too wise to tell her what had happened. And though in five minutes everybody knew the prince had taken a spill in the lane and even that he had at the time been looking at Surrender Rose's cottage while she was standing like a scarecrow at the window, nobody guessed why suddenly she began at one moment to be happy and elated and at another pensive and somewhat distressed. Surrender Rose looked at the mirror often. And she was not very pleased at what she saw, for she could see nothing princely or rather princessly. And here I suppose she was right, for though Surrender Rose was pleasant looking enough with a sweet little round face and sweet sparkling brown eyes and had no cause for dissatisfaction whatever, there was nothing remarkably beautiful about her face. In fact she was like most other little girls in the world—neither very pretty nor very ugly—but since she had a pleasant smile she was more pretty than not. There was only one thing that could take away this impression and that was when she had a look of dissatisfaction on her face. Since this happened seldom it is quite safe to repeat that she was pretty rather than not.

For, just as I am repeating this emphatically, Surrender Rose is looking at herself in the mirror and her face is thick with dissatisfaction. You have read that she had soft brown eyes and a sweet smile. Now she has neither. Her eyes are sad and even a little hard with resentment because they are not larger and do not have very long lashes, and oh if only they were green! Surrender Rose had never found herself so wanting in beauty before. And not only is her dress not white and gold, it is made of very simple home-spun cloth and the cut (her aunt made it) seems to her unfashionable. She pulls at the neck with her hand, which improves neither the dress nor her mood. Finally she leaves the mirror because for the first time in her life she cannot bear to look at herself.

At this point her aunt saw her going back to her embroidery. As Surrender Rose approached the window her face was slowly transformed. Not only was it as pretty and pleasant as ever; it became beautiful because in precisely this place she had seen the prince and now recalled how friendly and unassuming he had been. It was enough to have seen him just once in her life to be happy forever. That such nobility and such simplicity existed in one person, and that person a prince, and that prince mounted on such a horse... she knew quite well that if you took away the horse you still had the most wonderful being in the world.

How she could have stood there with her arms stuck straight above her head! And then she rehearsed in her mind all the things she could have done with her arms and the things she could have graciously replied in a clear and silvery voice to the prince's friendly comment. When she had rehearsed them often enough in her mind she went to the mirror to try them out, but they went better inside her head. She gazed sadly at her reflection. For the first time it seemed to her that her skin was very dull, not like the creamy rosy complexion of pretty girls. In fact her skin was a lovely olive matt, and she had the most beautiful glossy black hair, and though her colouring was one of her best features she now found fault with everything and left the

mirror again.

In the next few days Surrender Rose, who had always eaten heartily, lost her appetite; her embroidery became very untidy and she didn't even enjoy helping her aunt in the garden. Surrender Rose's parents noticed that something was wrong. They gave her a tonic, then they gave her a laxative. Then they said she was sulking. Then they took her to a doctor. Then they wanted to take her for a holiday. But she stamped and absolutely refused to leave the cottage. They had never seen her stamp her foot before and were seriously alarmed. Finally they turned to Aunt Tulip who had remained serene in all these changes. Aunt Tulip said she would tell them what had happened only if they promised not to breathe a word to anyone and least of all to Surrender Rose. They were much dismayed. No parents want to see their only child sad and pining away for something she can never have. When it is a bicycle or even something more splendid in that line they can work hard and buy it. But there's not much you can do about procuring a prince. Aunt Tulip did not agree with them, but then she seldom agreed with them about anything and they did not consider her sensible. Indeed if she had not been such a very good cook, embroidress, seamstress, gardener, etc., they would have considered her downright hopeless, as well as absent-minded. However, contrary to what they believed aunt Tulip was very practical and she was watching the situation. To the untrained eye it was deteriorating rapidly. You should have seen Surrender Rose's chain stitching: very, very jagged indeed and the stem stitch full of knots. And she ate no more rice for lunch than could have been contained in a thimble. In fact for the first time her hair was no longer glossy and so one of her principal claims to prettiness was fading, which only increased her dissatisfaction.

