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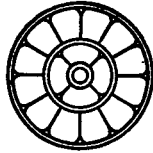
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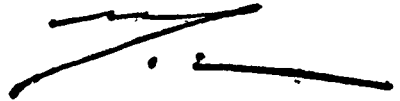


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 5

"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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SOME ANSWERS BY SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

KRISHNAYYA: *P. Kameshwar Rao of Ongola has sent me today Rs. 10 by M.O. — Rs. 9 being the sale proceeds of the books and Re. 1 his monthly offering to you. I herewith enclose the one rupee coin.*

He wrote also a letter in which he says: "I am reading the books of Sri Aurobindo and worshipping the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's photos daily and practising meditation. As it is quiet and calm in the nights, we sit for meditation after supper. We feel at that time quite happy and calm. But at times while I am meditating I lose consciousness and it is as if I went to sleep. Can it happen like that?"

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the character of the sleep. There is a state in which one is not aware of outside things but goes inside and is there conscious.

(3-10-1936)

*

SRI AUROBINDO: Devotion and a more and more complete inner consecration are the best way to open the psychic.

(22-2-1937)

*

A DISCIPLE IN EUROPE: *What is the best time for anybody, anywhere in the world to meditate?*

THE MOTHER: 7.45 p.m. by the Indian standard time.

*

THE MOTHER: The more a person is quiet in front of all occurrences, equal in all circumstances, and keeps a perfect mastery of himself and remains peaceful in the presence of whatever happens, the more he has progressed towards the goal.

*

THE MOTHER: To give the Divine what one has in excess is not an offering. One should give at least something out of what one needs.

*

(From Nirodbaran's notebook of Talks with Sri Aurobindo)

MANILAL: *What happens when the human consciousness is replaced by the divine consciousness?*

SRI AURÓBINDO: One feels a perpetual calm, perpetual strength, one is aware of Infinity, and lives not only in Infinity but in Eternity. One feels Immortality and does not care about the death of the body. And then one has the consciousness of the One in all. Everything becomes the manifestation of the Brahman. For instance, as I look around this room, I see everything as the Brahman. No, it is not a mere thinking, it is a concrete experience: even the wall, the books are Brahman. I see you no more as Dr. Manilal but as the Divine living in the Divine. It is a wonderful experience!

NO RETURN

I STAND here for all time, rooted in God.
 A thousand heart-gropes find each root their goal.
 I am caught by a depth and warmth of eternal Love,
 Love that by being eternity is true earth,
 The rock-grip of a bliss that cannot end.
 Here is my Country, my Creatrix, my World's Core.
 To the old out-scattered life there is no return.

But my fixed tree is a branching magnificence:
 Everywhere spread huge arms that pierce all space,
 Nothing the sweep of the universe can give
 Eludes; but now from a stainless height I search
 Earth's distances of lost divinity.
 Here is the Abroad, the All-Mother, the World's Edge.
 To the low rush, the blind grasp there is no return.

May 27, 1954

K. D. SETHNA

OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1978)

7

The Mother, Her Children and the Various Interrelations

(a)

WHEN the Mother's son, André, by the painter Henri Morisset who had married her in the studio-days of her late teens, was to come on a visit to the Ashram on 4th November 1949 after a separation from the Mother for 34 years, she was reported to have joked: "I don't know what he looks like now. I only hope he hasn't become bald." She must have been pleased to find that though his hair was not quite bushy his head was far from having reached the billiard-ball state. The reunion of *Maman* and *fil*s was said to have been a warm one. The Ashramites were very glad to see the Mother's one and only son. I happened to be on a visit to the Ashram from Bombay in this period.

André was a handsome and affable person, with a fine poise of mind. He was invited to the houses of many Ashramites and the enthusiastic welcome he received included an affectionate laudatory poem by Pujalal. When he left, Kameshwar accompanied him in the car to see him off at the Madras airport. After Kameshwar had returned, the Mother talked to us more or less as follows: "Kameshwar was all curiosity to ask André whether he had always known who I am. It seems André told him that he had the sense of the reality from an early age. When he was a boy, I never called any doctor to treat his illnesses. I always cured him by spiritual power. Whenever any harsh opinion was expressed by my in-laws, little André used to defend me. Once at dinner a criticism of me was made and André rose up to declare spontaneously: 'Ma mère est la vérité!'"¹

I asked the Mother why André had not come here all those years. She answered: "Why should he have? He had his own life to live in France; and actually, even while he was there, there was no real inner separation. Up till now it was as if there were a screen in my room and André was present behind that screen. What has happened now is simply that he has come out in front." Talking with André on one occasion I learned from him that a subtle contact always existed between the Mother and him and that even at a distance he would know if she wanted him to do something.

From my friendship with him and from the various types of work the Mother gave him I gathered that, although an electrical engineer by profession, he had a

¹ "My mother is truth!"

multitude of talents and capacities and could cope intellectually with almost any kind of commission. I recall that when my associate editor on *Mother India*, Soli Albless, was planning to go to a philosophical conference at Brussels and some hitch temporarily arose, the Mother suggested that André should take my friend's paper with him and represent him in whatever discussions might ensue.

In later years, when André came on long visits to the Ashram I found that communication to and from the Mother could be at its clearest through him. When the Mother, in old age, was a little hard of hearing, André's voice and way of speaking seemed to be on a wave-length most attuned to her. She also showed confidence in his capacity to convey her messages faithfully and I believe she has left some instructions with him about a few matters which would be helpful in case of uncertainty. One of the instructions is said to be that he should see whatever had remained unpublished from the tape-record of her talks in the series from which selections were appearing in the *Bulletin* under the title "Notes on the Way". She considered these talks as rather impromptu and therefore needing his scrutiny and judgment in case she could not attend to them. I hear that she told him Nolini too should go through the tape-record before its publication. A copy of the whole set covering many years used to be kept in a cabinet in her room. Subsequently it was found that the papers had been removed from there by the persons who had done the tape-recording. The Mother also referred another Ashram-member to the tapes, saying they might be consulted in order to get the type of information needed in the course of the work with which this member had been entrusted.

Of course, André would be the last person to announce publicly that the Mother had given him any special charge. He never forces anything on people's attention in personal matters and is always loth to take advantage of being the Mother's son. He knows too that being physically born from her is not the sole claim to being her child. To him the invocation which Sri Aurobindo's elder brother, Manmohan Ghose, made to his own mother in a moment of high poetic vision would come most naturally:

Augustest! dearest! whom no thought can trace,
 Name murmuring out of birth's infinity,
 Mother! like heaven's great face is thy sweet face,
 Stupendous with the mystery of me.
 Eyes, elder than the light; cheek, that no flower
 Remembers; brow, at which my infant care
 Gazed weeping up and saw the skies enshower
 With tender rain of vast mysterious hair!
 Thou at whose breast the sunbeams sucked, whose arms
 Cradled the lisping ocean, art thou she,
 Goddess, at whose dim heart the world's deep charms
 Tears, terrors, sobbing things, were yet to be?

She, from whose tearing pangs in glory first
I and the infinite wide heavens burst?

(b)

Even from the outward point of view the Mother's relationship, with those whose souls had felt in her the Divine Creatrix or even moved towards her with a deep instinct and without any definite mental conception, was exactly as of a physical mother. Champaklal once told me that one could hardly imagine how far the Mother's intimate and tender Grace could go in dealing with certain disciples. However, I have observed that, no matter what closeness one may have to her, she never really gave in where the central truth of the Yoga was concerned. She could be very calm and cool and yet drive home certain aspects of a situation which her supposed "favourite" had failed to see. Actually, with those whom she considered really near in heart and open to her she felt she could let herself come out with clear criticism, knowing that they would never misunderstand it and were always eager to stand face to face with the highest ideal. Such children of hers have told her repeatedly that she should never mince matters with them.

The Mother rarely asserted her motherhood unless the child plainly declared his wish for it. The true master is he who never longs to have disciples. I remember how, on my first arrival in the Ashram, I expressed my desire to do Yoga, saying dramatically: "I have seen all of life. Now I want nothing except God." The Mother very sweetly asked: "How old are you?" I answered in a dignified tone: "Twenty-three." Then she said: "And at twenty-three you have seen all of life?" I was a little taken aback at this splash of cold water. The Mother continued: "You are very young. You must not decide anything in a hurry. Stay in the Ashram, look around, see how you feel and calmly come to a decision." Something had already chosen the Mother, and I am sure she had also chosen me. But I realised in the next few months that, under the pressure of the Ashram atmosphere, several sides of me which in my initial enthusiasm I had thought to have outgrown were still there and posing all kinds of problems. I had to tackle them: they were both mental inclinations and sensational-emotional proclivities. The true turn to the Yoga came when, apart from spiritual ideation, something opened in the heart. Then the Mother's child that was deep hidden within rose to the front and was spontaneously accepted as such by the Mother.

I did not want any barrier to exist between her and me. I was anxious to be pulled up by her if she felt that anywhere I showed unconsciousness of belonging to her. How she took me up at my word may be seen from a small incident. Once I spoke to her about a letter which had come from my mother, sister and brother who were at Bombay. I said: "I've just heard from home." The Mother, with a slightly ironical smile, exclaimed: "I have caught you out. You said 'home'. Where is your 'home'?" I understood at once that even in our outermost habit-

ridden being we must let the inner truth, the soul's choice and destiny, shine through. The commitment to the Integral Yoga has to be integral.

Sometimes I have wondered at the Mother's inexhaustible patience—a patience stemming from a boundless understanding of one's nature. Sri Aurobindo has written that she and he went through more difficulties than anyone else either now or in the past, for theirs has been the task of being at the core of all the psycho-physical problems of evolving humanity and first solving them in themselves before assuring the frantic or dejected disciple that the apparently insurmountable obstacles can be got over. "How can you trust in our word of confidence unless you believe that we have been through the same complexity of troubles and succeeded in untying every 'knot intricate' of life?"—such in effect is the stand of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This diversified experience within themselves of all types of natures and all species of problems has given them a sympathetic and helpful tolerance that is unique.

I know from my own example how they could hold on to the best part in a disciple's nature and adjust themselves even to some vagaries on his side and to certain trends of behaviour persisting from a particular cultural and social background. They were aware that I had a very westernised mind and a temperament with quite a bit of affinity to the Latin Quarter of Paris. They gave me a lot of liberty of movement and contact.

They were themselves astonishingly broad-minded and full of laughter at the foibles of erring humanity, though they never stopped insisting on the ideals of the Truth they had come to establish. Sri Aurobindo's uninhibited humour may be gauged from a little incident connected with my experiment in learning to ride a cycle. After some private practice on a small scale I took a machine out from Benjamin, the sadhaka who used to keep the cycle-store. On returning home from the long adventure I wrote to Sri Aurobindo:

"My first cycle-ride went off very well. Just one fall into the gutter. A paddle-crank got slightly loose. I had it set right. Scratches on the chain-guard. Couldn't be removed at once; nothing very serious—a few touches of paint will remedy them. I hope the Mother won't mention anything about the paddle to Benjamin."

Sri Aurobindo's reply ran:

"All right. You remind me of the servant girl who had an illegitimate child but pleaded to her mistress, 'Please, maam, it is only a very little one.'" (21.3.1935)

The first two years of my life in the Ashram were rather ascetic by way of reaction from the manner of living to which I had been accustomed before. During them the foundation of Yoga was laid. The intense opening of what Sri Aurobindo terms the psychic being took place. The beard that I started growing and the hair that I refrained from getting cut framed the soul's emergence with an appearance which people dubbed Christlike. But there was an element of fear in the sanctity—a kind of early-Christian flight into a desert in order to escape from the world, the flesh and the devil. When the inner work done in this period was over and the time

arrived for the superstructure to be raised upon the part ascetic part psychic foundation, the old K.D. Sethna re-emerged with his complex modernism so that a proper natural form might be taken by the growing spiritual personality. A reaction set in to the earlier reaction itself. I got into touch with life outside the Ashram and grew acquainted with one or two families in the town. I did not hide the fact from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but, although the Ashram regime was fairly strict in this period as compared to what it later became, they hardly ever interfered with my freedom.

(c)

Udar—at that time Laurie Pinto—came to Pondicherry a few years after my arrival, to set up a business here in collaboration with Monsieur Gaebelé, member of a very influential French family and himself the husband of a highly cultured lady and the father of four charming daughters, two of them strikingly beautiful. Madame Gaebelé was a devotee of the Mother and the teacher of French to a small group of Ashramites including myself. When Udar arrived, I was already on very friendly terms with the Gaebelé family and soon struck an extremely close friendship with him. He was as westernised as I and had gone one better by having stayed in England for some years and got engaged to an English girl. Although I was doing sadhana and writing poetry, philosophy and literary criticism under Sri Aurobindo's inspiration, I still found the time to meet all my friends.

Sometimes I used to return pretty late at night. My chum Premanand, the then librarian of the Ashram, who stayed in the same building, the Old Guest House, where the Mother had given me the room in which Sri Aurobindo had once stayed for nine years, would always willingly open the courtyard gate for me. But I suppose my late entry was accompanied by an amount of noise which did not agree with the spiritual slumbers of the other residents. Complaints must have gone to the Mother. She must have been expected to cut short my "strayings" from the "razor-sharp path". But, to the surprise of all, she supplied me with a spare key to the house gate, so that I might steal in as quietly as possible at any hour of the night.