What was aunt Tulip waiting for?

For one thing she was waiting to see how constant this feeling of Surrender Rose's was. In some people it passes.

In this case it became apparent after some months that it was unlikely to pass. In fact it became more intense. Surrender Rose now spent a great deal of time walking in the garden in a state of semi-trance. It was difficult to get her to answer sensibly any question or suggestion. But what was worse was that she was getting very thin. And it seemed quite certain that if nothing intervened she would go into a decline.

Once again, "What was aunt Tulip waiting for?" She was waiting for Surrender Rose to reach a point of desperation. For, usually, it is, alas, only when one has reached this point that one is willing to try a method normally considered too difficult or effortful or even impossible. And aunt Tulip had to wait until just exactly the right moment before Surrender Rose got weak from going into decline but not before her situation had ripened into one of desperation. If she blew it, it might never occur again. So she waited, trying to be as calm as possible, and trying not to lose her spectacles and sewing articles so as not to get the already edgy family closer to the edge; she tried not to mislay the rolling pin so that she could make

pastry to tempt Surrender Rose's appetite and also because she did not know just when she would need this very important article for other purposes.

The moment came.

One afternoon aunt Tulip and Surrender Rose were sitting by the window embroidering. It was an oppressive afternoon with grey clouds banked up. The birds seemed nervous in their chirping. They were still working on the very same bag that we spoke of at the beginning of the story. It was still for the birthday of Surrender's Mother, only it wasn't for the same birthday, for with all the upheaval they simply hadn't been able to get it done in time and aunt Tulip was even wondering whether another birthday wasn't going to fly past before it would be finished. The stitches were by now so jagged and knotted that they had to be taken out again and again and Surrender Rose even sometimes worked right into the quite good work that she had done before seeing the prince, so that the whole bag practically had to be restarted from the beginning.

What with seeing this and the weather and sensing things impending, aunt Tulip, for the first time, the very first time, spoke in a slightly irritated voice, "These stitches won't do. No, they won't do at all." And with a testy little jerk she began to pull them out for the umpteenth time. But it was the first occasion on which she had been anything but completely patient and loving. Perhaps patience is the wrong word because when you are completely loving you don't need patience. You don't need anything. Well, the weather and the feeling of impending things and all the rest must have been working on Surrender Rose too, for *she* did something which she had never done before and which was so unlike her that it startled even aunt Tulip. She snatched the bag back and threw it on the floor and said, "I don't give a damn about this ugly old bag or any of you in this ugly old house. Everything's ugly and horrible and so are you."

Well!

As you can see if ever a situation had ripened to a point of desperation it was this one. And fortunately aunt Tulip recognised it. It seems simple when you just say it like that. But it can be, it usually is, an extremely tricky thing, like catching a twisty ball. Because if aunt Tulip had got offended and left the house (as you may have suspected, Surrender Rose was the one who was keeping her here) all might have been lost. But she caught the ball, as it were, and realised that if Surrender Rose had said this thing to her it could only mean that the moment had come. So she quietly picked up the badly embroidered bag, for this was no time to mislay things, and put her arms about Surrender Rose, at which Surrender Rose burst into tears of remorse and confusion. She could not understand who had said these words, for she loved her aunt more than anyone else in the world besides the prince—and sometimes more than the Prince.

"Surrender Rose," said aunt Tulip, "the time has come for me to tell you something."

"Yes, aunt Tulip. Anything, anything. I'll listen. I'll re-do the whole bag."

“Well, perhaps the main thing is not so much listening as looking but there is even a little listening. You see, to be brief, I’m a fairy.”

You may think Surrender Rose received this with disbelief, specially after what she had just said to her aunt and also when I tell you that Aunt Tulip was rather a plump woman with a fairly sharp nose. And since you probably remember she was always losing her spectacles, you probably realise that she was short-sighted or long-sighted. Actually she was short-sighted which is also why she could never find anything else either. But figures and noses are of no consequence. They are not what distinguish a fairy from those who are not fairies. If anything does, it is the eyes. And that is where Surrender Rose now looked. She looked straight into her aunt’s eyes and it seemed to her that she had never done so properly before. She saw something very wonderful there that moved her heart. After a very long look indeed which brought tears to her own eyes Surrender Rose heard her aunt’s voice as though from far away, saying, “Now there is something I have to show you. Can you please bring me my rolling pin? I’ve left it in the left hand corner on the bottom shelf next to the flour and below the lime marmalade.”

Much to her astonishment, for things very seldom were where aunt Tulip said they were, Surrender Rose found the rolling pin just there. But then when a spell has begun working or is beginning to work everything is absolutely right and correct down to the last microsecond or millimeter. That’s why something must have gone terribly wrong if Cinderella’s godmother couldn’t get her to leave the ball precisely on time. But here nothing went wrong and having found the rolling pin Surrender Rose brought it to her aunt who balanced it on her palms and flicked a crumb of dry dough from the handle. Then closing her eyes she waved it. She didn’t even wave it like a wand. She sort of brandished it gently above her head so she could look into Surrender Rose’s eyes but it acted as well and better than any conventional wand could. From having been handled so often and so lovingly by aunt Tulip it had become a perfect transmitter for her. She did not even have to touch Surrender Rose’s person with it. In fact she hardly needed any material object at all for this but she did think the world wasn’t ready for a complete break with tradition. Anyhow, once she had waved the pin this is what Surrender Rose saw:

She saw a luminous Princess, she knew immediately that such a being must be at least a princess if not something far greater. This princess was a being of light who smiled at her with infinite peace and sweetness and with the wisest, most imperturbable, most beautiful eyes in the world. She could not but smile back. All longing, all pain, all remorse were stilled in her. All that was not joy fled from her being. And as she gazed and gazed she felt her smile become like that of the princess who became increasingly familiar, more and more until with a shock of delight she realised that she had known her all her life, that she was gazing upon herself, her very inmost self. Something yielded deep inside herself and she knew: that was her smile, those were her eyes. She was and always had been incomparably beautiful. She never knew how long she looked. It seemed a life-time or more, much

more, at least several life-times but perhaps it wasn't so long. When she moved, the afternoon was dimming into evening and though she did not know how she had got there she realised she was sitting on the floor with her cheek against her aunt's knee.

She knew the meaning of what she had seen, for her aunt was a great fairy, and with the revelation she had been able to provide the knowledge of what to do with it, which is a faculty rare even in good fairies. And even when they have it, it is useless unless the person in question is able to catch it. Surrender Rose caught it perfectly. She knew immediately that though she was the princess she would have to grow into her and that this, specially in the light of what she had been capable of this very afternoon, might be hard work.

But she was determined and she expressed her determination to her aunt. This was a great relief to aunt Tulip, for it proved that she had acted with good timing and had not wasted her fairy power, which is a thing to be avoided above all else. It also saved her from having to explain in words what she had shown Surrender Rose, for explanations can be embarrassing to delicate souls and are hardly ever effective. Once you have to *explain* something...

Anyhow her timing had been perfect and she now realised more than ever how wrong she would have been to give in to her temptation of waving her rolling pin merely to solace Surrender Rose or even worse—heavens, much worse—to procure her prince for playmate. She had at times sorely been tempted to do both these things. A soft heart is often a fairy's undoing, for naturally they love the charges they are sent on earth to guide, but there is a deeper necessity than softness and fondness and that is wisdom and the knowledge of the trials that must be passed through. Many a good fairy has had her power withdrawn through untempered fondness. But both aunt Tulip and Surrender Rose had come out of the moment of desperation and the angels too were smiling and even the gods.

(To be continued)

MAGGI

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.