Perhaps my redeeming feature was that I had no secrets from the Mother. When I experimented in a spot of wine-bibbing I kept her in touch with its effects. She joked with me at first, saying: "It is quite a test of one's self-control to see if, with some alcohol inside one, one can move one's feet along a straight line drawn with a chalk." Later, when I discovered that a certain craving was felt in my abdominal region, as if there were a small hand in it with clutching fingers all the time, I wrote to the Mother that I saw now what really lay behind the urge to drink and that I had decided to give up my little experiment. She replied: "I am happy at your resolution and I hope you will keep to it. I was going to write to you that you must choose between seeing me and drink—for I would not see you if you went on drinking—but I am glad to hear that you have made the resolution already." (11.10.1935)

Actually my dallying with Bacchus lasted no more than a week. My fondness for gambling at cards persisted longer. Udar and the Gaebelés proved very good company for this indulgence. From my college days I had the gambling instinct. I put the gains of many a scholarship at stake. The instinct found play in that most glorious, though also pretty ruinous, game of chance: horse-racing. Having been a great lover of *equus caballus* and consequently a rider too (despite my lame left leg) for at least twenty out of my life's twenty-three years before joining the Ashram, it was an extra-fascinating challenge to me to catch the dominant theme from amid a Wagnerian harmony-hubbub of galloping hooves, and set my wits against the unknown to pluck the heart of the elusive future. When I started reading Sri Aurobindo's books I gave quite a whoop of delight when I found him describing the evolution of life, mind and supermind from the gulf of the Inconscient as a wager by the supreme Purusha with himself to manifest his divinity from its uttermost seeming-opposite. The attempt of Yoga too Sri Aurobindo views in terms of gambling when he formulates the discouraging and restricting advice of the wise ones and exclaims in response:

Who is the nomad then? who is the seeker, the gambler risking
All for a dream in a dream, the old and the sure and the stable
Flung as a stake for a prize that was never yet laid on the table?

Our hazardous earthly existence itself Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* calls

The wager-wonderful, the game divine.

Of course, brag, poker and pontoon are poor aspects of what in general Sri Aurobindo says about the whole many-layered process of nature:

All is a wager and danger, all is a chase and a battle.

Even horse-racing cannot transmit the profound excitement of the world-adventure as seen by Sri Aurobindo, but in a semi-perversed way it used to relieve for me in Bombay the humdrumness of a too conventionally regulated living. Pondicherry could not offer even the thinnest shadow of its thrill. My eyes were starved of the very sight of a horse. But when gambling at cards offered itself, my Yogic detachment and calm could not quite push it away. This too I kept the Mother informed about. She explained to me the occult wire-pulling of forces behind all games of chance. Subtle entities make sport of human beings when the latter think they are being clever at these entertainments. The tactics of these entities is to give us some striking luck and elate us as well as create a false sense of our capacities. They lead us to risk more and more money and then, when we are most confident and hopeful, bring us down with a crash. The more acutely miserable we become, the more they jump in joy.

I dropped my brag, poker and pontoon when the Mother opened my eyes.

Apropos of playing cards, the Mother recounted to me the one and only occasion when she had gambled. I shall tell the story later when I touch on Paul Richard's role in the Mother's life; for, her gambling experiment took place in connection with him.

My friendship with Udar, which was not only on the gambler's level, drew him more and more towards the momentous experiment with both the True and the New that was Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Communications went on, time after time, through me between the Mother and him. She evidently found in him a bold and large nature and, not long after he had married Mona who had sailed out from England to join her life with his, the Mother took both of them along with their baby-girl Judy Anne (later Gauri) under her wings.

(d)

The Mother's unfailing comprehension of the diverse sides of my being came into view most clearly when I stayed away from the Ashram for several years. A number of times during my first six years in the Ashram there were earnest invitations from my grandfather and mother to visit them. When I refused to go, my mother, brother and sister came to Pondicherry year after year. But grandfather was obstinate and thought it *infra dignitatem* to visit a fellow nearly fifty years his junior. I also held out. But there was some weakness in myself which cropped up again and again. The Mother tried her best to keep me in the Ashram—and I obeyed her. In 1934 grandfather sent one more invitation, this time pleading that he was getting older and older and might take his leave any time. Actually he lived on for twenty-four years more and died just a few months before he could hit a century. But his threat of making an exit in his seventies sounded rather serious. I put it before the Mother. Now she said, "Yes." I was astonished. My next feeling was of disappointment that she did not say, "No." It was as if she were cutting me loose from herself. A tinge of fear also crept in at the thought of a maelstrom of life like Bombay.

I wrote a number of letters to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. One was in connection with a spell of danger to the Ashram brought about by some hostile elements in the British Government which wanted Sri Aurobindo dislodged from Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo suspended correspondence with us for a fortnight in order to concentrate his Yogic Force on the situation. When the situation had cleared I wrote to him that during the dangerous period I felt as if I could throw away my life with the utmost ease if thereby I could defend the Mother and him. I made an analysis of my own character—the positive and the negative sides—and asked him whether I was right. He replied:

"Your analysis is correct, but the doubts are not your own, they come from outside. It is true you have a capacity for heroism which can come out on the surface if your will helps, but usually it needs difficult circumstances to come out. In ordinary

circumstances your vital tends to become dull and need excitement. You must be careful to resist the encroachment of the outer atmosphere when you go to Bombay." (?2.1934)

In the interview before my departure I asked the Mother how my life should run in Bombay. She said that I did not need to put special restraints on the ordinary course of things but eat, drink and live normally as a person in Bombay would do. At the end of my talk I said: "Please give me one promise. Never let go your hold on me. Even if something in me wants to leave you, never accept it." She answered: "I am like a fairy godmother. Whatever one wishes to have, I can grant. If you wish to separate from me, that too I can grant. But if you want me never to let go my hold on you, I will keep you in my hands forever."

Before parting I put one arm around her shoulders and drew her near to me. She led me to a big photograph of Sri Aurobindo and asked me to kneel before it. The same night I took the train to Madras. The whole journey was full of her face before my shut eyes. I could hardly sleep. I was going far from her after six and a half years.

My experience in the turmoil of Bombay was hardly pleasant except for the fact of meeting dear family-members. Until I established some sort of balance between me and the city-whirl, every face I saw seemed to come hurling like a coconut towards me and hitting against my chest. Soon after my arrival I contracted scarlet fever, bringing a high temperature that went down by slow degrees over almost a week. It was 105 F. one whole day, then 104 the next day and so on. A severe headache persisted all through. I am a person who, despite sustained reading and prolonged brain-work, never suffer from headaches. Only during this fit of fever and once before when I had an attack of bubonic plague I experienced pain in the head—indeed pain with a terrific vengeance. But all through the illness I had the firm assurance of a cure and not the slightest idea of any danger. The Mother later told me that it was my sense of certainty of her help that made the curative power of her Grace work so well and save me from the possibility of meningitis which is a common sequel to scarlet fever.

After I returned to the Ashram I felt an extreme pull towards the Mother and, looking back on my seven years of stay in the Ashram, I wrote to her: "Pardon my writing to you without any specific reason; but I felt like telling you that you are my darling. In spite of my thousand and three imperfections, this one sense remains in me—that you are my Mother, that I am born from your heart. It is the only truth I seem to have realised in all these years. A very unfortunate thing, perhaps, that I have realised no other truth; but I deeply thank you that I have been enabled to feel this much at least."

Sri Aurobindo replied: "It is an excellent foundation for the other truths that are to come—for they all result from it." The Mother added under his reply: "My blessings are always with you." (17.9.1934)

My second visit to Bombay happened in 1936. Before leaving, I wrote to Sri Aurobindo: "Won't you tell me something to which I can always turn for help and

contact during my stay in Bombay?" The answer was: "Remember the Mother and, though physically far from her, try to feel her with you and act according to what your inner being tells you would be her Will. Then you will be best able to feel her presence and mine and carry our atmosphere around you as a protection and a zone of quietude and light accompanying you everywhere." (12.12.1936)

When I went to Bombay for the third time—at the end of February 1938—circumstances so developed that I was in great perplexity in the matter of returning as planned. I stayed on for over a year and then wrote to the Mother: "My heart is pulled towards you and I want to come back. But certain things are keeping me here and I feel that they will keep drawing me even if I return at present. What should I do? But please know that whether I come just now or not I cannot ever break away from you. I pray to you not to abandon me."

The Mother's reply, dated April 24, 1939 ran: "My dear child, blessings of the day... Just received your letter of 21st; it came to me directly (without the written words) three days ago, probably when you were writing it, and my silent answer was categorical: remain there until the necessity of being here will become so imperative that all else will completely lose all value for you. My answer now is exactly the same. I want only to assure you that we are not abandoning you and that you will always have our help and protection."

The letter is notable not only for its deep understanding of my all-too-human two-ways-tugged being but also for the evolutionary truth it enshrines. Our choice of the spiritual life must come ultimately as a sheer necessity of our nature: then alone is it the seed of a true growth into godhead. Merely mental decisions will not work. Not even a desire to obey the Divine's call is enough. A spontaneous leap from within has to take place. Then no experience will be a superimposition, a precarious thing however grand. All will be a glad flowering and whatever arrives will stay for good.

This does not mean that we may wander about with a lazy reliance on the Divine to do everything for us. We must create the right conditions for the soul to get a chance to emerge. But until the soul truly peeps out, even if it does not fully emerge, we are not ready to plunge into the uncharted ocean of the Infinite.

AMAL KIRAN

UDAR REMEMBERS

XXI

BEFORE I go on to my remembrance it will be good if I explain a little about myself as it is relevant to the subject. Although I come from a Christian Roman Catholic family we are pure Indians, Saraswat Brahmins, who had been converted to Christianity long back, at Goa, by the Portuguese. Now, though my forefathers became Christian they kept very strictly to the old social customs. So, as Brahmins, we live apart in Bhammon Vados and, when marrying, we have to marry strictly within our community. I was, perhaps, the first in my family to break that tradition.

Then there is another interesting custom to which I must refer. Our families were quite large and to avoid splitting up by marriages, generally only the eldest son was married and inherited all the property. The second son became a priest while the other sons usually took up various professions and put all their earnings into the family coffers. I was the second son and so was expected to become a priest and from my early childhood I grew up in that expectation but, of course, many things changed later.

All these things I told to our Mother and She remembered them well as you will see. So now I come to my Remembrance. There were a boy and a girl in our Ashram who fell in love with each other and, with Mother's approval wanted to get married. The girl's mother wanted the marriage to be performed by one of the Purohits in the Ashram as had been done in other cases. But due to some quarrel, the Purohits all refused to perform the marriage. The lady was sad about this and wrote to Mother for help and guidance. Many persons used to send their letters to Mother through me as I would be seeing Mother every day and this lady gave me her letter. Together with other letters I took hers to Mother and read it out to Her. Mother listened quietly and then to the question of what was to be done She turned to me and said, "Udar, you are a Brahmin and a priest. So you marry them." I was quite taken aback and thought that perhaps Mother was joking but I found Her to be quite serious, so I just kept quiet. Then when I told the lady what Mother had said she was overjoyed and so I had, perforce, to accept the assignment and agree to perform the marriage.

Now I am quite ignorant of how these ceremonies are performed and know only something of the Christian system. So I felt that it would be foolish to try to learn anything about all this now and that it would be best if I made up quite a new ceremony and this is what I did. I made some selections from *Savitri* and worked out a ceremony which I shall now describe.

1. First the bridal couple stand with me at their side and look at the pictures of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and the three of us and all those present stand in silent meditation for a few minutes.

2. I then recite from *Savitri*, Book 5 Cantō 2, page 396 (Cent. Ed.) the following passage:

He met in her regard his future's gaze,
 A promise and a presence and a fire,
 Saw an embodiment of aeonic dreams,
 A mystery of the rapture for which all
 Yearns in this world of brief mortality
 Made in material shape his very own.
 This golden figure given to his grasp
 Hid in its breast the key of all his aims,
 A spell to bring the Immortal's bliss on earth,
 To mate with heaven's truth our mortal thought,
 To lift earth-hearts nearer the Eternal's sun.
 In these great spirits now incarnate here
 Love brought down power out of eternity
 To make of life his new undying base.
 His passion surged a wave from fathomless deeps;
 It leapt to earth from far forgotten heights,
 But kept its nature of infinity.
 On the dumb bosom of this oblivious globe
 Although as unknown beings we seem to meet,
 Our lives are not aliens nor as strangers join,
 Moved to each other by a causeless force.
 The soul can recognise its answering soul
 Across dividing Time and, on Life's roads
 Absorbed wrapped traveller, turning it recovers
 Familiar splendours in an unknown face
 And touched by the warning finger of swift love
 It thrills again to an immortal joy
 Wearing a mortal body for delight.
 There is a Power within that knows beyond
 Our knowings; we are greater than our thoughts,
 And sometimes earth unveils that vision here.
 To live, to love are signs of infinite things,
 Love is a glory from eternity's spheres.
 Abased, disfigured, mocked by baser might
 That steal his name and shape and ecstasy,
 He is still the Godhead by which all can change.
 A mystery wakes in our inconscient stuff,
 A bliss is born that can remake our life.
 Love dwells in us like an unopened flower
 Awaiting a rapid moment of the soul,

Or he roams in his charmed sleep mid thoughts and things;
 The child-god is at play, he seeks himself
 In many hearts and minds and living forms:
 He lingers for a sign that he can know
 And, when it comes, wakes blindly to a voice,
 A look, a touch, the meaning of a face.

3. The bride then puts a garland of flowers, which has to be kept ready at her hand, over the head of the bridegroom and I then recite from *Savitri*, Book 5 Canto 3, page 409, the passage as follows:

Then fitting like pale brilliant moths her hands
 Took from the sylvan verge's sunlit arms
 A load of their jewel faces' clustering swarms,
 Companions of the spring-time and the breeze.
 A candid garland set with simple forms
 Her rapid fingers taught a flower song,
 The stanzaed movement of a marriage hymn.
 Profound in perfume and immersed in hue
 They mixed their yearning's coloured signs and made
 The bloom of their purity and passion one.
 A sacrament of joy in treasuring palms
 She brought, flower-symbol of her offered life,
 Then with raised hands that trembled a little now
 At the very closeness that her soul desired,
 This bond of sweetness, their bright union's sign,
 She laid on the bosom coveted by her love.
 As if inclined before some gracious god
 Who has out of his mist of greatness shone
 To fill with beauty his adorer's hours,
 She bowed and touched his feet with worshipping hands;
 She made her life his world for him to tread
 And made her body the room of his delight,
 Her beating heart a remembrancer of bliss.
 He bent to her and took into his own
 Their married yearning joined like folded hopes;
 As if a whole rich world suddenly possessed,
 Wedded to all he had been, became himself,
 An inexhaustible joy made his alone,
 He gathered all Savitri into his clasp.
 Around her his embrace became the sign
 Of a locked closeness through slow intimate years,

A first sweet summary of delight to come,
 One brevity intense of all long life.
 In a wide moment of two souls that meet
 She felt her being flow into him as in waves
 A river pours into a mighty sea.
 As when a soul is merging into God
 To live in Him for ever and know His joy,
 Her consciousness was a wave of him alone
 And all her separate self was lost in his.
 As a starry heaven encircles happy earth,
 He shut her into himself in a circle of bliss
 And shut the world into himself and her.
 A boundless isolation made them one;
 He was aware of her enveloping him
 And let her penetrate his very soul,
 As is a world by the world's spirit filled,
 As a mortal wakes into Eternity,
 As the finite opens to the Infinite,
 Thus were they in each other lost awhile,
 Then drawing back from their long ecstasy's trance
 Came into a new self and a new world.
 Each now was a part of the other's unity.
 The world was but their twin self-finding's scene
 Or their own wedded being's vaster frame.
 On the high glowing cupola of the day
 Fate tied a knot with morning's halo threads
 While by the ministry of an auspice-hour
 Heart-bound before the sun, their marriage fire,
 The wedding of the eternal Lord and Spouse
 Took place again on earth in human forms;
 In a new act of the drama of the world
 The united Two began a greater age,
 In the silence and murmur of that emerald world
 And the mutter of the priest-wind's sacred verse,
 Amid the choral whisperings of the leaves
 Love's twain had joined together and grew one.
 The natural miracle was wrought once more:
 In the immutable ideal world
 One human moment was eternal made.

4. I then offer to each of the bridal pair a flower and these flowers they exchange, facing each other, while doing so. Then I invoke Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's

Blessings on the union of these two souls and now the bridegroom embraces the bride and I recite again from *Savitri*, Book 2 Canto 11 Page 274, the following passage:

Or as a lover clasps his one beloved,
 Godhead of his life's worship and desire,
 Icon of his heart's sole idolatry,
 She now is his and must live for him alone:
 She has invaded him with her sudden bliss,
 An exhaustless marvel in his happy grasp,
 An allurements, a caught ravishing miracle.
 Her now he claims after long rapt pursuit,
 The one joy of his body and his soul:
 Inescapable is her divine appeal,
 Her immense possession an undying thrill,
 An intoxication and an ecstasy:
 The passion of her self-revealing moods,
 A heavenly glory and variety,
 Makes ever new her body to his eyes,
 Or else repeats the first enchantment's touch,
 The luminous rapture of her mystic breasts
 And beautiful vibrant limbs a living field
 Of throbbing new discovery without end.

Now that is the end of the marriage ceremony which I prepared. I told Mother all about it and She approved. Then the marriage was performed and it went off very well. When I next went to Mother I informed Her that it was done and then I said to Her: "Mother, as you asked me to perform the marriage, I did it with a ceremony which I have explained to you. But now I ask you if you meant all this seriously or if it was all just a joke." Mother replied: "Udar, all marriages are jokes. That is why I have said that in Auroville if a boy and a girl love each other truly, they can live together with my Blessings without the need to perform any sort of marriage ceremony." Then Chinmayi asked: "But what about the children, Mother? If there is no regular marriage what status will they have?" To this, Mother replied: "The children born at Auroville will belong to Auroville and not to the parents. That is all the status they will need."

Now after the marriage of this first couple was done, we had to go to the Town Hall and have it registered as that was the law then. So we all went there since the register has to be signed also by the Purohit who performed the marriage. When I began to sign as such, the clerk of the Municipality protested because he knew about me well enough and that I was supposed to be a Christian. So I felt it best to stop all further questioning and said rather aggressively: "Well, I am the Purohit. Have you any objection to it?" This frightened him a little and he promptly answered

that he had no objection and that if I said so, it was enough for him. And thus I became established officially as a marriage Purohit. But that was the beginning. The news got around and I was called upon to perform several other marriages even outside Pondicherry. There was one done at Bombay. In the U.S.A. a couple waited for me to get there to have their marriage performed. I am still a marriage Purohit. A joke? Perhaps! But I quite enjoy it, joke and all.

UDAR

TO THE ALCHEMIST FIRE

Invocation at a Matrimandir Concreting, February 21st, 1978

O ALCHEMIST Fire, for Your descent we've laid
 an altar in this timeless year of God—
 in-Time on which our days are offered, made
 of incense of cement dust, and iron rod

of Mind's rule, leaden habits, gravel stone
 of petrified emotions, sands of Time's
 inconstant waverings weighing with our own
 pebbles of error, mingled with surging climbs

of Spirit's will to mount beyond this matter's
 dull concrete-mix, the heavy form and name,
 until Your lightning signature that scatters
 old darknesses shall in one blinding flame

Unite their heaven and earth, abyss and height:
 transforming them into Your tower of Light.

Matrimandir Workers Camp, *Peace*, Auroville

SEYRIL

HOW I WAS DRAWN TOWARDS SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

THE WORKING OF THEIR GRACE

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1978)

IN 1940 I had asked B to send me the second volume, parts 1 and 2, of *The Life Divine* with Sri Aurobindo's blessings. He sent the same in December of that year. In the covering letter he wrote: "Sri Aurobindo recognised you at once." When B came to my place in 1941 he said, "When I went to Sri Aurobindo with your books, I began to introduce you. At once Sri Aurobindo said, 'Oh! that pleader from Mehsana'". Dear reader! Can you imagine what joy it is to know that one has a place in the Master's consciousness? Words fail to describe it.

In 1943, I had the experience of what *Ajapā jap* is.

In the early hours of the 22nd June I heard first the melodious sound of a Veena and then the mantra began to repeat itself without any effort on my part. On the 23rd June, while I was going to bed one Mr. G came and took me to see the film "Naya Sansar". I was not willing to go but could not say Nay. That was my weakness. I was not interested in the film. But one thing happened by the Mother's Grace. Whatever songs occurred in the film went reciting for me the mantra! When I came out of the cinema hall, in all that I heard, I heard the mantra alone. On the 28th June I noted down this in my diary. Up to that time, *i.e.* for seven days, everything I had heard had become the mantra. I do not know when it receded afterwards.

In 1947 I suffered from the worst type of piles and was confined to bed on the 2nd May. All the medicines I took aggravated rather than healed the disease. The doctor advised me to go to Bombay and get myself operated upon. I was not inclined to undergo the operation. I wrote to the Mother that even though I was going to Bombay for an operation I did not want it and I relied on Her. One N, who was a good astrologer, told D that death stared me in the face and I would not return from Bombay. When we reached Bombay the doctor examined me and said that there was too much swelling and the operation could not be performed till the swelling had subsided. We came back. After two months we again went to Bombay. The doctor said, "The swelling is still there but we shall perform the operation." I said, "I am not in a hurry to go to God's house." Then we consulted one of the best surgeons of Bombay. He said, "You are suffering from fistula with piles." I asked him, "Can we wait for two months?" He said, "Yes." We came back.

On or about the 12th or 13th November, while I was having a nap, I heard the following words: "You ask people to have faith in God; where has your faith gone? Why did you go to Bombay twice and incur so much expense?" I woke up at once

and called my wife and asked her to gather all the medicines, pack them up and throw them into the lumber room. I resolved there and then not to take any medicine and to rely simply on the Mother's Grace. After that, I took my bath every day at about 1.30 p.m. and then told my rosary for an hour, taking the Mother's name. The miracle happened, and on the 2nd December I was able to attend my business.

In 1949 I wrote to P, in charge of the Publication Department, to send me *Letters*, 2nd Series, with the Mother's blessings and autograph. P sent the same and he wrote to me on 8.4.1949: "The *Letters* has been especially autographed for you by the Mother with her blessings." Naturally it was a joy to know this.

The year 1950 followed. Sri Aurobindo withdrew His Consciousness from his body on the 5th December. When I heard of his withdrawal, I could not believe it. I said to myself, "Sri Aurobindo has promised that the Supramental will descend. It is a thing decreed and inevitable. But who can bring this about except Himself? Sri Aurobindo will assume a new body."

Up till now, I had not gone to Pondicherry. I decided to go there and sought permission of the Mother for it. On the 19th December I received a letter from the secretary of the Ashram: "Your letter. It is better you postpone your intended trip for the present." I could not go.

1951 passed and I decided to go to Pondicherry in May 1952. On the 29th February 1952 one M, an inmate of the Ashram, had come to our place. We invited him to our Centre as we were all eager to know how the Ashram was going on after the withdrawal of Sri Aurobindo. In the course of his talk he said, "Smokers are not allowed before the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo"—he ought to have said that smoking was not allowed in the Ashram. This raised a problem for me. I was a chain smoker. I smoked at least three packets of Gold Flake a day. If I was not allowed to have the darshan of Samadhi, what was the use of going 1400 miles and more? I had firmly decided to go to Pondicherry, come what may. I could hardly sleep the succeeding nights up to the 10th March. If I accepted Sri Aurobindo as my Guru, if I accepted Him as the incarnate Divine, could I not give up smoking? I decided on the 10th March that I would smoke as many cigarettes as I could on the 11th and then stop smoking. I smoked up to 11.15 p.m. of the 11th, then washed my mouth, hands and feet and went to my Puja room, sat before the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and prayed to the Mother:

"Ma! I have given up smoking. I am taking a vow not to smoke again. I have not the strength to keep the vow; give me the strength to keep it. If I fail, Thy reputation will be at stake."

Then I went to bed. When I got up on the morning of the 12th, the wonder of wonders was that I did not remember the cigarette at all... It was as if I had never smoked in my life.

In May I was to start for Pondicherry. My reservation was for the 26th. I had to settle a certain social affair before I started. The affair was not settled. My younger

brother suggested that I should cancel my trip to Pondicherry and telegraph to the Mother: "Sorry, could not come." My reply was, "The Mother is not waiting for me. I would be a great fool if I did not go after getting Her permission. I am not going to cancel my trip." My younger brother fell ill and did not come to the station to give me a send-off when I started for Pondicherry on the 26th May 1952. My daughter and one K were with me.

In the early morning of the 28th we were nearing Pondicherry. After we had started from Chinnababusamudram, the station about half an hour before Pondicherry, hardly five minutes passed when I sensed the change of atmosphere. At about 6.30 a.m. we reached Pondicherry. The moment I set foot on the platform a depression set in.

The rickshaw-walla took us to the Central Bureau of the Ashram. I showed the person in charge the postcard I had received from the secretary of the Ashram. He said, "You should see the secretary." So we came to the main building of the Ashram and took our seats in chairs that were near the Reception Room. One P came by. He asked me what the matter was. I told him. He took the postcard and went to the secretary. He returned with the news that we were to be accommodated in Golconde. He asked one C to take us to Golconde and said that the Mother would give balcony darshan. C showed us the balcony. He came with us to the dining hall and said that after taking breakfast we should attend the balcony. We went to the dining room, took our breakfast and returned to Golconde. Then we went for the balcony darshan.

At that time there was no fixed moment for darshan. The Mother used to come between 8 and 9.30 a.m. At last I had the darshan of the Mother. But I was not satisfied. Love did not well up in my heart on seeing Her. On the contrary, my mind asked, "Where is the divinity? She is a human being like other human beings." At that time M met us. He said, "I have been remembering you for the last 15 days." I asked him, "Who will introduce us to the Mother?" He said, "I shall ask the secretary and then let you know." Then we went to the Ashram building. We sat before the Samadhi. I put my head on the Samadhi. I felt peace descending into me.

Then we went to the meditation hall. When I stood near the photograph of Sri Aurobindo and my eyes caught sight of Him, I stepped back in awe. This was not a picture but a living Presence. At that time M came and said, "The secretary has said that you may be taken to the Mother in the evening at the Playground when she distributes Prasad." In the evening we went to the Playground. The Mother was standing at the door of Her room there and distributing Prasad. When my turn came M said to the Mother, "Vallabh Sheth and his daughter from Mehsana." I was very much dissatisfied with this introduction. I thought: "How is the Mother to know who is Vallabh Sheth and where Mehsana is situated." I clearly forgot that She was the Divine and She did not need any introduction.

On the 30th May I wrote to the Mother: "I have adored Thee as the Divine

Mother for the last 19 years. I do not feel the joy and Ananda that I should feel on seeing Thee. There is some resistance in the being. Strike with thunder this being if need be but let it be transfigured."

The 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st were days of trial and test. The Hostile Forces sent suggestions without number against the divinity of the Mother. But on this point I was adamant; by the Mother's Grace I said, "Whatever suggestions may come, for me the Mother is divine." My constant aspiration was: "O Ma! Grant that I may understand Thee in Thy truest form." When I went to the Samadhi, I prayed: "O Lord! Grant that I may understand the Mother in Her truest form and that my faith in Her divinity may not waver for a moment."

On the 1st June, I was sitting before the photograph of the Mother in Golconde. After Puja was over, I said, "O Mother! I thank Thee for everything Thou hast given me even though I may term it good, bad or indifferent." At this time I felt love for the Mother springing up in the depth of my heart.

The 1st June was the Prosperity Day. The Mother gave me leaves of the plant "New Birth". I was newly born.

When I met P I told him of my difficulty. He said, "The Mother is now dealing with children, so She has adopted the most human form."

On the 3rd June, in the early hours of the day between 1 and 8 a.m., I saw the Mother in Her Divine Form; only Her face and throat were visible and I heard the following words:

"This Mother is the Divine Mother. I have declared it openly in my letters. If you cannot accept Her as the Divine Mother, woe be unto you. Sri Aurobindo."

On hearing these words I asked, "Have I not accepted the Mother as the Divine Mother?" I received the reply: "This is not meant particularly for you, it is a general message."

In those days the Mother gave blessings in the Meditation Hall three times a week. If I am not mistaken, the 3rd June was a Blessings Day. The Mother came down with a dish of flowers in Her left hand. To see the Mother descending was a sight worth seeing even for the gods. It seemed She was coming down with light upon the earth.

She took Her seat on the chair. When my turn came, I stood before Her and what did I see? I saw Her eyes full of love. There was an ocean of Love in them. I decided at once that to understand the Mother one must see Her eyes. If one misses Her eyes, one misses everything.

In 1957 I had asked P to send me the major works of Sri Aurobindo (American Edition) with the Mother's autograph and blessings. But P had sent the same without the Mother's autograph and blessings, saying: "The Mother has no time." So I had taken with me the books for the Mother's autograph and blessings. When I first met P I told him that I had brought the books for the Mother's autograph and blessings. He said, "The Mother has no time." As it was my first meeting with him, naturally I could not press him.

On the 4th June I requested P to get the Mother's autograph and blessings at least on two books. He consented and asked me to give him the books before 4 p.m. I did so. At that time I had no idea how the books would be returned to me. A surprise awaited me.

K had met Champaklalbhai then and Champaklalbhai had said to K that we would be allowed into Sri Aurobindo's room at noon.

At noon we went to the meditation hall on the ground floor. Champaklalbhai was waiting on the stairs. He took us to Sri Aurobindo's room. I felt peace and Ananda descending. My whole body from head to foot thrilled with joy. I made my offering.

The 6th June was the day of my departure. It was also a Blessings Day. We went for the Mother's blessings. When my turn came I offered flowers to Her. She gave me a flower named Psychological Perfection; then She said to Champaklalbhai, "Some books for him." This was a surprise. Nobody had introduced me to Her except on the day of our arrival. How did She know that the person standing before Her was Vallabh and that P had sent books on my behalf for blessings and autograph? I was convinced of Her Divinity. The Mother gave the two books to me with Her autograph and blessings.

As we were leaving Pondicherry at night, we went for the Mother's blessings at about 4 p.m. She came down to go to the tennis ground. She stood near the door of the stairs. I offered Her flowers. She said, "Going?" The word still reverberates in my ears. I placed my head on Her feet for some time. Then I raised it a little. She did not put Her hand on my head. So I raised my head but with no result. The third time I raised my head a little more but still the Mother did not put Her hand on it. I thought, "Will not the Mother put Her hand on my head?" I raised my head still higher for the fourth time. This time the Mother put Her two fingers on my head and pressed it. I felt a current entering my body. I can relive this experience even today.

I had written a letter to D on the 3rd or 4th June. In it I had mentioned my overall impression of the Ashram: "The town of Pondicherry may be properly described as a city of silence. It seems the people have no tongue. What do I find here? Immensity, vastness, wideness, infinitude, silence are pervasive and, above all, there are the Divine Mother and our Lord's Samadhi. If there will be a perfect humanity on earth, it will be in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Men and women, boys and girls mix together, play together. Sex, which is the undoing of so many Yogins, has no place here. It seems the Ashramites do not know the name of sex. On everybody's face you find a kind of joy, Ananda, youth and health."

On the 5th June I had written a letter to my uncle to this effect: "I would say this for the present that one would not like to go to Nirvana or Moksha after enjoying the Ashram life."

(To be continued)

VALLABH SHETH,

SECRET HARMONIES

O SECRET-silvery, mellow clouds,
Guardians of angel wings,
Keepers of the gates
To blue infinitudes—
How the trees
With deep green passion
Fill their cells
With yearning design
And sweetly make you their mate—
Lovers of virgin sublimity.

O lovely flowers,
Love's sweet-limbed perfume,
So tenderly do you mingle
With night's silent-hearted call.

O gentle-throated bird,
Wide within your brooding breast,
Herald of felicitous dreams,
Diamond-eyed in the pool of night,
How your voice harmonizes
With the firmament's breeze.

O brilliant stars, immortal lamps,
Reminders of our pilgrim way,
Keeping diamond treasures
Aloof in shiny orbs,
Listening patiently
To earth's ancient call.

O secret soul,
I see you glowing everywhere
In the dark garb of night;
But how am I to find you
In this throbbing heart of clay?
Am I here and you there?
Or is it just hide-and-seek,
The infinite's wand at play?

RAJESHWARI

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1978)

CHAPTER IV

SADHANA OF THE BODY

2

IMMOBILITY of the body is not less important than immobility of the mind. "The body must be taught an entire passivity in the hands of the spirit".¹ To this injunction must be added the Mother's thought-provoking words: "There is tremendous power in immobility, you must remain like a wall absolutely motionless."² My attention was drawn to these pregnant lines just as the eye is caught by a firefly in the darkness of the night. For, my own plight had to find a solution: "Can one whose body is the home of illness reach to this height? Will its dream reach realisation even in decades? What is the use of planning an impossibility? My "discursive mind" condemned itself.

Someone has rightly said: "Nothing worthwhile can be achieved in life unless we have the desire, 'to be the first' in whatever field we are working in. Success and progress in any field of life has been possible only by striving to do better than what has been done before."

What is fulfilled today was the promise of yesterday. One must take a leap towards tomorrow. Is it not within the power of man to break the shackles of the past and carve out a new path of self-development?

Formerly the indrawn state was very rare. Later on, the higher force tried to penetrate to the inner depth but was thrown out again and over again. Even one random thought could break the link and pull down the consciousness. However I tried, the spinning and weaving habit of the mind never came to a halt. I remember having read in a book how hard a Japanese prophet had battled with himself to reach the land of "No thinking". Such a living story put new life into a fixed soul.

The burning aspiration and earnestness in me kept me on the quest for a method that would be congenial to my nature—the one which could be easily adapted and assimilated. I knew the undesirable elements in me and was fully alive to the fact that I was nothing but a bundle of weaknesses ; yet the higher parts in me never allowed me to take things lying down.

The Rishis of yore have declared: "The Self is not for the weaklings."

One must have courage, courage of "receiving the blows and yet of continuing, of pocketing them", the Mother exhorts. "When you receive blows—blows as a

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 681.

² *Questions and Answers* (1956), p. 60.

result of your defects—you don't go very far; at the first turning where one loses sight of the little habitual life, one falls into despair and gives up."¹

So there must be a spirit of adventure, "the great adventure of the divine discovery,... one throws oneself into the adventure without looking back and without asking for a single minute, 'What is going to happen?' For if one asks what is going to happen, one never starts, one always remains stuck to the ground, there solidly planted."²

"A break-away from the past came when I acquired the inner strength to stop the inner machine at will. Reaching the state of void no longer remained a distant dream. Making the mind bare of thoughts, sometimes I would sit still with nothing there. All around me looked vacant. It seemed I was all alone in the wide world. On some days I felt the Grace flowing to different parts of the body. The day the body was fully occupied with the Mother's Force, it got straightened and remained seated like a statue. Nothing in me felt inclined to move. No distraction could disturb that immobility. Joints seemed locked—to use the words of Sri Ramakrishna. [This gave me the first experience of living in this world but not being of the world. The exalted state could not be maintained for long as all the parts of the body could not bear such a high pressure.

Hence Sri Aurobindo counsels:

"The body must develop a perfect power to hold whatever force is brought into it by the spirit without spilling and wasting it or itself getting cracked.... This faculty of holding, *dhāraṇāsakti*, in the physical consciousness is the most important siddhi or perfection of the body."³

To increase the *dhāraṇāsakti* what process should we adopt? What should be the first step? The answer is there in *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

"The first thing the will has to do with the body is to impose on it progressively a new habit."⁴

In order to tell how I reached this stage I shall have to take the reader with me across a wide waste. It took more than twenty years to reach the other shore of life.

The procedure advocated in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is very scientific. If one follows the prescribed formula, the long-shut doors begin to open one by one. The Mother's practical eye goes straight to our day-to-day problems. In one of her classes she enjoined that if you want to realise something, you must organise yourself—organise inwardly. But how can one who is newly initiated to Yoga foresee and take the right decision? Here lies the supreme role of Grace in our life. Unless a guiding light comes from a secret source we are sure to fail and falter. Instead of confounding myself with a hundred things, in the early 'forties I chose one precept and went on hammering it into my being:

"Guide my steps, illumine my heart, transfigure my consciousness."

¹ ² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 682.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 681.

Another quotation that made a mark in my life was:

“When you open yourself to the spirit within you it gives a first foretaste of the higher life, then comes the will to lift yourself to that, the hope of reaching it, the certitude that it is possible, and finally the force to make the necessary effort and the resolution to go through.”

Unless we put them into practice we cannot understand the extraordinary power of these simple sentences.

Perhaps impelled from within, a young teacher of the Ashram school gave me a book which he liked very much, and wished me to give it a look. It was recorded there that if during the meditation the spinal cord is kept erect, the gravitational pull is much reduced. This greatly helps to ward off the waves of thought. The Mother never used an easy chair. She sat motionless for hours in a small chair in the playground, fit only for very young children and yet never showed any sign of uneasiness.

Thus my consciousness was awakened to the imperative need of imposing on myself a strict discipline. “Without discipline you can go nowhere, without discipline you cannot even live the normal life of the normal man.”

Doctors had declared that mine was a case of rheumatism. For years it did not allow me to return to normal health. Bending knees or sitting on the floor incurred severe pain. My case was further complicated by nervous trouble. So long as life is dominated by the ego there is bound to be friction in dealing with others. One of the hardest disciplines lies in the conquest of ego.

Mental tension is the gift of the modern age. If the nerves are strong, cool and calm they will not get easily irritated, will not respond to the attack of the lower impulses. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: “A match-stick flares up by the first strike; when it is wet, it won’t catch fire even if rubbed a hundred times.” Tension during the day told on the nerves at night. Often a great part of the night I had to pass taking rounds in the courtyard.

The Integral Yoga does not compel us to a set pattern. In Sri Aurobindo’s opinion, “one can accustom oneself to meditate walking or lying but sitting is the first natural position”.¹ I had not the faintest idea how one could enter into the state of meditation standing or walking. Since sitting was not possible my “blundering mind”,² accustomed to an easy life, saw no harm in going in for meditation reclining in an arm-chair. In doing so, no doubt, the lower part of the body felt the action of the Yogic force powerfully but the mind went on wandering with the wind. Sometimes I passed on into sleep and this brought a sharp reaction. Had I learnt to meditate walking, right from those formative years of sadhana, I could have shaped my life differently.

Usually the body fritters away what is poured into it. Hence the stress on the *āsana-siddhi*. Here is what Sri Aurobindo says about it:

“The first object of the immobility of the *āsana* is to get rid of the restlessness

¹ *Letters: Fourth Series.*

² *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 493.

imposed on the body and to force it to hold the pranic energy instead of dissipating and squandering it.”¹

How to give these theories a practical form? How to make the first move? Unable to find a way I took a drastic step. Kneeling down before the Mother’s portrait I started waving an incense-stick (a thick one which could last long), letting a wordless prayer go rising from the heart. From fifteen minutes I went on increasing the duration to one hour, defying all bodily resistances and recalling that “Pain is the hammer of God”, “No pain, no gain”, etc. The day the lovely figure of a saint or a sage or a God came to the vision of the mental eye, the allotted period did not appear tedious. In Sri Aurobindo’s view:

“The Gods are in origin and in essence permanent Emanations of the Divine put forth from the Supreme by the Transcendent Mother, the Adya Shakti.”²

They are ever ready to lend a helping hand to those who are earnest in their approach. One can gather innumerable stories about them. Let me cite one to bring the matter home.

An inmate of the Ashram, who has been here from 1934 conducting a big department, had gone to Kashmir with his neighbour before coming to the Ashram. There they came to know about the Manasa Devi temple. Whoever approached the Goddess had his desires, his prayers fulfilled by her Grace. That is why people came to her from far and wide. One of the two pilgrims entreated the Goddess, “I do not seek any worldly success. My only prayer at Thy Feet is that I may be blessed with the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo.” (His name had come to his ears somehow.) On the very first visit to the Ashram he found in the Mother an abiding shelter.

From time to time I recite the following Aphorism:

Be wide in me, O Varuna;
 be mighty in me, O Indra;
 O Sun, be very bright and luminous;
 O Moon, be full of charm and sweetness.
 Be fierce and terrible, O Rudra;
 be impetuous and swift, O Maruts;
 be strong and bold, O Aryama;
 be voluptuous and pleasurable, O Bhaga;
 be tender and kind and loving and passionate, O Mitra.
 Be bright and revealing, O Dawn;
 O Night, be solemn and pregnant.
 O Life, be full, ready and buoyant;
 O Death, lead my steps from mansion to mansion.
 Harmonise all these, O Brahmanaspati.
 Let me not be subject to these gods, O Kali.³

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

² *The Practical Guide* (1st edition) p. 248.

³ Cent. Ed. Vol. 17, p. 85.

The next step, which proved to be the first step, was to form the habit of sitting in a chair in which I could keep the spinal cord erect. In doing so, unconsciously I formed the bad habit of shaking my legs. Bad habits once formed stubbornly resist any change. I was at a loss how to avoid this unwanted movement. Thus I was forced to start sitting cross-legged, however tedious the posture. The first reaction was a back-breaking pain. It deprived me of the joy of meditation. On closing the eyes I saw nothing but darkness, as usually happens when effort is used in meditation. Shaking of the legs was replaced by shaking of the body's upper part. There were other distractions. Hands responded to the itching sensation on the head, ear, nose, etc. Oppressive weather appeared more oppressive by flies, ants crawling on the body. Mosquitoes also did not fail to play their part. The mind asserted that these blood-suckers should be killed. The more I retahated the more they rushed to feed on my blood. When the attention was distracted by these trifles, what concentration was possible? This prompted me to learn to endure—one of the primary lessons for those who long to achieve equality of consciousness. Equality is the first and foremost condition for spiritual living, as propounded by the Gita.

Now I shall tell something curious.

One day I found that lots of mosquitoes were merrily enjoying the sweetness of my blood yet my attention was not in the least distracted. At times they remained hovering round me but did not feel inclined to sit on the body. Though this is not always the case, at any rate I do not allow my concentration to be disturbed by their ravages.

This little restraint, a little endurance, won for me something for which my heart was hankering. Once I found there was an unbearable pain in the parts below the back but the upper part was absolutely free from any kind of suffering. Thus the pain was localised. This induced me to separate the consciousness. The mental consciousness kept on looking at the pain like a witness as if it were borne by someone else. The pain went on increasing but the mind was not "overpowered". The following is what I had read in *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

"This detachment can be made so normal and carried so far that there will be a kind of division between the mind and the body and the former will observe and experience the hunger, thirst, pain, fatigue, depression etc. of the physical being as if they were experiences of another person.... This division is a great means, a great step towards mastery."¹

The conquest of the restlessness of the body and the separation of consciousness paved the way to the attainment of stability and the state of immobility. Then I reached the state in which I could sit thoughtless, motionless and breathless. All my energies are now centred on making this blissful state normal. It requires long labour and patience; for the body still refuses to bear the pressure with pleasure. A little more detail is called for to explain how the impossible came within the orbit of possibility.

(To be continued)

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 319.

THE IMAGE OF MAN

HIS FOUR FACETS

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1978)

Facet II: The Romantic Man (Contd.)

It is the works of Charles Dickens, which bring to us romantic images of persons, characters and individuals, each striking, each alive with his or her idiosyncrasy, each unmistakably English and typically Victorian. The panorama is baffling in its array, many-sided in its presentation, at once humorous, quaint, tragic and full of vitality. Dickens's knowledge of life is profound, his analysis unscathing and his humour effective without being bawdy or coarse.

A critic says,

"There is not any injustice in Dickens in going straight to the central feeling which gives life to his work: and that feeling is social. Through it he is linked up with a whole group of writers, and he has a place in a great movement of the time.

"No novelist before Dickens had treated the lower middle classes on such broad lines or in so frank a way. He studies them not as a detached, superior kind of observer, but as one on their own level; a sympathy, an immediate community of impression and, as it were, an instinctive fraternity, thus impregnate his study." (*A History of English Literature* by Legouis and Cazamian, pp.1128-30)

The sense of drama is keen in Dickens. But this sometimes leads to sheer drollery, if not downright caricature. What he aims at is not satire, melodrama or farce but a sharp lively and vibrant criticism of life at the period. The exaggerations are intentional, so too the ridiculousness of these characters, their mannerisms, their ways and habits. Yet they, in spite of their being grafted into the plot, are natural and do not seem improbable. This was due to his genius as a story-teller.

He wrote rapidly and did not have an eye for details or for perfection. This affected his treatment both of character and situation. But critics hold that when the characters are allowed to dominate, as in *Pickwick Papers* or *David Copperfield*, the slender fabric of action is recompensed by the abundant vitality of the individuals at play in it.

His descriptions are as copious as his personages. His style is racy, with an immense vocabulary at its command.

One critic comments: "Dickens is one of our great comic writers, and a great tragedian. He is both social reformer and social pessimist; a man of boundless energy in creative affairs and practical commitments, yet a deeply religious writer too, of an unorthodox kind." (*The Inimitable Dickens* by A. E. Dyson, p.10)

So much for an introduction. Coming to the issue at hand, we may choose David Copperfield out of the crowd of personalities. And this choice is deliberate.

For, he is the most typical of Dickens's heroes: he is one of his best creations, exemplifying the author in his personal life and hardships. The plot reveals the diverse elements at work or at struggle creating the dramatic fabric of the book. Dyson notes, "*David's* names and styles are one among many instances of the homogeneity of the book. We could follow a score of such details, each re-inforcing our vivid sense of the people and incidents; speech-rhythms take pride of place as usual. A reader has only to listen to Rosa Dartle, Mr. Micawber, Uriah Heep, Betsy Trotwood to find himself mimicking them and reproducing them in his mind's theatre." (*Ibid.*, pp.126-7)

David, in this instance, brings to us the image of a posthumous, ill-treated child often under hostile circumstances, and sometimes aided by mercurial persons like Mr. Micawber or his aunt Betsy Trotwood.

Characters like harsh Mr. Murdstone and his harsher sister rouse our instant sympathy with the little hero, who is nevertheless befriended by his comrades in misery, Steerforth and Traddles.

There are, however, other characters not connected with the hero directly or forming an integral part of the plot. They are Dick, the lunatic companion of his aunt Agnes, Peggotty who elopes with Steerforth, and Steerforth himself with his tragic end.

In maturer years David's love for Dora Spenlow creates the inevitable complication. But Agnes Wickfield's love prevails and the second marriage follows interspersed by the cruel drama of Uriah Heep's betrayal and his inevitable punishment.

David culminates his life as an author, a typical nineteenth-century personage.

As a boy David has been shown as a slightly bewildered child, weak in temperament but volatile when roused. He reveals a strange determination when he runs away from school and throws himself at the mercy of his aunt. He is choosy in making friends but has no insight into his pal's character as in the case of Steerforth. He is equally heedless to the call of true love as in the case of his first wife, Dora. He is not fickle, but has little discrimination in judging men.

Also, he is conspicuous by his lack of courage and of force of character. He is an artist, an impressionable man, and has all the traits of a creative writer, traits which could only flower under the loving family atmosphere and Agnes's affection. This is Dickens all over. In fact, Dickens has commented about *David Copperfield*: "I like this best."

The nineteenth century produced another great name, equally at home in poetry, drama and fiction. This is Victor Hugo, who dominated the entire French literary world with his forceful presence. To the French, he is more renowned as a poet and dramatist but to the non-French his novels have a special place of distinction.

He brings to us a vivid series of romantic images in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Man Who Laughs*, and *Les Misérables*. Hugo is a realist, a realist greater

than Scott, one more true to life than Dumas, and touches a deeper chord than Rafael Sabatini, and others of his *genre*. His characters are not aristocrats like those of Tolstoy, Turgenev, or Gogol, and certainly not caricatures of life like those of Dickens. It is his profound sense of sympathy for people in general and the French common man in particular that made him write *Les Misérables*. Out of the host of characters in this great novel, the Thénardiens, Cosette, Mon. l'Abbé, Fantine, Marius and Gavroche and the rest, we choose Jean Valjean as the most representative.

Sri Aurobindo comments about *Les Misérables*, "It is not one of the masterpieces of 'art', but I regard it as the work of a powerful genius and certainly one of the great novels. It is certainly not philosophically or psychologically deep, but it is exceedingly vivid and powerful." (*Sri Aurobindo Centenary Vol. 9, p. 559*)

Jean Valjean is a vigorous man both physically and psychologically. He is not the hero of the story, but certainly plays a dominant role. His sense of justice and honour is very keen, so too his love for the oppressed as we find with Fantine and Cosette. He has great organising abilities, and never takes advantage of his opponent's downfall and on no account harps on revenge.

But in *Les Misérables* Hugo has brought into play the inevitable poetic justice, which immediately marks him off as a romantic. He is a realist in description of character, action and place, but the entire turn of events unmistakably is romantic, with their action and reaction, cause and effect, the tragedy of human life.

If Dickens's tragedy is contrasted by his comedy, Hugo's tales are grim, accurate in detail, morbid in places, and there is no play of shadow and light. The tone is serious, saved by his dynamism and creative force.

Action is not a strong point with Dickens, but Hugo's novels are replete with action in spite of his lengthy side-tracking descriptions which often mar the momentum. But Dickens is a master-craftsman in painting characters. This aspect of genius is less visible in Hugo.

If David Copperfield is the typical product of nineteenth-century England, Jean Valjean is the product of France of the same period. But Dickens's England is prosperous and without any social strife, while the France of Hugo has seen a Revolution pass, is teeming with social injustices and just managing to stand up on its own feet as an industrial and progressive nation. While Dickens is a social reformer, Hugo does not have any such commitment. He is an artist of life without any philosophy attached to his work.

Opposite to both Dickens and Hugo is Romain Rolland. His image of Jean Christophe is one of a rebel, an artist and an idealist. In this image Rolland has infused much of himself, his character, his vicissitudes and frustrations. Unlike Dickens or Hugo, Rolland attempts to give a glimpse of his hero's ideas, reflections, reactions and sympathies. But the inner *raison d'être* of a musician is not necessarily his amorous adventures, or his social struggles, but his musical creativity, his inspiration and the work of this inspiration. That is, Rolland has given us an external

picture of the prodigy, the boy who did a man-size job, the man who rebelled, performed, became celebrated and made several conquests as of Rosa or Sabine. But of the inner life (we do not mean merely his thoughts or reflections, his ideas or abstractions but concrete movements of experiences) he speaks very little, perhaps he himself had a meagre realisation of them.

Sri Aurobindo has said, "Rolland is an idealist who takes interest in spiritual mysticism—not himself a man of spiritual experience." (*Sri Aurobindo Birth Cent.* Vol. 9, p. 557) What is true of spirituality in his case is valid in the case of music as well. He has made a penetrative study of music and art, but he is not a musician or an artist himself, as is Dickens in *David Copperfield* where the writer's soul emerges poignantly with all its foibles, sentiments, creative impulses and impracticality. This is not to decry Rolland but to point out the singular failing of his work, which many critics may have overlooked.

Rolland has described a German genius, but the image he presents before us is typically Gallic. It is true the European artist ignores national or geographical boundaries, but something of the broad lines of character nevertheless remains, the Latin races have nothing in common with the Teutonic people. Again, the Slavic people have trends which are radically different from those of either the Teutons or the Latin races. In this respect, Hugo's Jean Valjean, or Balzac's Père Goriot, or again Flaubert's Madame Bovary are truly Gallic and correspond to life. On the other hand Jean Christophe does not bring home the authentic stamp of the true German hero.

The problems confronting David Copperfield or Jean Valjean are social problems, external in nature and their scope does not rise beyond emotions or sentiments. The problems facing Jean Christophe are more psychological and pseudo-spiritual. The external problems exist too, but running parallel to them are subtler issues. The modern man is growing aware of his inner existence, and it is this that Rolland has attempted to tackle, with indifferent success. If he could have unveiled the true picture of the hero's inner problems, this book would have been a landmark in modern fiction. Incidentally, let me mention another great failure of our times: it is *The Razor's Edge* by Somerset Maugham.

Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, is a poet of the inner worlds, without losing his grip on external issues, events and situations. With him the external is a reflection of the inner and there is no anomaly between these two existences. "Our life," says Sri Aurobindo, "moves between two worlds, the depths of our inward being and the surface field of our outward nature." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 139) He corrects the normal Western approach as in Rolland, Maugham and others by not submitting to the fallacy by which "The majority of men put the whole emphasis of life on the outward and live very strongly in their surface consciousness and very little on the inward existence. Even the choice spirits raised from grossness of the common vital and physical mould by the stress of thought and culture do not usually get farther than a strong dwelling on the things of the mind. The highest flight they

reach—and it is this that the West persistently mistakes for spirituality—is a preference for living in the mind and emotions more than in the gross outward life...” (*Ibid.*)

The image of Perseus that Sri Aurobindo presents to us is more Aurobindonian than truly Greek according to the legend. Perseus, declares the myth, is the offspring of Zeus, the god, and Danæ, the mortal, and we perceive his superhumanhood in his extraordinary deeds. His love for Andromeda is a romance, as all romances of the legends go and nothing more.

But the Perseus of Sri Aurobindo says:

Though great Athene breathes Olympian strength
Into my arm sometimes, I am no more
Than a brief mortal.

(*Ibid.*, Vol. 6, pp. 24-5)

This is what Perseus declares to Iolaus, the brother of Andromeda. This aspect of humanity is the hallmark of greatness, and is Aurobindonian in its turn.

Sri Aurobindo's Perseus is a compassionate individual, because he is the instrument of the goddess Athene.

Like all great men, Perseus does not seek the drum-beat and the glamour of fame; he is content to be of help and once his role is over, he pines for a quiet nook, “far from the madding crowd”. Therefore, when he has saved the two men from drowning by shipwreck (this act, incidentally, sets the whole drama rolling) and the people have witnessed his superhuman feat, he says to Iolaus:

I have a thirst for calm obscurity
And cottages and happy unambitious talk
And simple people...
I will drink deep of pure humanity.

(*Ibid.*, p. 26)

The play itself has a number of intentional departures from the original myth. The location is Syria, and not Ethiopia. The main deviation is in the beginning. The myth runs: “Cepheus and Cassiopea had a daughter called Andromeda who was even more beautiful than her mother. Both these women claimed to be more beautiful than the Nereids or even proud Juno. This was not only conceited of them, it was a very foolish boast to make. The daughters of Nereus and Juno, queen of the gods, quite naturally complained to the all-powerful Lord of the sea Neptune who, filled with wrath at this pretension of the Ethiopian princesses, covered the fertile plains of their land with foaming waters which destroyed the fruit and the harvest. As for the cattle and the human beings, they were devoured by a huge sea-monster. Following the usual custom in time, Cepheus sought out the oracle.” (*Myths of Ancient Greece and Rome*, by Emile Genest, pp. 145-6) And the oracle ordained the chaining of Andromeda to the rocks to be devoured by the sea-monster to expiate the sin.

The fabric of myth has too anthropomorphic a texture for Sri Aurobindo's liking. Hence he made the play a wager between Poseidon, the power of gloom, and Athene, the Puissance of Light. The former's instrument was Polydaon, the priest in Poseidon's temple in Syria, providing human sacrifices. Athene's instrument was Perseus and in a lesser way Andromeda.

Iolaus, in Sri Aurobindo, is Andromeda's brother, whereas in the myth he is betrothed to her. In Sri Aurobindo, Phineus the prince of Tyre becomes the husband of Andromeda.

The whole drama revolves around the two victims of a sea-wreck who were meant for Poseidon's altar but were saved by Perseus. We have mentioned this at the outset.

The enraged priest, actually the power in the land behind the throne, demands either that for his altar Perseus be produced who could dare to defy the all-powerful Poseidon, or else Iolaus must die instead. Andromeda, hearing, in the meantime, of Perseus's brilliant exploits, falls in love with him and declares that she would marry not Phineus, who was a schemer and an opportunist, but Perseus. She also demands the release of the two victims marked to be sacrificed at the sea-god's altar. The priest incites the people of Syria against the throne, against this sacrilege, for Andromeda has by this time actually set the victims free.

News reaches Perseus of the rabble's rising and imprisoning the Queen and the King, and seeking out to kill Andromeda.

He is roused. He exclaims:

Me they have incensed
 With their fierce crafty fury. If they must give
 To their dire god, let them at least fulfil
 With solemn decency their fearful rites.
 But since they bring in politic rage and turn
 The barbarous rite into a trade of murder,
 Nor rite nor temple be respected more.
 Must they have victims? Let them take and slay
 Perseus alone. I shall rejoice to know
 That so much strength and boldness dwells in men
 Who are mortals.

(*Ibid.*, p. 73)

Perseus comes to the temple to witness Andromeda releasing the victims. He cries out:

Thou art the mate for me, Andromeda!
 Now, now I know wherefore my eager sandals
 Bore me resistlessly to thee and Syria.

(*Ibid.*, p. 95)

Perseus finds in her his equal partner, equal in sympathy, equal in compassion,

equal in selflessness. Now this one act actually triggers later a great upheaval in Syria, fomented by the priest, as we have mentioned earlier. There are other characters in this drama of uprising: Therops, the popular leader, Perissus, the butcher.

Andromeda was well aware that her act was a fatal one. But she was moved so much by her compassion that she did not care for her own safety.

One of the victims is seized and he confesses Andromeda's guilt of having saved him; so the whole ire of the populace burns fiercely against her. There is panic everywhere. Syria, it appears, would be devastated by the floods of the angry sea-god. People flee to the countryside. Andromeda is seized.

Again the news reaches the hero who had a premonition of this trouble. He says:

I feel a stir within me as if great things
Were now in motion and clear-eyed Athene
Urging me on to high and helpful deeds.
There is a grandiose tumult in the air,
A voice of gods and Titans locked in wrestle. (Ibid., p. 126)

He further expresses himself:

I have arisen and all your turbulent Syria
Shall know me for the son of Zeus. (Ibid., p. 129)

And:

This is no hour to speak or plan, but to act.
A presence sits within my heart that sees
Each moment's need and finds the road to meet it.
Dread nothing; I am here to help and save. (Ibid., p. 130)

He flies to Andromeda and addresses her consolingly:

Look up, O sunny-curled Andromeda!
Perseus, the son of Danäe, is with thee
To whom thou now belongest. Fear no more
Sea-monsters nor the iron-souled Poseidon,
Nor the more monstrous flinty-hearted rabble
Who bound thee here. (Ibid., p. 161)

A terrible confrontation takes place between the hero and the monster. Then, returning triumphantly, he exclaims:

The grisly beast is slain that was thy terror,
And thou may'st sun the world with smiles again,
Andromeda. (Ibid., p. 163)

Together Andromeda and he go to the temple where Cepheus, Cassiopea and Iolaus are bound for sacrifice. There is a dramatic pause when Perseus narrates his exploits. The royal pair is freed, the rabble appeased and the cruel priest Polydaon dies heart-broken, frustrated and unable to endure the total defeat.

Then Phineus comes forward to claim his right over Andromeda. But Perseus turns him and his soldiers to stone.

After the happy union, Perseus says at the end, when the worship of Poseidon yields place to the worship of Athene at Andromeda's request:

Yet shall truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.

(*Ibid.*, p. 201)

(*To be continued*)

ROMEN

THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of March 1978)

The Yoga of King Lear

IV. Lear and His Daughters

LEAR is a dominating imperious king wielding very great natural strength. Though he takes initiative to disinherit his youngest daughter and exile his faithful friend, there is not in him the capacity for conscious and intentioned evil which we see prevalent in his two elder daughters as well as in Cornwall, Edmund and Oswald. Nevertheless, there is a force in Lear that releases a movement of destruction in which evil does rise and momentarily take hold on the course of events. When Lear decides to renounce power in favour of emotions, the vital egoism in him which thrives on power rises up and asserts itself against the movement. It is the drive for power, attention, recognition, vengeance; the habit of assertion, anger, rage; the traits of pride and vanity which take hold of him and initiate a downward movement of destruction in opposition to the upward movement of the heart. The course of events which follows is an inevitable working out of these opposing movements. For until the lower is exhausted, the higher cannot be fulfilled.

The vital egoism in Lear is a dominating force which permits the existence and expression only of itself and its own will. Whatever submits and satisfies survives, the rest must vanish unnoticed or remain unexpressed. Such an atmosphere is stifling to the natural growth of other personalities which require freedom for self-expression in order that they may outgrow what is primitive and childish in favour of what is mature and cultured. These psychological circumstances almost inevitably result in suppression and repression rather than growth. Instead of being expressed and outgrown the capacities for selfishness, cruelty and perversity in man get organised beneath the surface into pure evil of great intensity. Lear's daughters are the product of such an atmosphere. Goneril and Regan learned how to please their father in word and act while harbouring beneath the surface a hostility which gradually matured into organised evil. Only the youngest, Cordelia, who was Lear's favourite and undoubtedly given freedom by his emotions from the iron hand of his will, was free to develop naturally the nobler qualities which lie latent in her father, depth and richness and goodness of heart. But even in Cordelia there is evident a wilful stubborn mind, sense of pride and the egoism that is their natural consequence and that prevents the emotions from fully blossoming in their native power for good. In Lear's words,

O most small fault,
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
 Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
 From the fix'd place; drew from my heart all love
 And added to the gall. (I. iv. 266-270)

Cordelia's brief caustic remarks to her sisters after the court scene, reveal the manner in which that egoism can express itself as cruelty, whether justified or unjustified.

I know what you are;
 And, like a sister, am most loath to call
 Your faults as they are named. (I. i. 269)

In choosing to pursue a doctrinaire idealism, Cordelia loses not only her share in the kingdom but the power to help her father. Because her idealism is genuine, she gains a noble husband in the King of France and power outside of Britain. She loses her inheritance for her pride but gains a husband's love for her love.

We may appear unfair in emphasising these negative qualities, especially where they are present only as seeds in a noble personality like Cordelia. But the true nature of these qualities and their native expression is fully reflected in Lear's two elder daughters. Heilman observes, "this extension of inner conflict into conflicting characters who in part objectify the warring subjective elements is most marked in Lear's family... Lear's tragic flaw is the whole being of Goneril and Regan."⁹ Simply to call Goneril and Regan evil or inhuman is to overlook the capacities in human nature which make their existence possible. A self-willed, obstinate, passionate egoism and its natural companions, pride, vanity, arrogance and domination are traits present in Lear and his daughters. In each case they express themselves as cruelty to others. Where the personality is large and the energy great, the distorting effect of channeling all for one's own utility creates greater intensities of cruelty. If in such a case there is added some element of perversity as we see evident in Goneril and Regan, that perversity becomes an opening for forces of evil and destruction to act in and through the human vehicle. The greater, the more powerful the personality, the more the destruction. The result is a being with all "the undivided energy of the beast". It is this quality we find fully developed in Goneril and less fully but perhaps more offensively in Regan whose lesser strength is compensated by a greater joy in perversity.

When we ask in bewilderment how one man could possibly give birth to such stark opposites as the good Cordelia and these monsters, it is because we fail to understand the fundamental condition of life which is that the worst and the best are inextricably bound together so that only by completely eradicating the one can the other ever find free and full expression. The evolution of life is nothing less than a gradual purification of all that is ignorant, small, narrow, mean, selfish and perverse in man so that what in him truly knows, loves and is capable of self-giving can develop

and emerge. This process of evolution of consciousness which Bradley refers to as "process of purification" is what we see working out on a miniature scale in Lear as a representative—not merely as a symbol—of the entire race.

As Granville-Barker wrote, "We may see, then, in Goneril and Regan, evil triumphant, self-degrading and self-destructive."¹⁰ The force which motivates them cannot be dismissed by any terms such as human smallness, selfishness, hatred or meanness. It has an intensity and scope beyond the limits of their personalities. It is contagious and spreads from them to Edmund and Oswald and Cornwall evoking the worst from all who can respond to it. This evil is of the nature of a vibration, a vibration of destruction. It destroys whatever it comes into contact with, self or other. But destruction is not in itself synonymous with evil, for even the most positive forces in the universe must employ destruction as a means to a greater creation. The characteristic of evil which distinguishes it from all other vibrations in nature is the intention to inflict harm either on the subject in which it arises or through him on others. The extent to which that harm is the sole or major motivating force indicates the degree or absoluteness of the evil.

But for such evil to emerge in life some weakening and rift in the normal social fabric, some opening is necessary. In *Macbeth* it is war. In *Othello* it is the violent social transgression of the elopement. Here it is Lear's conscious initiative in renouncing power, rejecting daughter and friend, three acts of violence against the consciousness of his world which splits life open at its seams and allows all that is dormant below the surface to erupt and dominate the scene.

In Lear vanity is the occasion but it is not the driving force. His acts and their consequences do not issue from that surface motive but from a deeper more powerful source. Had there not been a deep stirring and eruption of self-destructive egoism in Lear himself, the emergence of similar forces around him would not have been possible. As Bradley puts it, we tend to regard Lear as "a man more sinned against than sinning ... almost wholly as a sufferer, hardly at all as an agent ... we are in some danger of forgetting that the storm which has overwhelmed him was liberated by his own deed".¹¹

Once that plane of life was activated there was no positive force of corresponding strength in a position to counteract it effectively. All the good in Cordelia and Kent was powerless. The evil released had to play to its own natural conclusion. In the process it not only destroyed itself but brought forth the birth of something greater and truer.

The true significance of Lear's action soon becomes apparent. He has given up his powers and property with the sole condition that he be maintained alternately by his two daughters along with a company of one hundred knights. He has renounced power but wants to retain its trappings. Almost immediately after the transfer of power Goneril finds an excuse to complain of the arrangement and press for the dismissal of the king's knights. Her action cannot be attributed to even the worst of motives, not even power or greed. What is expressed is pure meanness, a desire to hurt, and

the threat to remove his train is aimed to strike directly at Lear's enormous vanity and reduce him to a whimpering child.

This admiration, sir, is much o' th' savour
 Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
 To understand my purposes aright.
 As you are old and reverend, should be wise.
 Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
 Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,
 That this our court, infected with their manners,
 Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust
 Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel
 Than a grac'd palace. The shame itself doth speak
 For instant remedy. Be then desir'd
 By her that else will take the thing she begs
 A little to disquantity your train;
 And the remainders that shall still depend
 To be such men as may besort your age,
 Which know themselves and you.

(I. iv. 236-251)

Goneril is tactful in her psychological assault and her steward Oswald is the perfect instrument. Before departing, Lear utters a horrible curse on Goneril which reminds us of his words to Cordelia and the reason for his present suffering.

Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear.
 Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
 To make this creature fruitful.
 Into her womb convey sterility;
 Dry up in her the organs of increase;
 And from her derogate body never spring
 A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
 Create her child of spleen, that it may live
 And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her.
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
 With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,
 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
 To laughter and contempt, that she may feel
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
 To have a thankless child. Away, away!

(I. iv. 275-286)

Bradley's comment here is perceptive:

The question is not whether Goneril deserves these appalling imprecations, but what they tell us about Lear. They show that, although he has already recognised his injustice towards Cordelia, is secretly blaming himself, and is endeavouring to do better, the disposition from which his first error sprang is still unchanged. And it is precisely the disposition to give rise, in evil surroundings, to calamities dreadful but at the same time tragic, because due in some measure to the person who endures them.

The perception of this connection, if it is not lost as the play advances, does not at all diminish our pity for Lear, but it makes it impossible for us permanently to regard the world displayed in this tragedy as subject to a mere arbitrary or malicious power. It makes us feel that this world is so far at least a rational and a moral order, that there holds in it the law, not of proportionate requital, but of strict connection between act and consequence.¹²

Lear departs to seek refuge and support from Regan. But he finds in her hostility equal to Goneril's. What Regan lacks in quality of evil, in the capacity for original ideas of cruelty, she compensates for in quantity by an even cruder more overt harshness. Cornwall throws Lear's messenger Kent into the stocks, and the king himself is driven out onto the stormy heath by their "calculations" to reduce his company of knights.

The difference between Goneril and Regan's husbands is noteworthy. Albany is a good, mild man as Goneril constantly reminds him,

This milky gentleness and course of yours,
Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,
You are much more ataxt for want of wisdom
Than prais'd for harmful mildness. (I. iv. 342-345)

He is deeply in love with his beautiful but evil wife. His goodness and affection give the impression of weakness. But once he fully realises his wife's nature, the attachment is broken and the strength of his character emerges. Cornwall, on the other hand, shows no capacity for gentleness, affection or goodness. He is a small personality of bad temper, aggressiveness and cruelty whose limited energies for evil are quickly exhausted. Like Regan, he joys in perversity but lacks the strength to organise it for any purpose. Goneril has married a good man opposite to her evil capacities in every respect while Regan has married one similar to herself in size and nature. The evil in Regan is crude and primitive. It issues from the vital being. The evil in Goneril is organised in a developed mind, it is more self-conscious and more absolute. The undeveloped vibration of evil in Regan attracts a mate who can bring out its further development while the mature evil in Goneril attracts a mate to destroy it. Life sup-

ports every vibration until it reaches its full stature and then provides the necessary circumstances for its destruction or transformation.

GARRY JACOBS

(To be continued)

NOTES

- ⁹ *Casebook: King Lear*, Edited by Frank Kermode, Macmillan & Co., 1969, p. 175.
- ¹⁰ *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, p. 48.
- ¹¹ *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A.C. Bradley, Macmillan & Co., 1965, p. 231.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

SURRENDER ROSE

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1978)

FOR the first few days things went very well indeed. It seemed to Surrender Rose that nothing could ever go away again. She knew who she was now and knowing who she was she knew exactly what she had to do and how to do it at each moment of the day.

Her stitches became perfect, tiny and regular, while the stems of the flowers curved so gracefully that they looked filled with sap. In a few days the bag that had taken so long was finished. Her mother was delighted. Her father was delighted. They thought, so did Surrender Rose, that all difficulties were at an end. Only aunt Tulip suspected that this might not be so.

By the end of the second week the vision of the princess had begun to fade, so Surrender Rose began trying to think of some means to evoke her. She had never spoken of her to aunt Tulip. But now that she began to see the luminous Princess as someone outside herself she wanted to speak about her, to be reminded that it *was* herself. The truth is, she was beginning to be tempted to behave like someone who is not a princess. At lunch one day her mother reminded her that she hadn't finished her vegetables. Surrender Rose didn't particularly like them, and was tempted to ask why a princess should finish her vegetables.

For the first time it irked her very much that nobody knew she was a princess. She knew the unwisdom of blurting out something like this, and vaguely remembering that the princess always smiles, she managed a little lift of the corners of her mouth and said mincingly, "Thank you very much but I'm not hungry." It sounded wrong but she hadn't been able to make it come out any other way. She pushed the food to the corner of her plate and waited to be able to get up and go.

On the very first occasion that she was alone with her aunt she could bear it no longer and said,

"It's true, isn't it, aunt Tulip?"

"Yes, its true," said aunt Tulip threading her needle.

Then why did aunt Tulip refuse to help her out? Surrender Rose pulled the thread on her new piece of embroidery, a handkerchief for aunt Tulip, so tight that the cloth puckered. She was about to burst out, "Why can't everybody see it? Why doesn't he come?" But aunt Tulip's calm way of stitching stopped her. She could see aunt Tulip's grey bun balancing on her bent head, and the set of her shoulders and the calmness that was in her short plump body soothed Surrender Rose. It was as though aunt Tulip had said a magic word, for Surrender Rose was flooded with memory. It was not the same as that first evening but she knew again and, loosening the stitch, pulled the cloth straight and started the embroidery where she had left off.

But the feeling of forgetting and dissatisfaction came up after only two days this time, and when in the afternoon the neighbours' child pushed her roughly in their play she said, "Be careful how you touch me, I'm a princess." The boy, whose name was Tom, said:

"Yah yah, bloody likely", and pushed her over into a rubbish pile. She kicked him in the shins and ran inside crying with rage. Finding her aunt in the kitchen she shouted:

"Aunt Tulip, aunt Tulip, do it again. Do it again so that everyone can see."

Tears of frustration were running down her face. Aunt Tulip, who was never one for propriety in a crisis, wiped the tears with a dish-cloth and said, "Now then you know it's not like that", and Surrender Rose did know that, but she went on crying:

"Then do it just for me."

"I can't," said aunt Tulip quietly.

"But it's horrid. I hate it."

"Hate what?"

Surrender Rose was about to say, "Nobody knows. He doesn't come", but she said, "I can't see her." Aunt Tulip said nothing. "No, it's not that." There was a long silence. "I can't *be* her." Aunt Tulip folded the dish-cloth and said casually, "Yes, well, you can", and went back to rolling pastry. For the first time Surrender Rose knew she would have to make her way alone.

"What must I do?" she asked. Aunt Tulip stopped rolling and looked at the ceiling. For a moment Surrender Rose thought she would utter a magic spell for her and something or someone would come down. But soon aunt Tulip started folding the pastry again, folding and rolling, folding and rolling. Perhaps she had forgotten. At last she said, "If you like you can go on rolling this pastry for me while I get the oven ready."

Surrender Rose flushed in anger. "But lightly, lightly," said Aunt Tulip, and Surrender Rose found herself with a floury rolling-pin in her hand. "A light touch is everything with pastry," said Aunt Tulip peering into the oven. Before Surrender Rose knew what was happening the rolling-pin went clattering across the kitchen floor and the wooden handle came off. Aunt Tulip made no move to pick it up. After a short silence she said:

"I'm always dropping it myself and that handle comes off. Never mind. You'll just have to be a bit more clever with the rolling. It's tricky but you'd get the hang of it. I'll ask your father to fix it later."

Surrender Rose picked up the broken implement, dusted it off on her skirt, for aunt Tulip was still fussing about the oven with her back to her, and started rolling, rolling and every now and then folding, sprinkling with flour and rolling again. The sweet smell of the dough came up to her and the flour dust tickled her nostrils. It was somehow comforting. Soon the oven began warming the kitchen pleasantly and Surrender Rose was glad to have something to do. Since she couldn't

for the moment make her way to the princess she might as well be here with her aunt in the kitchen rolling and folding with the sweet smells and familiar shapes. She almost began enjoying herself and suddenly, unexpectedly, the princess, though she could not see her, seemed a little nearer.

The most difficult thing for Surrender Rose to bear in the days that followed was the up-and-downness that had come into her life, the near-and-farness of everything that she desired. She felt, she knew that princesshood was just within reach, yet when she reached out to take it, thinking "She is mine; I am she", everything slipped away and she was left with a dark and empty feeling. Disappointment brought back the mood in which she wanted to throw things around. She had stopped begging aunt Tulip to produce the princess for her but she would plead and plead to be told exactly what she should do, promising to follow instructions down to the smallest detail. But aunt Tulip would shake her head and sing a little song:

Eat when you're hungry,
 When tired sleep.
 You'll never have
 What you try to keep.
 Straighten the stitch,
 Roll the dough.
 You'll never learn
 If you try to know.
 It's not on the ceiling,
 It's not on the floor,
 Yet a hundred miles nearer
 Than the house next door.

"Nearer than next door?"

"Nearer than this," said aunt Tulip laying her needle against her breast. "You know, so don't pester us with questions."

"Well then, why don't you bloody well show her to me." In her frustration Surrender Rose who'd been embroidering again pricked her thumb. Blood welled up in a little bubble and as she put her thumb up to her mouth she managed to brush it against the handkerchief which now bore a bright red streak. She said a word she had learnt from Tom, and threw her embroidery on the floor. It was becoming a habit. She waited for aunt Tulip to get cross, she almost wanted it.

In case you're wondering, aunt Tulip was not beyond provocation and if they'd been taking a walk down the lane she might have cuffed her niece. For even if you're part fairy, once you take a human form you're subject to the same rules and difficulties as ordinary humans. However, as she too was embroidering at the time, an activity which she always found most soothing, she had everything under control in much less than the time it took her to outline a single petal. She could sense quite

clearly the little hobgoblins that were dancing in Surrender Rose's blood, and knew better than to take their mischief personally. So she just went on stitching. Now if anger is catching, peace and calm are still more highly contagious, so she just concentrated on the embroidery, forgetting about anything but turning the edge of the petal, and soon Surrender Rose felt two tears rolling down her cheeks and the rubbish heap moving off her heart and sliding away as though down a steep hill. And though she was too embarrassed and ashamed to get right up and retrieve her embroidery she did understand how far she was from being on the right track. When she threw things around she got a sort of a drunken feeling which made her forget everything else; and for the first time Surrender Rose understood that she was trying to use this strange and violent method to cure her longing. In a very small voice she apologised to aunt Tulip and told her so.

Then she got up and went to retrieve the rumpled handkerchief. She had to look around for the needle from which the thread had slipped. She looked under the carpet where she had swept some dust the day before and combed her fingers through the pile of the carpet, which is where she finally found it. While she was doing all these things she looked very beautiful and moved with grace.

Whether aunt Tulip was pleased or even noticed it I cannot say, for she was by now deeply interested in her embroidery again, but Surrender Rose was certainly pleased when she looked in the mirror to comb her hair before lunch. Her eyes glowed and her hair shone in a special way and there was no mistaking who and what the radiance reminded her of. And she spent the whole meal and the whole afternoon like that. That evening after her bath she looked in the mirror for signs of the princess. But she no longer seemed to bear the stamp quite so clearly and she saw this with a tug of disappointment. Even as she scanned the mirror it seemed to disappear altogether.

(To be continued)

MAGGI

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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Glossary of Terms in Sri Aurobindo's Writings (Compilation). *Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, First Edition 1978, pp. 300. Price Rs. 30.*

THE coming of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother marks a new era in human living. So the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo naturally departs from the norms and modes of existing thought. He has drawn from the philosophies of the East and the West. His outlook and inlook are so rich and so comprehensive that past concepts, however sublime, are found wanting. He has not only coined a few new words in the English language to express his vision and experience but also used many common words in a special sense. When such is the case, a compilation like the glossary before us is highly welcome. Up till now a number of glossaries—English-Hindi, English-English—have appeared; but none seems to be as satisfying as the present one.

The compilation is divided into four parts and each part is prefaced by a special note by the compiler. The first contains an alphabetical order of the English terms which Sri Aurobindo has used in his writings. In the introductory note to this section the learned compiler says that even common words like 'mind', 'life', 'psychic', 'vital', 'consciousness' have a special meaning in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. 'Supermind' and 'transformation'—these two words have a special connotation and an exhaustive explanation is given, throwing light on the different shades of sense in which they were employed by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo says: "Transformation is a word that I have brought in myself (like supermind) to express certain spiritual concepts and spiritual facts of the Integral Yoga" (p. 168).

The second part contains the glossary of Sanskrit and other Indian words and phrases. Here also a note is given on the scope of the glossary, on transliteration, on definitions. Except for long passages, all the Sanskrit words, phrases and words from other Indian languages (Hindi, Bengali, etc.) are alphabetically arranged over 80 pages. The transliteration of Sanskrit words is done according to the internationally accepted system.

The third part of the glossary, which is short, contains words and phrases from French, German, Italian and Latin. The concluding part carries a note on a number of words special to Sri Aurobindo. Words like 'dynamis', 'ineffugable', 'sublate' are explained etymologically. Like the previous books of the Ashram, the get-up of this one is attractive and the printing fine.

V. MANMOHAN REDDY

The Grace of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother (Stories about Sri Aurobindo and The Mother)—Part Two, *by Har Krishan Singh*. Published by Har Krishan Singh, 16, rue Saint-Louis, Pondicherry-605001. Price 2.80.

Big philosophical tomes, however highly intellectual, may not be able to impress the beginners of Yoga. But a personal experience, however fugitive, may immediately be the cause of conversion. In the case of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's disciples, the Grace factor is unique. We have come across a number of cases of disciples who have not at all seen either the Master or the Mother, yet they narrate the living episodes of Grace. This is a wonderful and inexplicable phenomenon with the disciples. Although Sri Aurobindo has penned masterly theses of philosophy, the heart-approach and not the mind-approach is given the first place in the Yoga which he and the Mother teach.

The book under review is highly recommended to beginners and to those who have not yet cultivated a heart-approach.

There are 13 episodes in the book, which are lucidly narrated by the author. Each story is remarkable in itself.

I appeal to all the disciples to send their stories of the Grace to the author so that he may be able to compile further parts. This would be a treasure of Grace for the future generations.

Like the previous volumes, the beauty of the book is enhanced by the author's painting on the cover page.

V. MANMOHAN REDDY

New Race, a Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Human Study, 2-2-4/1, Hyderabad, 21st February 1978. Editor: Prof. V. Madhusudan Reddy. Annual Subscription Rs. 12, UK £ 1.50, USA \$ 6.

The new race is on — for the new race. And the tide of life is set with a new and strong race of consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given a new breath and a new hope to languishing and direction-lost man. They have set a new pace for a further adventure of consciousness. They have shown and macadamized a new and luminous road for man, and not only pointed the way to his inevitable goal but made him run with courage and confidence because they themselves are with him to achieve it—the goal of a new race of divine beings on this earth.

We have on record that the Vedic Rishis tried to bring down the Vijnana consciousness into their bodies, but they pronounced that it was not possible to do so while keeping the body intact. Although the efforts for the divinisation of the body have been made by various systems of Yoga, especially the Tantriks, they were more on the individual level than for the creation of a race of god-men with divine bodies. But the new race attempted by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is for the establishment of the Vijnana principle in the earth-consciousness so that the divinisation of the body may be achieved not for a few individuals here and there but as part of the ushering in of a race of gnostic beings.

Sri Aurobindo considers the entire process of creation as evolution, being the reverse of a prior involution of the Spirit into Matter. He deems it as teleological, the involved Spirit in Matter emerging out of it to create more and more developed forms of consciousness culminating in perfect and living manifestations of the superconscious Spirit. According to him, as involved life emerging out of dead matter created plant and animal life and involved mind developing out of animal creatures formed mental beings, so a greater consciousness, which he called Supermind, flowering out of mental beings would create a superior race, that of gnostic beings or supermen. He says: "man as he is cannot be the last term of that evolution: he is too imperfect an expression of the Spirit, mind itself a too limited form and instrumentation; mind is only a middle term of consciousness, the mental being can only be a transitional being. If, then, man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed and supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation. But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature."

The *New Race*, the name given by the Mother to the quarterly journal of the Institute of Human Study, Hyderabad, dedicates itself to the furtherance of such a cause in its own way. The learned editor has himself written most of the articles in this issue which has come out after a lapse of some years with renewed determination, and they all reveal a sweeping understanding and grasp of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. The article "The Need for a Civilisation of Consciousness" was originally submitted at the golden jubilee session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held at New Delhi from Dec. 28, 1975 to Jan. 3, 1976. In this connection, Sri Aurobindo has sharply noticed the trend of modern life and prevailing circumstances in definite and strong words: "A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it." The Mother gives a very clear-cut solution to this dangerous turn and misdirection of man: it lies in a "change of consciousness" which, she says, "is bound to come". But she warns with an emphatic and luminous note that it is left to man to decide whether he wants to realise it voluntarily or wants "crashing circumstances" to force him to bring it about. For at last

All earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home,...

The earth shall be the field and camp of God.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are not only the forerunners of the new race for the new race, but its guides and strength-givers:

To raise the world to God in deathless Light,
To bring God down to the world on earth we came,
To change the earthly life to life divine...
All then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

Guide to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy by *K.D. Acharya*. Second Enlarged Edition. Published by Divya Jivan Sahitya Prakashan, Pondicherry-2, pp. 224. Price Rs. 12.

Sri Aurobindo's writings are vast, complex and many-sided. To comprehend even in general this unique and profound literature one needs not only a keen intellect but also—and this is more rare—an inner attitude which has a natural turning towards Yoga; that is to say, one must possess a measure of openness to its underlying vision. For, the works of Sri Aurobindo are not just a systematised structure of thought; rather they embody an orchestral expression of the 'Reality' visioned by him. As the master of Integral Yoga Sri Aurobindo holds within him the 'Delight of Existence' in its limitless dynamic manifestations. To be opened to his literature means being opened to Yoga-Shakti.

K. D. Acharya markedly fulfils this condition. He was drawn towards Sri Aurobindo's Yoga while still young and his ardent turning towards its ideal and the life of sadhana extending over half a century lent a depth and authenticity to his understanding. Since he is a scholar not only of the traditional Indian literature on philosophy and yoga, but also of western philosophy, he can with ease enter into the basic concepts of the terms used by Sri Aurobindo. He can also appreciate much better than a lay reader the profound suggestions with which Sri Aurobindo packs these terms. Acharya, by his fine Hindi translation of the *magnum opus* of Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, and by writing about a dozen books on his Yoga and philosophy, is well-equipped for the kind of compilation that his *Guide to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy* represents.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one in 10 chapters deals with the Absolute Reality and its manifestations, like Gods, Goddesses, soul, psychic being, consciousness, matter, life, mind, overmind, supermind, etc. Part II in 10 chapters deals with Evolution. The selection of the passages from *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, etc. has been done very judiciously. For instance, if

the reader wants to know the definition or exact meaning of 'evolution' according to Sri Aurobindo, he can get a satisfactory answer in only one sentence selected by the author from *The Life Divine*: "Evolution means the progressive manifestation of that which is involved." This sentence contains in a nutshell the whole drift of the Vedantic notion that nothing can be evolved or manifested which is not already contained in its cause (called *sat-kārya-vāda*), and it differentiates Sri Aurobindo's theory from all others current in the West, *i.e.* materialistic, vitalistic, idealistic, etc. The selected passages have been arranged so systematically that each one is connected with the next one and all together harmoniously produce the vision of one leading idea in which they are incorporated.

The way in which the author raises the most fundamental problems of philosophy and science—what is evolution, why is there evolution, what is its process, what are its graded stages, its latest achievement and the ultimate goal?—and gives their solutions shows wide study, deep thinking and meditation on and skilful grasp of Sri Aurobindo's literature.

The notes given by the author between the quoted passages not only organically knit them together but reveal the hidden contents of them to the mind of the reader. Certain scientific facts quoted in support of Sri Aurobindo's view from the writings of some eminent botanists like Peter Tompkin and Christopher Bird, etc. make it all the more interesting.

Sri Aurobindo's writings are being progressively recognised as a light-house of knowledge, and the awakened section of humanity is turning increasingly to him. The need of a deeper study and understanding of his works is felt everywhere. But all cannot take up his vast literature at once. There has to be a degree of preparation and slow progression. The compiler has produced a compact work which affords a summary yet thrilling view in an easily and clearly understandable language, of a knowledge of incomparable dimensions. The book is not only useful for the general readers of Sri Aurobindo but, as the author has given the exact references of the quoted passages at the end of the book in two indices, it is equally or rather more useful for professors and research scholars planning extensive study and scrutiny by reading allied passages from the writings of the Master; for the book is like a guide-map which can lead the aspirants to the goal of their search.

I congratulate Acharya for producing such a useful compilation. I hope that the universities, colleges and other libraries will enrich their treasures of knowledge by adding this new jewel to their shelves for the benefit of their readers.

C. N. SHARMA

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In Celebration of the Mother's Birth Centenary

18th February 1978 — 19th February 1978

A SPECIAL (forty-first) Seminar of the New Age Association was held to celebrate the Mother's Birth Centenary. Because of the large number of participating speakers, the Seminar was held in two sessions—on the 18th and the 19th February 1978. In the first session at "Knowledge" there were 11 speakers; in the second session at the Hall of Harmony there were 13 more speakers.

The subject for the Seminar was: *What I have learnt from the Mother.*

This subject was chosen with a view to giving an opportunity to the student-members of the Association to utilise the occasion of the Mother's Birth Centenary to express their gratitude to her by recollecting what were the lessons of life they had learnt from her, directly by personal contact or indirectly in some way or other, which had helped them to mould their life and character.

At the beginning of the sessions Kishor Gandhi, the chairman, made a brief introductory speech, which is reproduced below:

Friends,

This year we are celebrating the Mother's Birth Centenary. But in doing so we should not lose sight of the fact that to measure the span of time since the Mother's birth in her present body has only a relative significance. I say this not to diminish in any way the immense significance of the Mother's centenary year which we are celebrating, but to point to the fact that her existence here upon earth stretches far back in time beyond her present birth and it will continue to extend far ahead in future until a time will come when she will be permanently here in a physical body,—but of a new type, the Divine Body.

This will be obvious if we recollect what she herself once said: "Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of consciousness, I was there."

This manifesting a ray of consciousness upon earth in a continuously increasing degree is the essential significance of evolution. It is for this reason that to a sadhak, who asked Sri Aurobindo what he and the Mother had been doing during their previous lives, he replied, "Carrying on the evolution." And when the sadhak asked for

further elaboration of what this answer meant, Sri Aurobindo said, "That would mean writing the whole of human history."

So we can say that the whole upward evolution of humanity is centrally the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Or, to put it in other words, we may say that the whole of human history in its luminous march forward is at its core the life-history or biography of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

And we should also remember that the history of evolution has not ended. Evolution is like a vast drama of which some scenes have already been played but many more yet remain to be enacted. So, as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were on earth unrolling the past scenes, they will also be there unfolding all the future scenes of this drama of evolution. There can thus be no finis or end to the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's personal presence on earth, for it is an ever-recurring phenomenon. In saying this I am not referring to their spiritual presence on earth which, of course, is and will always be there. I am referring to their physical bodily presence. But in evolution every new stage is marked by the emergence of a new variety of physical organism, a new species embodying the new level of consciousness reached—plant, animal, man. Surely the human body is not the last in the series. A new kind of body capable of manifesting the supramental consciousness is now going to emerge, and it is to prepare its manifestation here upon earth that the Mother has temporarily withdrawn from her physical body. And when she comes in her new body, the Divine Body, the Glorious Supramental Body, she will have no more to leave the earth, for that body will be ageless, deathless, eternal. It will be the birth of the Eternal in eternal time.

It is for this reason that I said that our celebration of the Mother's Birth Centenary can have only a relative significance. A century represents only a fraction of the Mother's perennial existence on earth and of her total responsibility for the ever-continuous evolutionary progression from its obscure beginning till its luminous so-called 'end'. In fact, after the supramental stage is reached, it will be an infinite progression in the Infinite.

I am reminded here of what the Mother once said during her last years: "I am millions of years old", and she added, "and I am waiting."

When will she come in her new body? The answer to this question ultimately rests with the Supreme Lord who is the Master of Evolution. But proximately and relatively it depends upon us also, upon our readiness to receive her new manifestation in the Divine Body. The Mother during her last years was repeatedly asking: Are you ready? Perhaps it would not have been necessary for her to withdraw from her body if we had been ready to receive the supramental Truth that she was bringing down upon earth. But now that she has withdrawn and we are eagerly asking, "When will she come back", her answer and that of the Lord could probably be the same: "Are you ready?"

This is the most important point over which we should ponder during this centenary year and do what is needful. For on the extent to which we earnestly make ourselves ready for it, will partly depend the advent of her next glorious incarnation.

And when that advent occurs we shall not have to count and celebrate the span of her life by years or centuries but every day and every moment will then be a ceaseless celebration of her eternal Presence in our midst.

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After this, the other speakers delivered their speeches in the alphabetical order of their names. The first speech by Aravinda Habbu is reproduced below. Other speeches will be published serially in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER

SPEECH BY ARAVINDA HABBU

Dear Friends,

One finds it indeed difficult to pinpoint what one has learnt from Mother, especially if one has grown up here in the Ashram. For one is then justifiably tempted to say that all that one has learnt has been taught by Mother. This, though no doubt true, can be made more specific by looking deeply into oneself and discerning one's special need, one's peculiar capacity and aspiration.

I have been immeasurably privileged to have had a daily contact with Mother through correspondence for over two years during the most formative period of my life, and this contact has remained with me ever since. I find it impossible to convey in words my profound gratitude for this Grace accorded to me. Let this talk of mine be considered my sincere homage to Her and Sri Aurobindo, however mediocre it may sound and however inadequate its scope, marking this great and immensely significant occasion of Her Birth Centenary.

My own path was clearly drawn by Mother Herself. In 1968 a discussion in school made me put a question to Her, a very crucial one as I later realised, on my tenth birthday when I went for Her Darshan. On a piece of paper I had written down in French: "Sweet Mother, How to do 'Yoga?'" Her oral reply was in French too but She must have seen how dazed I was by Her simply speaking to me. She asked me whether I wanted Her to write it down. By the time some verbal expression had escaped my lips She had already begun writing Her answer. Here is the translation in English: "Be completely sincere, never try to cheat others. And try never to cheat yourself. Blessings." I cannot say that I have quite arrived at what She wanted of me but at least I know precisely what to aim at. Sincerity means to be exclusively open to the highest Light one is capable of coming into contact with: that Light for us is Mother.

In my later association with Her, when I sent flowers to Her and received flowers from Her every day, She encouraged and guided me unstintingly both from

within and without. I used to write to Her about anything and everything and never did She discourage me from doing so. Once when an elderly friend, seeing me somewhat smartly dressed, remarked that there just had to be a girl friend somewhere to justify my smartness, I replied that I loved Mother much too much to bother about such things. He said that we would see about it in the future. This too without any hesitation, and very simply, went to add to the contents of my diary before it went to Mother that day. There not only is noted the complete dialogue but also my promise to Mother never to let myself fall into this trap of lower nature. I dare say that She has seen to it that this does not happen. When my very respected elderly friend learnt of my innocent piece of reporting, his hand went in between his teeth and as far as I am concerned has stayed there in regard to such matters.

That Her presence is constantly with me even in my darkest and most inconscient moments cannot at all be denied, for our relation was very open and extremely intimate and She is always accessible to me in the shrine of my heart. Thus, during this period of Grace in which She literally formed me, the flame of truth and sincerity and frankness was nurtured in me, and often I have had occasion to look back and see how open I was, and try now to be as receptive, if not more.

Always to have a sunny disposition and to go through life with the confidence that a greater presence is at work here is the sure sign of a deeply receptive attitude, for then one clearly perceives one's limitations in face of the task to be accomplished and sees too the next step to be taken—a more and more complete surrender to Her so that we may at long last be entirely attuned to our higher and realisable Self. This was repeatedly pointed out in the manner of my writing to Her, as I now see it, and in Her replies to what I wrote. Here are a few of them: "To be and to become more and more what the Divine wants us to be should be our greatest preoccupation" or "Do not torment yourself, the true knowledge comes from beyond" in reply to a letter about my education as suggested by my parents and as I envisaged it, or "Do not be afraid, confide yourself entirely to the Divine..." or "To understand the Divine you must become It". All these indicate a direction which leads us to our larger and truer Self and Being which contains all our other parts and fulfils their *raison d'être* while at the same time it transcends them because it is not bound by them. And like so many who have chosen and have been chosen, I feel myself to be led, through experiences inner and outer, closer and closer to the realisation of my aspiration: To belong to the New Race whose consciousness does not depend on the ego but on the Divine Consciousness. Mother, in reply to a letter where I had rather feelingly expressed this, said, "Persevere in your aspiration and your effort and you will succeed". Mark the words "you will succeed"—the sanction and seal of the Supreme Mother Herself! One cannot but be overawed by what has been given to us as our rightful legacy, and I often feel unworthy of the trust placed in me. In this year of the Mother's Birth Centenary it can be said without any doubt that the pressure on us to stir ourselves and purify ourselves so that we may simply open ourselves to be filled is indeed very great. So great is the pressure that the body thrills at the touch of profounder

realities in such a way that one is projected into a transformed state of consciousness from which one can have a real and potently direct action on the consciousness and matter of the body itself. From this state one begins to experience and truly comprehend what it is that Sri Aurobindo and Mother mean when they speak of bodily transformation, though this transformation itself is rightly and practically seen to be very much beyond our present and farthest horizon. But we *know* the immediate steps to be taken towards it, and the rigorously precise spiritually scientific processes that concern the present condition of our consciousness and our body and their progress are revealed to us. No longer does one simply dream of immortality but has the effective possibility of attaining to it lucidly indicated. One sees almost physically that from this stage of receptivity onwards death no longer presents its inevitable and irrevocable front.

But for this to happen in oneself one has to be sincere, sincere and receptive, receptive and humble, humble as Mother said of the flower signifying unselfishness: "deeply open so as not to refuse anything." Never ought we to bar out from our experience any new or unexpected elements, keeping always the attitude that all in fact comes from the Divine. This might seem to some of you to be an intolerable extreme but let us remember that immortality is also an extreme absolute, and all absolutes above must meet their absolutes below.

I remember the last time I saw Mother at close quarters. It was my birthday and I had been called last so as to have a longer time with Her. I had specially kept a country rose signifying "Surrender" in my hand, and when I went in I offered this flower to Her. She looked deeply into my eyes and pressed my hands tightly in Hers. Then, smiling as if all the sweetness of heaven and earth had poised on Her lips, She blessed me several times, stroking my hair caressingly. Then holding the rose in Her palm She asked me whether I wanted it. My eyes were brimming with tears of joy and gratitude and in a choked voice I replied, "Yes, Mother." But again, as in 1968, my answer came too late, for She was already pressing "Surrender" into my hand. And then as we parted physically She bade me "Au revoir"—"We shall meet again." I know where we shall meet: in the far future She saw in my soul when She gazed intensely into my eyes. Till then Her constant presence will sustain me to shape and open me profoundly to the working of Her Grace. This is the deeper truth that I must discover and which we all have to live on our diverse paths towards the one Perfection.