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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Letters to my Little Smile. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1977. Pp. 167. Rs. 12. 00

A LITTLE girl of fourteen gets attracted to Sri Aurobindo, comes away from her home in distant Gujarat—her elder brother is already an inmate of the Ashram—and plunges straight into the Mother's lap, to find there a solace no human mother could give. This was Vasudha, now in her mid-sixties, to whom the Mother gave the name, "Mon petit Sourire", "My Little Smile". The letters collected in this small volume were written to this young girl and to her elder brother, Chandulal, engineer in his early thirties. The brother dies while still a young man. The sister retains her smile to this day.

As Amal Kiran notes in his Introduction, the Mother's "gracious flow of spiritual feeling" towards Vasudha "is well summed up in what she wrote on 6 January 1963 on Vasudha's birthday: 'To Vasudha whose precious help prevents my feet from being hurt by the stones on the way...'" And she writes on Chandulal's death, "It has been a sad event and a big loss for the work..."

This little volume remains a precious document for more than one reason. It brings out vividly so many facets of the Mother's personality and action. It contains perhaps the longest letter from her I have so far come across.¹ It shows Sri Aurobindo in a humorous mood, not so frequent in those early days of correspondence with disciples. And it gives us glimpses of the Ashram in its formative period, that will be of supreme interest to future historians. The bulk of the letters cover the period from 1933 to 1936.

The Mother takes in hand a young girl and a young man at a time when there was no regular arrangement for academic or physical training, and herself guides them along, with consummate mastery. She develops the girl's artistic tastes by giving her the kind of work that she loves. She explains some fine points of "technology" to a highly qualified Polytechnician, and gives pieces of advice on management that would be welcome to an experienced Public Relations Officer in any big enterprise. She gives tips regarding health and the cure of eye-trouble and the secret of healing power that a medical man might envy. And as was her wont, she leads by the hand the novice on the path of yoga, by the shortest of short-cuts. She remains for ever the eternal Mother.

Sri Aurobindo's Presence can be felt through this volume, as if permeating the entire atmosphere. He is not altogether in the background; for the Mother makes him write some of the answers. His letters are few, but they remain priceless possessions to both the recipients. There is one that consists of a single *tathāstu*, "So be it", written in Devanagari script. There is another that commends the "supramental fish" that Vasudha had embroidered for Sri Aurobindo.

The original letters were in French, but the English-speaking world is wide enough to justify the non-French version.

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ Editor's Note: Reproduced in *Mother India*, March.

Lift Me High: *Poems by Lahta.* Published by All India Press, Pondicherry. Price Rs. 5/-

These verses by the author of *Tales of India* were mostly written, she tells us, on "pretty greeting cards" and sent to the Mother from 1965 to 1973; a few others written more recently have also been included.

At first glance they look hardly more than little verses appropriate to pretty greeting cards. With almost naive rhythms in rhyming couplets or quatrains they seem no more than charming lyrics, marred here and there by a line of prosaic flatness and heightened here and there by a phrase or line of startling intensity and showing in general an originality of language and a seriousness of content not usually found in greeting-card verses.

To such an assessment the most entirely successful of the pieces appears to be one where content and expression are matched in lyrical simplicity:

MOON BOAT

Blue moon-boat,
Over the clouds sailing,
Whither dost thou float,
A pearly gleam trailing?

All the night through,
Over the hill-tops high
Thy star-dust blew
A soft silver sigh.

What divine lover
Dwells in far skies,
A gossamer veil drawn over
His fleur-de-luce eyes?

Distant the marge—
How could we hope to know
Whither thy crescent barge
Dreams to go?

In others the simplicity of form seems not always to match so well the depth or height of experience or aspiration it attempts to convey.

But with re-reading in a different mood this critical view is utterly disarmed by the candour of these offerings. These verses speak from the heart to the heart and the unpretentiousness of rhythm and expression are found to be simply the very natural

vehicle of the trust, reverence, love and gratitude the child offers to her Mother. Then the apparent naiveté reveals unexpected subtleties and strengths and an indefinable light suffuses each page. Though not many of these pieces may achieve poetic perfection all through, those who can warm to the heart's voice will find a great deal to delight them here and will be grateful to Lalita for sharing her songs with us.

Surely a mere Rs. 5.00 is worth paying for her spontaneous soul-help.

M. S.

An inch of experience goes farther than a yard of logic.
Sri Aurobindo

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EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of January 1978)

18

CHRIST Church College is one of the oldest Colleges in Oxford. It was founded by Cardinal Wolsey in 1515. Originally it was called Cardinal College. It was later renamed Christ Church by Henry VIII. The Tom Tower in front of the Tom Quad in this College is a very impressive tower; Gothic in style, it expresses Tudor strength and boldness. Almost all the Colleges have a quadrangle, called a Quad in Oxford and Courtyard in Cambridge. In front of the tower is a beautiful copy of Giovanni Da Bologna's figure of Mercury. Christ Church is by far the largest College in Oxford and it accommodates about 400 students.

The most magnificent tower belongs to the Magdalen College. Graceful and austere, it makes one stop and think for a while. Voices of a hundred choir boys come floating across the sky:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of Thy throne
Thy Saints have dwelt secure,
Sufficient is Thine arm alone
And our defence is sure.

O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

We talk a lot about streamline these days. If you want to see perfect streamline in any ancient building, nothing can beat the twin towers of All Souls College. Towering far above the neighbouring buildings they seem to pierce the firmament. The dome that impresses most is the dome of Radcliffe Camera. It is the largest reading room in Oxford. To an apparent view it looks more like a dome by Wren. In fact it was done by one James Gibbs. The dome was christened Radcliffe in honour of Dr. John Radcliffe, one of the greatest benefactors of Oxford. And if you like to see Greek influence on English architecture there is nothing like the entrance to the Ashmolean Museum that houses old paintings, musical instruments and other antiquities. It

reminds one of the Parthenon, the temple dedicated to Athena on the Acropolis in Athens. Martyrs' Memorial, in memory of Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer near Balliol College is worth noting. It is made of stone yet it looks like wrought iron-work, so delicate is the steeple with exquisite embellishments on all sides. Among the modern buildings the Bodleian Library and the Inorganic Chemistry Laboratory are very impressive. Nuffield College for social studies (completed in 1937) is noteworthy. There is also the Indian Institute where researches on India and Pakistan are carried on.

There is another very interesting spot in Oxford that most visitors are shown. William Shakespeare, when he fled Stratford-on-Avon after the poaching incident, spent the night at Oxford on his way to London. Shakespeare-admirers have been able to find the room where he stayed. The room has been cleared and cleaned. There are beautiful frescoes on the wall and it is now known as the Painted Room. It is a room in the house of one William Wykeham who founded the New College at Oxford.

*

Before ending this story let us introduce our readers to one Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris in his youth was bent upon becoming a surgeon. But his father was too poor to afford the expenses of such a training. Mr. Morris had no other go but to open a cycle repair shop in one of the main thoroughfares of Oxford. Soon the boys came along. a flat tyre, a broken chain, a loose spoke, or a brake gone wrong. Within a short while Mr. Morris was doing very well and he found that he had deft fingers, and he could do the repairs very efficiently, if not to human bodies, at least to cycle parts. He started repairing cars, and soon bought a shattered and broken-down car to try his hand. He made the car move. With great enthusiasm he started designing cars and actually made them run on the road. He built a great factory in Cowley, a suburb of Oxford. And now Morris Cowley is a name familiar all the world over. All ended like a fairy story. The British Government recognised his genius. The prince of cars became Lord Nuffield.

But the University of Oxford did not like this at all. For there was bound to be a difference, with a commercial town springing up so near. Lord Nuffield, now a multimillionaire, offered a huge sum to Oxford for a College for Technology. The authorities would have none of it. He implored, and supplicated, and begged but all to no avail. The authorities were adamant. Finally they agreed to take his money only for a College for Social Studies. This College was opened in 1937. The old tradition of learning for learning's sake remained undisturbed. For the University was not interested in "Technology" or "Do it Yourself". Men may come and men may go but Oxford and Cambridge go on for ever.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI