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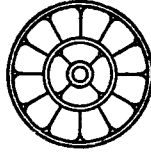
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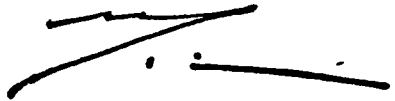


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 6

"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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PROTECTION AFTER DEATH

UNPUBLISHED STATEMENTS OF THE MOTHER

WHOEVER has an aspiration at the end of his life or even only at the moment of death comes to me for shelter and help. Immediately after death there is a difficult and for many a dangerous time when crossing the vital world before reaching the psychic world which is the place of peace and rest. It is for this crossing through this vital world that so many people come to me without having even known my physical being, instinctively because they perceive the Light that guides and protects.¹

Q: Millions of people die daily. Do all of them come to you?

No, not millions. It is only the elite of humanity that is ready to cross consciously to the psychic world and the elite is, after all, a small number.

It is an emanation of mine especially set apart for the purpose who does the work very consciously. At any time by a concentration the central consciousness can become aware of this work. The night atmosphere is more quiet which makes it favourable for this kind of activity.

Those who are in direct relation with me are constantly in my consciousness and nothing can happen to them without my knowing it.

12.12.1935

¹ EDITOR'S NOTE — It may be of interest to refer to a statement in Dr. Raymond Moody Jr.'s recent bestseller *Life After Life*. He records it as a common experience of those who have revived after being considered dead that they meet a being of light on the other side. This being comes to help and guide and is identified according to the previous belief of the person concerned.

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THE MOTHER AND THE TRUE GOD

UNTIL the age of about twenty-five, all I knew was the God of Religions, God as men have created him, and I did not want him at any price. I denied his existence but with the certitude that if such a God did exist, I detested him.

When I was about twenty-five I discovered the inner God and at the same time I learned that the God described by most western religions is none other than the great adversary.

When I came to India, in 1914, and became acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's teaching, everything became very clear.

24 March 1970

ACTS OF CHARITY

From observing the way in which workmen, the needy and all the unfortunate act among themselves, I was forced to conclude that the poor are far more charitable, far more prepared to succour their fellow-sufferers than are those more favoured by fortune. There is not enough time to go into the details of all that I have seen, but I assure you that it is instructive. I can, in any case, assure you that if the rich, in proportion to what they have, gave as much as the poor, soon there would no longer be a single starving person in the world.

I could give you many examples of acts of charity which have led to the most disastrous results because they were performed without reflection, without discernment, without understanding, without insight.

THE SUPREME'S WILL

A TALK WITH THE MOTHER

Report of what the Mother said to Udar on 11-11-1971 to his best recollection

It started from a question Udar had put to Mother about what he should do about a certain matter.

MOTHER: Do nothing. Keep quiet. What has happened has happened. It is the Supreme's Will. Leave everything to the Supreme's Will. He has His own way of doing things.

UDAR: Yes, Mother. I do want to leave everything to the Supreme's Will. So I tell you these things so that You can inform Him. (*Laughs*)

MOTHER: Do not laugh—it is not a matter for laughing.

UDAR: Mother, I am not laughing in jest, but in joy. I am really happy to be able to leave everything to the Divine's Will.

MOTHER: Yes, I know that all kinds of things are happening. It seems as if all the evil, darkness and falsehood, because they know that their time is over, are trying to force themselves more and more on the world. Do you know it seems some people here are preparing to attack the Ashram?

UDAR: Yes, Mother, I know of it from a reliable source. I told you about it the other day.

MOTHER: Oh it is you who told me. Well, there you are. But it is all left to the Supreme's Will. If He wants that things here should be destroyed, He will have it done; if He wants them to continue, He will look after them. You know I have seen such wonderful and marvellous things. I felt at the time that it must be my imagination but later I found that they have come true. So I leave everything to His Will. As I say, if He wants to bring about the change by destruction, there will be destruction and we cannot prevent it.

UDAR: Mother, this is a point often raised in questions when we speak to people. Some say, "If it is the Divine's Will that there should be great disaster and destruction then what can we do to prevent it? So what is the use of telling us that we should do this or that or try to live according to the Truth? Nothing will change the Divine's Will." What should we answer to this?

MOTHER: The answer is very simple. You say you are speaking to them because it is the Supreme's Will that you do so, and not your own will. And they listen also because it is His Will and they must begin to change and live according to the truth because it is His Will. Everything happens according to His Will.

UDAR: Mother, this is a very good answer. Now I know what to say.

MOTHER: But you must be able to receive clearly the Supreme's Will. Generally, one is full of obscurity and obstacles and the order does not come through clearly. One must aspire to be clear so that His Will can be fully received. One should be in a

state of complete sincere receptivity (*Mother joins together and raises Her open hands as in a gesture of offering*). One should ask always to be so, to be sincerely and completely submissive to His Will and to obey that alone.

If He tells you to fight, then fight. If He tells you to be quiet, even if you receive a blow, then be quiet. Be completely open to receive His Will and follow only that and not any ideas of your own however good they may seem.

UDAR: Mother, I really want to be so. I sincerely aspire and pray that I may be so—clearly receptive to His Will. But, Mother, I know I am full of obscurities and obstacles and very often I am not sure if it is His Will or my own idea that acts in me; what to do then?

MOTHER: That is why I am here. That is why I am staying on. I am a transmitter of His Will. I do not say or do anything on my own. So that is why I am here.

UDAR: Yes, Mother, we are all indeed very very fortunate to have You to guide and direct us in His Will or else we would have fallen into serious error. And for myself, Mother, I am so privileged and fortunate indeed to be able to ask You personally about what is the truth and His Will whenever I am in doubt.

MOTHER: Yes, you can always ask me. I am here for that. You must be completely sincere and submissive (*Mother makes the gesture of offering again with Her hands*). You must offer yourself up entirely to His Will. Whatever He wants to happen will happen.

UDAR: Then, Mother, should I continue to tell you things as I hear of them—various happenings. Should I go on reporting this to You?

MOTHER: Yes, certainly! It is very necessary that I know as much as possible of all things that are happening. This helps in knowing His Will at each point. So you must continue to tell me things as you come to know of them.

OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of May 1978)

8

“THE STAR OF DAVID”, TAGORE’S VISIT TO THE ASHRAM, SOUP-DISTRIBUTION,
“PROSPERITY”-MEETINGS, YOGIC FULFILMENT

IN the last issue I announced that I would write what I had gathered, from the Mother herself and from some disciples who had been close to her, about Paul Richard’s role in her life. But I have changed my mind in view of the fact that for reasons of her own the Mother always wanted to keep his name in limbo. In passing, I shall touch only on two topics. First, I shall repeat the story which I have told elsewhere and which I promised in my last article to relate in connection with Richard and the subject of gambling. Then I shall correct a report which has been going round for years and years as authoritative about his first meeting with Sri Aurobindo in 1910.

The gambling story has for its scene the boat on which the Mother was coming to India from France. She told it to me with the introductory words: “I have gambled only once.” Richard played cards with his friends hour after hour and kept losing money all the time. His friends turned to the Mother, laughing: “Madame, why don’t you take his chair and bring him some luck?” The Mother answered: “I warn you that if I play I will take away all your money.” They guffawed. The Mother took the seat—and she did take away all their money! It was by the exercise of an occult power. She explained to me: “I could see all their cards as if they had been transparent.” So, knowing their hands, she played hers. It was a good lesson to them. They had to beg her to stop playing.

Four years before this amusing incident Richard had arrived in Pondicherry on a political mission. Through a person named Zin Naidu who happened to know Sri Aurobindo he got the chance to have interviews with Sri Aurobindo on two successive days for two or three hours each time. The tale is current in the Ashram that the Mother had asked Richard to find out from some Yogi in India the meaning of the symbol which goes by the designation “Star of David”, sometimes wrongly called “Seal of Solomon”. The latter is a pentagram often employed in magical practices and in India supposed to cure the scorpion-sting if not the snake-bite too. The former, now the official emblem of the State of Israel, is a six-pointed star made of two intersecting triangles with their apexes in opposite directions. With some significant additional design in the square that can be formed at the centre of the intersecting triangles, the Star of David is also Sri Aurobindo’s

spiritual symbol. When it is said to have been shown to Sri Aurobindo by Richard, Sri Aurobindo is reported to have given an interpretation which completely satisfied the Mother when Richard conveyed it to her on his return to Paris. Unfortunately this fascinating tale has turned out to be mythical.

When a new edition of A. B. Purani's biography of Sri Aurobindo was being prepared by the Archives Department under Jayantilal, the Mother was asked to consider the statement: "Mother had given Richard some questions which he had to get solved by some spiritual person in India." The Mother inscribed a twice-underlined "Omit" above the statement. In the margin she wrote: "Not correct. I never gave him any questions to be solved." She also commented on another sentence of Purani's. Purani had written: "One of the questions which the Mother had asked related to the symbolic character of the 'Lotus'." Above the words "which the Mother had asked", her comment ran: "Not I. Probably Richard himself."

The Mother's first visit to Pondicherry lasted about a year. Owing to circumstances created by the First World War she went back to France for a while and then sailed for Japan. In Japan she came into contact with Tagore. Tagore had the habit of meditating every morning at a fixed hour. The Mother once told us: "I could follow him in his meditation and know exactly what was happening. On the mind-level he used to get a touch of Sat-Chit-Ananda."

The Mother left Japan in 1920 and came to join Sri Aurobindo. Several years later—some time after I had settled here in December 1927—Tagore who was on a boat passing by Pondicherry stopped to pay a call on Sri Aurobindo. Nolini took him upstairs where at the other end of the meditation hall Sri Aurobindo was standing to receive him. As soon as Tagore entered and saw Sri Aurobindo he flung his cap away and ran towards him and made as if to embrace him. Sri Aurobindo extended his arms and caught Tagore's hands. Then they sat down for a talk. The Mother sat on a stool near Sri Aurobindo.

Nolini was also present at the meeting and that is how we came to know what happened there. Most of the talking was done by Tagore. He described what he had accomplished in Europe and asked Sri Aurobindo: "Why do you not go to Europe and spread your message?" Sri Aurobindo answered: "If Europe wants my message, it is bound to come here." Tagore seems to have been struck by Sri Aurobindo's lack of any desire to make himself famous or to preach his philosophy.

When the interview was over, Nolini brought Tagore down, followed by the Mother who halted near the bottom of the staircase. Later Tagore asked Nolini: "Who was that lady sitting near Sri Aurobindo? Is she his secretary?" Nolini answered: "She is the Mother." Tagore exclaimed: "Oh, Mirra Richard? I could not recognise her."

Just before Tagore's visit, the Mother had passed through a severe illness. It had come as a result of many months of the physico-spiritual practice of what we knew as Soup-distribution. Every evening, in what is now the Reception Room,

we used to sit in semi-darkness, meditating. The Mother would be in a chair in front of us. Champaklal would bring from upstairs a big cauldron of hot soup and place it on a stool in front of her. He stood by while she went into a trance. After some minutes, with her eyes still shut, she would spontaneously stretch out her arms, and her palms were poised over the cauldron. She was transmitting the power of Sri Aurobindo into the soup. After a while her eyes opened and she withdrew her hands. Then the distribution started. Each of us went to her, bent down on our knees and gave her our enamel cup. Then with a ladle she poured the soup from the cauldron into our cups. Before handing each cup back she would again withdraw inward with eyes half shut and take a sip. Sometimes after the sip she was lost once more in a trance and we had to wait until she came out of it. When the time was rather long she gave a faint apologetic smile. The occult truth behind the ceremony was that she was putting something of her own spiritualised subtle-physical substance into the soup in our cups. This was naturally a strain on her which could be compensated only if something in our being went out to her in return. Unfortunately the yogic traffic was often one-way. The consequence was a severe strain on the Mother's body. This strain was the real cause of her illness. Sri Aurobindo is reported to have said under his breath: "Brutes!"

The Mother suffered for quite a time. At one point she called the best physician in the town, Dr. Amaladas, not to prescribe any medicine but to consider the outer symptoms and diagnose where the damage had resulted. His diagnosis was meant to help the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to focus their curative spiritual force. Just before Tagore's arrival, the Mother had recovered. But she had become very emaciated. That was why Tagore could not recognise her.

The soup-distribution was never resumed. But, of course, the Mother's giving of her energies to us went on in different ways, and many of the physical troubles she later had were due to the inner road-blocks in the course of her disciples' sadhana.

With the stoppage of the soup-distribution there came an end also to the most interesting meetings she used to have with a few of us in the "Prosperity"-room above the soup-hall. Among other activities, some talks were given there by the Mother. I would take them down in shortened longhand, and reconstruct them afterwards. They have appeared, with the Mother's approval, in book-form as *Words of the Mother*, Third Series. The Mother once remarked to me that something of her living manner had come into the reports.

As far as I remember, the number of people she had decided to admit into those pre-soup sessions was 24. To each of us she gave a number. Number 1 was for René, the Mohammedan boy, originally named Yakub, who belonged to an aristocratic family from Hyderabad. Many members of it had become Ashramites. They were the first Mohammedans to join the Ashram, just as Lalita and I were the first Parsis. Both of us were included in the "Prosperity"-group. Her number was 2 and mine 15. I believe number 24 was that of Doraiswamy, the well-known

advocate of Madras who used to come to the Ashram every week-end and was extremely devoted to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

An interesting bit of occult news I heard in the early days of my stay here when I was very chummy with the central group of the sadhakas—Nolini, Amrita, Purani, Anilbaran, Champaklal, Dyuman, Rajangam, Pavitra—was that, when in a past life of theirs Sri Aurobindo had been Leonardo da Vinci and the Mother Mona Lisa, Doraiswamy had been Francis I, King of France (1494-1547).

Francis I was renowned for his love of art and chivalry, he was a patron of Renaissance learning and founded the Collège de France. It was in his arms that Leonardo died.

It was one of the impressions of Sri Aurobindo that in a past life I myself had been in Renaissance Italy. So perhaps I had some connection not only with Leonardo and Mona Lisa but also, through the former, with Francis I. That may explain why I was very friendly with Doraiswamy. We were also psychologically similar in one respect. The Mother said that in the "Prosperity"-group he and I were the two persons who were perhaps most inclined to feel helpless by ourselves and to call inwardly for her aid scores of times each day. I may here remark the curious fact that the digits of Doraiswamy's number—24—and those of mine—15—sum up equally to 6, the number which means, according to the Mother, "New Creation", a phenomenon of which both of us possibly felt the greatest need at every hour of our lives.

At present not all the members of the "Prosperity"-group survive in the Ashram. Some died and some withdrew from the Mother's side, though it is certain that the Mother's inner enfoldment of her children could never cease. Yes, she has specifically declared that she would never abandon anybody. This, however, does not mean that she would go all out to get a person back. Her action was always guided by spiritual insight into each particular case. I well remember once saying to her about a certain sadhaka: "I am quite sure that if you gave the least sign he would come back to you." The Mother answered in effect: "I know he will come back if I call him. But the problem he faced in himself in the past will not be solved. It was a crisis of such a kind that it will recur in the future—unless his soul makes a free choice to come back to our fold. In all such critical and basic situations the decision must spontaneously come from the soul. I have to wait, even for lives, for the decisive turn to occur. Only with such a turn the true evolution takes place."

When the choice did not have a basic character, the Mother has acted differently. There was an old couple from France who after a year or so of stay in the Ashram became misguided enough to leave the Ashram and stay outside in Pondicherry in association with some friends. I came to know that they were badly disillusioned in their hopes of outside success. Two or three times I saw them standing opposite the Ashram and looking wistfully at it. I never had any special inclination towards them and I had also heard that they had said some unpleasant things about me to some mutual friends, but I saw that there was a need of the inner being and, putting

aside personal dislike, I spoke to the Mother about them. I told her that if she could somehow let them know they were still welcome they would run back to her. I do not know what exactly she did but they were soon Ashram-members again. The old man died in the Ashram. His wife, after a while, went back to France because she liked to be buried in French soil. The old man's death was memorable in the sense that it was the first death in the Ashram's history.

However, we looked upon it as an exception and not as the beginning of a rule. I well remember the time when it was taken for granted that Sri Aurobindo would complete the Integral Yoga by a transformation of his very body so that, just as there would be no ignorance or obscurity in the mind and no impurity and incapacity in the vital being, the body would acquire a divine nature and be free from disease, aging and death. What he as well as the Mother would achieve was intended to be repeated in their disciples. Not that one would be eternally bound to one physical frame: one could leave the body if one wanted but one would not be obliged to do so by any defect in it, any subjection to the so-called "laws of physical nature" which have obtained up till now. The death of the old Frenchman was not taken to contradict this expectation. It was important as a fact simply because no member of the Ashram had died but it had no far-reaching significance since he was a man of advanced age who had joined the Integral Yoga very late in life: no one could argue that the Yoga could suddenly put time in reverse and perpetuate a body naturally gone far on the way to a breakdown.

Incidentally, another condition for realising a transformed body comes out in a talk recorded by Nirodbaran between Sri Aurobindo and his attendants. Sri Aurobindo says there: "Amal once asked the Mother if he would realise the Divine. The Mother replied that he would unless he did something idiotic to cut short his life. And that is exactly what he very nearly did!" The reference is to my taking, under a wrong impression, a huge quantity of a powerful drug prescribed by a doctor friend during a visit of mine to Bombay. I took forty-eight times the normal dose and was about to die. Nirod, after meeting me on 21 March 1940 in Pondicherry, informed Sri Aurobindo of my conviction that I had been saved by a special divine intervention. Sri Aurobindo emphatically said: "Yes."

The same point is made in a letter by him on 1 August 1938 when I wrote from Bombay after my accident that I was all agog to know whether I should pack up for Pondicherry and come away with my heart still below normal by medical standards. Sri Aurobindo replied: "You must on no account return here before your heart has recovered. No doubt, death must not be feared, but neither should death or permanent ill-health be invited. Here, especially now when all the competent doctors have gone away or been sent to a distance from Pondicherry, there would be no proper facilities for the treatment you still need, while you have them all there. You should remember the Mother's warning to you when she said that you would have your realisation in this life provided you did not do something silly so as to shorten your life. That 'something silly' you tried your best to do when

you swallowed with a cheerful liberality a poison-medicine without taking the least care to ascertain what was the maximum dose. You have escaped by a sort of miracle, but with a shaken heart. To risk making that shaky condition of the heart a permanent disability of the body rendering it incapable of resisting any severe physical attack or shock in the future, would be another 'something silly' of the same quality. So it's on no account to be done."

It took me almost ten years to regain half my vigour, which is all that has been possible. But, considering the old superabundance, it was enough for the Mother to base herself on it for the continuation of her work towards the goal she had set for each of her disciples. The nature of the goal is spotlighted by a short talk I had with her in the very early years of my Ashram-stay. I was despondent about myself and said: "I can see that I am not fit for this Yoga and will never be able to do it properly." The Mother calmly answered: "Do you think you know more about yourself than I do? I am not at all in doubt." Then I suggested: "Well, I may be able to do something in some other life, some future rebirth." The Mother's response was clear-cut: "When I speak of the fulfilment of our Yoga, I don't think of other lives. I refer only to the present one." During this talk there was no question of the body being kept intact for the realisation: the question was essentially of having the will to carry on and never yielding to dejection. This question, of course, held good at all times, as the Mother more than once reminded me in later years. But in the wake of my accident the question of the physical state kept recurring, and she took always a positive attitude. Even as late as 1966 or thereabouts she repeated that if I took reasonable care of my body I would "participate in the realisation of the New World". But we must remember that this was said before she retired from all of us and went through the terrible crisis of May-to-November 1973. With her own withdrawal from embodiment, who can usher within calculable time the New World in the realisation of which one may aspire to participate?

As the Mother established the Supramental Light, Consciousness and Force on a universal scale in the earth's subtle-physical layer in 1956, the evolution of the New World in the future by the Supermind's entrance into the gross-material is certain. But evolution is a slow, zigzag, back-and-forth, up-and-down process, and human nature is difficult to change without the Incarnate Divine's pioneering sadhana concretely proceeding amidst us and gathering us up into its own movement with its constant Grace. Spiritual evolution and spiritual revolution were a single prospect when the Mother was still present in her body. In my view, it can be the same only when she takes birth once more or in any other way reappears on earth.

However, if the Mother has changed her plans we should trust that she knows best what is Sri Aurobindo's ever-wise will for the world. We must go on preparing the field for their Yoga's fulfilment in the time to come. Hence the continued importance of the Ashram's role as a luminous rallying-point of the world's aspiration. Hence also the significance of the Auroville-experiment in international collective living, with the same fundamental goal as the Ashram, even though imme-

mediate self-consecration to Yoga is not insisted upon in so integral a way and more concessions are made to the common difficulties of human nature.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

GRACE

"I HAVE not trod on thorns: do I deserve
 The paradise
 Of Thy cool presence? I can plead no rough
 Austere emprise.
 I never won a combat with life's ill,
 Nor luxury spurned:
 Only for sweeter joy when joy was mine
 This heart has yearned.
 Its single grief was a love that nought so rich
 On earth could see
 As what it longed for."... "Hence, dear child, am I
 Revealed to thee!
 Easy to win my grace if man but knew—
 No blood of pain
 Do I extort, no wrench of spirit or flesh,
 And strife is vain.
 One sole demand I lay upon each life—
 To realise
 That earth can never calm the deep heart's call
 Through love-lit eyes!"

20-8-36

K. D. SETHNA

Sri Aurobindo's Comment

It is quite good as poetry. But I feel that in matter of fact things are not so comfortably easy as that!

HOW I WAS DRAWN TOWARDS SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

THE WORKING OF THEIR GRACE

(Continued from the issue of May 1978)

IN 1953 I went to Pondicherry with my family. We reached Pondicherry on the 8th May. Most probably it was the Blessings Day. We went to the meditation hall for the Mother's blessings. When my wife's turn came she placed her head in the Mother's lap. The Mother put Her hand on my wife's head and when my wife turned to go the Mother's eyes followed her intently till she disappeared round the corner of M. P. Pandit's room.

The 13th May was my wife's birthday. We all were allowed into the Mother's room. My wife bowed down. The Mother blessed her and gave her a bunch of flowers. Then my son aged 6 stood before the Mother and prostrated himself. The Mother laughed and laughed. It was so charming. Then my eldest daughter stood before the Mother. When the Mother saw her eyes, She exclaimed "Such beautiful eyes!" In the evening also at the Playground we were allowed into the Mother's room. There when my wife was returning after paying her respects to the Mother, her sari got entangled with the knob of the door. The Mother saw it and at once got the sari free from the knob and switched on the light.

How considerate the Mother was!

In 1955 I revisited Pondicherry. This time I put two questions to the Mother.

(1) Whether we can celebrate Ramnavmi, Janmasthmi and the birthdays of Buddha and Christ by placing the photo of the person concerned before those of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and offering flowers to him.

(2) Whether we can invite a person not interested in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga to our centre and hear his discourse.

On the day of my departure, while I was on my way to the Ashram in the evening for darshan of the Samadhi, one X met me. He said, "N is looking for you." I met N and asked, "What is the matter?" He said, "Your two questions. Mother says that She has no objection." On hearing this I blurted out, "Mother has no objection even if we die, what I want to know is whether these things can be done." He said, "Personally I believe that these things should not be done."

I had met Nolini Kanta and requested him that as I was going I wanted the Mother's blessings. He told me to come to the Playground at 6 p.m. I went there at 5.45. One K was with me. We met Nolini Kanta. At 6 the Mother came out of Her room. Nolinida took us to the Mother and introduced me to Her. "Vallabh Sheth from Mehsana." I offered flowers to the Mother. She said, "Going?" I bent down and put my head on Her feet. She placed Her hand on my head. I was

in front of the Mother, Nolinida on my left and K on my right. Even today I can visualise the scene. The Mother gave me a smile and then went away.

In December 1957 I went to Pondicherry with my family. The 29th December was my birthday. I went to M. P. Pandit on the 28th and requested him to arrange for birthday blessings from the Mother. He asked, "What will you like to have from the Mother?" I said, "A photo and a book of Her choice." He said, "That is not possible, time is short." I had nothing to say. In the noon of the 28th I went to the Ashram building. A note from M. P. Pandit was awaiting me. It said, "The Mother will give you a book of Her choice. The photo also is selected." Naturally I was filled with joy.

The morning of the 29th came. We all went into the Mother's room for blessings. I offered flowers to Her and put my head on Her feet. She put Her hand on my head and then gave me flowers along with the book and photograph of Her choice. I gave the flowers, the book and the photograph to my wife. Then I told the Mother that I wanted to say a prayer. She answered, "Yes!" With folded hands and bended knees I began my prayer. Hardly had I spoken ten to fifteen words when the Mother jerked Her head a little and brought Her eyes on a level with my eyes and looked intensely into them. My soul lay bare to Her gaze. Tears of joy welled up. The Mother continued to look into my eyes till the end of the prayer. I repeated the last sentence of the prayer thrice. When I repeated the second and third time she said, "Yes." The scene is imprinted in memory forever.

In the evening we were allowed into the Mother's room at the Playground. The day was unique in this respect that I was the only person to receive birthday blessings. After entering the room I first of all offered a dish of flowers to the Mother. Before I bent down to put my head on Her feet, the Mother put a question and my soul answered. I put my head in the Mother's lap. When I raised it, She gave me a glorious smile. My soul realised what Sri Aurobindo had said in His book *The Mother*. While describing the form of Mahalakshmi He wrote:

"... grace and charm and tenderness flow out from her like light from the sun and wherever she fixes her wonderful gaze or lets fall the loveliness of her smile, the soul is seized and made captive and plunged into the depths of an unfathomable bliss."

The Mother's smile cannot be described. One is reminded of Dante's lines:

Quel ch'ella par quando un poco sorride,
Non sipo dicer né tenere a manté,
Si è novo miracolo e gentile.

What she appears when she smiles a little,
Cannot be spoken of, neither can the mind lay hold on it,
It is so sweet and strange and sublime a miracle.

Then the Mother asked me by signs to spread my handkerchief on Her lap. I did so. She put some toffees in the spread handkerchief. After remaining silent for some time She added some more toffees and then gave the handkerchief to me with a smile. The whole scene is before my eyes even today.

In May 1958 I went again to Pondicherry with my family. My wife was suffering from profuse bleeding. She had become very weak. She walked with difficulty. On the day we reached Pondicherry I saw M. P. Pandit and told him that we would like to pay our respects to the Mother the same day. He asked me to come to the Playground in the evening. We went there and we entered the Mother's room. Up till then I had no talk with my wife. The children first bowed down before the Mother. At this time my wife caught hold of my hand and asked me to tell the Mother about her bleeding and pray for cure. Naturally the Mother looked at me, with questioning eyes. I said, "She is suffering from profuse bleeding and she prays that she be cured." On hearing this the Mother cast a glance on my wife from head to foot. Incredible as it may seem, the bleeding stopped that moment.

The 13th May was my wife's birthday. We all were allowed into the Mother's room. We received Her blessings. On that day I prayed to the Mother for a message in writing.

Some days later Nolinida met me in the Playground and asked me, "How many days are you staying here?" I was surprised at the question. I asked him, "Any wrong movement on our part?" He said, "No, no, you have asked for a message from the Mother. Mother wants to know how many days you will be here." I replied, "Fifteen days or so." Days passed and I did not receive the message, so I thought that the Mother did not think it fit to give me a message. On the 2nd June at about 9 p.m. we were going to our room. We saw the Mother's car coming from the Playground. So we came back and stood near the gate. The Mother came and when She passed by me, She halted for a fraction of a second near me, Her eyes saying, "You will get your message tomorrow." And I got the message on the 3rd June 1958.

In December 1958, I alone went to Pondicherry. At that time the Mother was not coming out or seeing anyone due to ill-health. I was informed that She would be coming out on the 25th December. So I had gone to Pondicherry as my birthday fell on the 29th December. But the expectation did not come true. The Mother did not come out. So I was disappointed and irritated. I met M. P. Pandit near the Samadhi and blurted out, "What is the use of coming over more than 1400 miles if we can't have the darshan of the Mother?" He said, "Her health is our first concern. My brother has come for the first time travelling more than 2000 miles, but I have not prayed to the Mother to give him darshan." I could say nothing. I did not know at that time that my prayer was heard. On the next day, I was standing by the Samadhi at about 1.30 p.m., just opposite the window on the 1st floor. At that time the Mother appeared there and stood there for a mi-

nute or two and I had Her darshan.

In May 1959 I went to Pondicherry with my family. My two daughters were in the Ashram. They were to accompany us back to our place. We all were allowed into the Mother's room. The Mother embraced my daughters more than once. It was a sight to see. The Divine embracing the human. Of course we all received blessings of the Mother.

In 1960 one G came to my place with his friend. I thought G must have come for some business. So I asked, "What is the matter?" G placed in my hand a letter. The letter was from the secretary of the Ashram informing G that the Mother was sending blessings to him and he should see me for information about the Ashram. It was satisfying to know that the Ashram authorities considered me a fit person to give information.

There was a gap of ten years and I went to Pondicherry in 1969 with my family. The 13th May was my wife's birthday and we were allowed into the Mother's room. The moment I entered it I became deaf and went blind *i.e.*, I had no ears or eyes for anything else. I saw only the Mother's eyes. Even Her body was not visible. I learnt afterwards that my daughter had a talk with the Mother and that my daughter's son aged 3 had offered of his own accord three paise to the Mother, saying "Mataji, take this." He had offered all he had. I learnt that the Mother had accepted the child's offering and placed it in a different dish. While we were leaving the Mother's room I came back from the door and prostrated myself before Her. She looked at me with questioning eyes and my soul answered. She smiled and there was a look of approval in Her eyes.

In July 1972 I determined to go to Pondicherry. The moment I resolved, Hostile Forces began their attack. They sent me various kinds of suggestions. "You can't go. You will die, it is no use going," etc. But this time I had resolved for good that, come what might, I was going to Pondicherry for the Mother's darshan.

My wife and I went to my son's place on the 19th December. We were to start for Pondicherry on the 21st December. In the evening of the 20th I was brushing my teeth. All of a sudden, I leaned on my left. My wife and son inquired what the matter was. I could not reply. They caught hold of me and placed me on the bed. After some forty-five minutes I was able to speak. We started on the morning of the 21st for Bombay. We reached Bombay at about 3 p.m. My younger brother had come to receive us. We alighted and boarded a local train. As the place of our destination came near, my brother told me, "Come near the door." I got up and moved towards the door. During this short period a pickpocket relieved me of my wallet. With it went all the money I had taken for my expenses of the trip to Pondicherry. When I became aware of the theft, I laughed. The Mother's grace acted and I did not mind the theft. My poise was not disturbed. We started for Pondicherry on the 24th December from Bombay and reached it on the 26th.

The 29th December was my birthday. We went into the Mother's room.

When my turn came I put my head in the Mother's lap. She looked at me and put a question to my soul. My soul answered. She smiled. At this time Champaklalbai said to the Mother, "He wants special blessings for progress in sadhana." On hearing this the Mother went into a trance for some minutes, then stretched out Her left hand for a blessing packet. Champaklalbai gave the packet into Her hand. She gave it to me with a smile and put Her hand on my head. I was overjoyed.

In 1973, on the 17th November, I went to bed at 9 p.m. as is usual with me. In the night I heard some words. I do not remember them all, I remember only the following:

"The Consciousness was centralized in the body. Now decentralized universal working." I could not understand the meaning then. In the morning of the 18th one D came at about 9 a.m. and told me, "The radio has announced that the Mother withdrew from her body yesterday at 7.25 p.m." Then I understood the meaning of the words that I had heard in the night.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother can make the dumb to talk, the blind to see and the lame to stride over the hills.

(Concluded)

VALLABH SHETH

SHE LEADS

If knowledge is sometimes truly dangerous,
 Surely half-knowledge is always disastrous.
 Until you know the undivided whole
 Time keeps you bound to its merciless wheel.
 Yes, knowledge is a forest dark and wild,
 A thousand baffling ways crisscross the field.
 But of what use are these dim speculative woods?
 A daughter of Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, She leads,
 Through the troubled seas of ignorance, beyond death,
 And through knowledge to the undying home of Truth.
 No calamity can ever overtake Her child.
 O Soul! Her will is your fate, Her grace your shield.

VENKATARANGA

A REVELATORY EXPERIENCE

This article, containing an extract from a letter written to Nata by an Italian devotee of Sri Aurobindo, first appeared in Domani, an Ashram Italian publication, in 1973 and is translated into English by Maggi Lidchi and Michael Zelnick.

THE author of the letter which we present below is an Italian devotee of Sri Aurobindo who resides in Trieste. In an earlier part of the letter, which limitations of space oblige us to omit, he has described his childhood and youth in the chaos that was Italian society between the first and second world wars. An experience during his childhood had partially awakened the author to an inner life, but the main effect of this, given the hostile environment in which he lived and the failure of any decisive spiritual experiences to follow upon the initial one, had been to cut him off so completely from the "normal" life around him, that he, at times, doubted his own sanity. Shortly before the point at which we take up the narrative, the author had a series of deeply symbolic dreams through which, though somewhat vague, love reaffirmed for him the reality of the inner life and the truth of his spiritual destiny. He writes:

"These dreams soothed me even in the midst of the growing demands of my inner being and in the frustrations and the denials of the external world: the demand for a greater truth than that of the half-truths and the current falsehood and for a higher and truer and purer life. I did not then know that this is the only indispensable thing, and that when this happens divine grace intervenes whether one believes in it or not. I learnt this later through Sri Aurobindo, of whom I did not know at all at the time. I did not even know his name.

"I learnt it later, but this is what saved me then. It saved me at a high cost because the Fascist society demanded of free spirits an even higher price. And it was precisely when I was paying this price that the grace intervened. Or rather, it erupted suddenly, unforeseen and uninvoked and no longer through dreams this time nor in the solitude and silence of my study, but on a public road in the midst of the turmoil of the city's traffic, while, as on every morning, I was headed for my place of work, a teller's window, which was then my trial and my torture.

"It was a clear December morning, a few weeks before Christmas, and I was striding along the canal which traverses the central zone of my city, distractedly looking at the pushcarts laden with food and haberdashery and festooned with Christmas decorations, which came towards me from the Piazza Ponte Rosso. But the images slipped off my retina. The thoughts which passed through my mind in that moment were not at all elevated, not even interesting, but banal and pointless: the usual nonsensical chatter of the inner monologue, that meaningless rehashing which mechanically moves the lips of so many poor wretches who pass beside us on the street carrying their own cross. And mine was at the time heavier than ever: poor health, strained means, little faith, debts, bitterness and endless mortifications. The hard and squalid reality of the post-war period had submerged the ideals which had sustained me until then. I had just left the party that I had

fought with during the Resistance and I found myself alone and lost in a blind alley with a perennial sense of loneliness at the bottom of my heart, involved in bankdrafts and a coronary condition. As a result my situation at the bank was jeopardised, my efficiency visibly diminished and I felt myself slipping slowly and inexorably towards the bottom. I felt the trap closing.

“While I passed in front of the Church of San Spiridione which faces the canal, someone or something tugged me lightly from behind and it was as though an unknown hand of sweetness had knocked on a door which existed somewhere unknown to me. Breathless with amazement I spun around and looked about, there was no one. I slackened my pace, seeking in vain to collect myself. I turned and my gaze rose above the dome of San Antonio Nuovo which had been behind me. I searched the sky. I turned to the pushcarts which were coming towards me and it was as though I was seeing for the first time, seeing them through a new sense which revealed in them a stupendous and previously unsuspected luminosity. Eventually this luminosity expanded to include the people, the surrounding houses, the boats along the canal, all things near and far: everywhere the same light, more resplendent than the sun, the same splendour, the marvel. That glory—while it lasted, and it was there at length—did not at all diminish my mental lucidity, on the contrary my faculties were heightened to a degree I had never before experienced, so that I can say that in my ecstasy, if it can so be called and I don’t think I’m wrong here, I felt splendidly awake and conscious. I had finally emerged.

“But that is not all. My description has omitted the most important note which began to vibrate when, joyful and profoundly moved, I observed the people around the gaily festooned pushcarts. I was pervaded by a new sense of warmth which spread from the heart to the rest of my body. At a certain moment the flames flared up and blazed in the sky of my soul like the sun at midday. I had never known such love: it was total love, absolute and all-embracing, which knew no limits of any kind. It was certainly in such a moment that Schiller conceived the Hymn to Joy, that Beethoven sang in the Ninth Symphony where ‘multitudes embrace’.

“I felt for these people a melting of the heart which before I would have considered impossible and absurd. Until then I had believed that men were in most cases veritable corpses, believing themselves to be alive, and that the world, theatre of this death which we call life, was in its turn blind, soulless. But now here was this world in its true light, no longer empty, but brimming with glory even in this palpitating multitude, which was, after all, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, life of my life, akin to me in the most absolute and sacred sense of the word. I knew it with an intensity that brought tears to my eyes.

“This was the first part of my marvel, now comes the second part. While I was wiping the tears from my eyes there surged up from the depths of my being, first slowly, then more rapidly and overwhelmingly, what was for me a completely new sentiment, a feeling of existing truly, totally, absolutely. Nothing can express the uniqueness, the splendour, the sovereign greatness of that realisation. In that mo-

ment the highest sense of affirmation, 'I am', was revealed to me. We so often use it casually, as if it were the most natural thing in the world but now this phrase acquired a new significance which it had never had in the past, not even in the rare moments in which I thought I had attained the highest peaks of the spirit. It was as though the person with whom I had identified until then, the person who carried my name, used my voice, my brain, my heart, had been nothing but a shadow, a reflected image of myself, became myself. The true one was being discovered only now. It had come forward in the section of street between the Church of San Spiridione and the Piazza Porte Rosso. Someone had knocked gently on my door and like a prison door it had opened, showing me the height and the width and the depth of the world and of myself. I was vaguely aware that with this epiphany there began a new and wondrous stage of my life which I was later to compare with a new birth. I had had some presentiment of it in the past in critical moments, both of childhood and adulthood, especially when during the war, between one bombardment and the next, I had glimpsed the light of Rilke and of Beethoven, but these calls had come from a remote distance and disappeared rapidly in the grey squalor of everyday life. Here now was my paradise become prodigiously present and real. How lame was everything that I had heard people say of it up until then and if all that I had suffered was the price that had to be paid to cross the threshold, experiencing the abysses of the blackest despair, it was well worth it.

"One thing is certain: this splendour, this Realm, this Presence, that announced itself with a discreet knocking on my door, accompanied me while I passed wondrously happy among the pushcarts and all along the Via Genova to the bank. Nor did it abandon me even at my teller's window while I handled banknotes, cheques and drafts. Indeed, on that day, instead of being diminished, my professional efficiency improved.

"If this marvel were not my own experience I would say that it was a beautiful dream, an incredible fairy-tale. Sometimes it does not seem true that it happened to me and when I speak of it, which I rarely do and only when I think it worthwhile, I do so with the vague fear of profaning and of marring it with my words through excess no less than inadequacy.

"And yet this did not take place in some Tibetan monastery, or on Mt. Athos, or even on the banks of the river Jordan, but in the turmoil and bustle of a modern city, two steps from the port, the market, the Chamber of Commerce and the department stores, right in the heart, or rather stomach, of the consumer society. The realm of God, *Satchitananda*¹, in the stomach is a very astonishing thing. And this continued to shine resplendently, unperturbed and sublime in its pristine clarity in the following days, until Christmas, wherever I was, whether at my teller's window, at home, or in public places. It faded at Christmas, leaving in the sky of my soul a luminous trace of unforgettable nostalgia and so much joy that it has never been spent and has been able to resist all difficulties."

¹ Existence-Consciousness-Bliss

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of May 1978)

CHAPTER IV

SADHANA OF THE BODY

(3)

YOGA is a life-long process. Let us continue our study further. The shaking of the body and other annoying things referred to earlier indicated that the body had not the capacity to hold even "the limited life-energy that is generated in it".¹ It has to be trained in such a way that "it becomes increasingly capable of holding whatever energy is brought to bear upon it—and this increase is so enormous as to seem illimitable".²

The two states are poles³ apart. The pilgrim of the stars must travel from one hemisphere to the other to reach the goal of life.

I wavered long. While pursuing the solitary path of self-seeking I chanced upon these two observations in *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

One of the first objects of Pranayama is to "purify the nervous system".⁴ It helps to "maintain a perfect health and soundness of the body".⁵

I wanted to see whether this prescription would hold good in my case and suit my temperament. Learning some rudimentaries from Pandit Satwalekar who had a delightful stay in the Ashram for a few days in 1960, I started Pranayama. "Where is the harm in taking it as a first aid, since I have been a patient of mental tension?" thought I. It is necessary to point out here that my aim and object are not to expound the ideal and ideas set before our eyes or what should be done but the procedure I followed for my inner development.

The control of breath is closely linked with thought-control. It is said breath-control enables us to receive the cosmic forces. It is a great help in self-mastery. This also roused my interest in it a little. But suspension of breath caused pain in the lungs and it took a long time to get into the habit of the stipulated exhalation; still I did not leave the attempt till I succeeded. The progress was slow like that of a snail climbing a wall.

In order to regulate the timing of exhalation and inhalation I accustomd myself to the mental repetition of Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri mantra. In the original Gayatri⁶ Savitri is the solar god. In the new Gayatri Sri Aurobindo enthrones the

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 493. ² *Ibid.*, p. 494.

³ In another context the Mother uses the words "...like going on an exploration to the North pole". (Cent. Vol. v, p. 105)

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 496 ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

⁶ The Gayatri mantra originated from Vishwamitra. It first appeared in the Rig Veda (III, 62,10).

Mother as the Devata of the mantra—which is thus rendered into English by him:

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

However I tried, I failed to retain in action what was gained in meditation. So should I not give myself wholly to acquiring some internal qualities first? That was the problem that loomed large before my eyes. Meditation¹ brought a more easy flow of the Grace. This finds confirmation in the Mother’s words:

“To open the door whenever one wants is one of the earliest things that you are taught to do in Yoga. It is the result of meditation or concentration or aspiration.”²

It was for this reason that I chose the path of meditation without neglecting the work assigned to me. The Integral Yoga advocates the cultivation of all the three traditional paths—“the path of knowledge, the path of love and the path of work and something else added but everybody cannot do everything at the same time and there are people who need to be exclusive and to choose one of the three paths first in order to be able to combine them all later”.³ This was exactly my own approach.

Even to realise one of the three processes it requires tremendous effort and only a rare few are crowned with success. I stood condemned before my own eyes for relying too much on personal effort. True, to unlock the hidden doors of the Integral Yoga, the golden key is surrender: Give the reins of your life into His Hands, look to Him for everything and rest assured He will do all that is needed.

So simple yet so difficult to put in practice! Why? I shall dilate on the point later on.

Under the cover of surrender, I took care not to fall an easy victim to *tamas*. Pretending the attitude of surrender, the vital being would shrink from labour and struggle. If no effort is made one must be prepared to remain stuck where one is, the opposing forces are ever ready to “throw a rope at every step”. The number of *Pandavas* representing the higher elements in us is only five. The *Kauravas* are a hundred. They never allowed the *Pandavas* to be at ease. Off and on the physical cried, “Halt!” It has been aptly compared with an ass which “is the symbol of the inertia and obstruction in the body”.⁴ The subject is discussed by Sri Aurobindo at several places:

“The main difficulty of the physical consciousness is that it is unable, before it is transformed, to maintain any tension of tapasya—it wants periods of assimilation, sinking back into ordinary consciousness to rest,—also there is a constant forgetfulness of what is done etc.”⁵

“... the physical consciousness with its inertia which resents and resists any

It is found in other Vedas too. It commands universal appeal.

¹ “The true consciousness comes at first in the waking state or in meditation” (*Letters*, IV Series, p. 288).

² *The Mother’s Cent.* Vol. V, p. 209.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴ *Practical Guide to Integral Yoga* (1955), p. 259.

⁵ *On Yoga*, Tome II, p. 534.

call to change and its indolence which does not like to take the trouble—it finds it more comfortable to go on its own way repeating always the same old movements and, at best, expecting everything to be done for it in some way at some time.”¹

These are a few of the reasons why our progress is slow. I had to pass through such dry days that I could hardly move even one inch forward within six months. Further, the higher Force that is active in us does not allow us to rise to higher and higher regions.² The physical must have a share in the gain.

Despite its thousand ills the human body is the only body which can be made the abode of God. No other body can hold Him.

Reinforced by these thoughts and ideas I continued my efforts. When down-hearted the following words served as a tonic:

“Even the very biggest things are always made up of little untiring efforts.”³

“Efforts are vibrations that enable us to enter in relation with the universal vibrations. It compels you to organise yourself, concentrate your energy some way.”⁴

“You must always make effort to do more than you did, try better than what you did the previous day or the previous minute.” (I adhered to this principle to the best of my capacity.)

“All that you do in Yoga must be done for the joy of doing it and not in view of the result you want to secure.”

In a nutshell: “You must make effort all the time.”⁴

The Mother has not a kind word for those who depreciate efforts and profess passive surrender:

“... to sit idly not doing anything, not making the shadow of an effort, the Divine will do everything for me. Well, if I need surrender it (the Grace) will give me that and so on. There are people like that many!”⁵

Sri Aurobindo is also not less emphatic on the point:

“If there is no personal effort, if the sadhak is too indolent and tamasic to act, why should the Grace act?”⁶

Often a sense of clash and confusion rises between the sphere of the personal effort and the principle of surrender. The Mother, in another context but in words applicable here, shows the distinction between the two:

“... counting only on oneself, having recourse to oneself alone means personal effort: you count only on yourself and you have the feeling that if you do not make an effort every minute, all will be lost. That is personal effort.

“Take an artist who has in one way or another got an inspiration and resolved to paint a picture. He knows very well that if he has no inspiration and is not sus-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

² Many times I have seen myself flying in the air. We do not attach much importance to it. Our seeking is terrestrial realisation.

³ *The Path of Perfection*, pp. 47, 48

⁴ *The Mother's Cent.* Vol. V, p. 65

⁵ *Bulletin*, February, 1978 p. 31.

⁶ *Practical Guide to Integral Yoga* (1955), p. 114.

tained by forces other than his own, he will do nothing much... if he had the passive attitude, well, he would place his palette, his colours, his brushes, his canvas and then sit down in front of it and say to the Divine: 'Now you are to paint.' But the Divine does not do things this way. The painter himself must take up everything and arrange everything, concentrate on his subject, find the forms, the colours that will express it and put the whole will for a more and more perfect execution. His will must be there all the time. But he has to keep the sense that he must be open to inspiration, he will not forget that in spite of all his knowledge of the technique if... he has no inspiration it will be one picture among a million others and it will not be very interesting.... That person has worked for the Divine, in communion with Him, but not in a passive way, not with a passive surrender; it is with an active surrender, a dynamic will. The result generally is something very good."¹ Thus the two are not contrary but complementary.

There are two other reasons why I kept on the practice of Pranayama. It lessened sleeplessness and greatly reduced mental tension. When I acquired the strength to clear the mind of all thoughts, the one thing that proved disturbing was the breathing. There was all quiet within but the moment my consciousness turned to breathing, it grew faster. Now, how to stop it I did not know.

There is a chapter in the *Ideal of the Karmayogin*: "The Strength of Stillness." Its essence is expressed by the title of the chapter. We read in it:

"It is a common experience of the Yogin that when thought ceases, breathing ceases, but when thought begins again the breath resumes its activity. But when the thought flows without the resumption of the inbreathing and outbreathing then the Prana is truly conquered."

But my case was just the opposite. I was never regular in the practice of Pranayama. The moment I felt pain in the lungs I stopped, remembering Sri Aurobindo's warning that those who plunge straight into Pranayama, picking up its process from someone, frequently meet with disastrous results. I never committed violence on myself. The period of assimilation is as important as that of acquisition, so I waited till there was an inner urge. I could not detect where the mistake was. Inholding of the breath caused suffocation. It took me four more years to unravel the mystery.

Formerly the mind would not allow the heart to concentrate. When the mind became all quiet it became easier to concentrate in the heart or both at a time. One day when both the head and heart were deeply concentrated I lost the sense of breathing for more than an hour. If it remained it must have been too feeble to catch my notice. Even when I was attentive, my breathing did not grow fast as before.

Inwardly concentrated, in a sitting position, eyes open, fully conscious, I remained looking at myself without any thought, apparently without any breathing.

Many a time it so happened that I retired for some rest and got plunged in

¹ The Mother's Centenary Volume V, pp. 47-8.

meditation. Once when fully absorbed I saw the luminous figure of the Mother between the eyebrows. After a time the figure of Shiva came floating to my vision.

About seeing Shiva Sri Aurobindo says:

“Shiva is the Power that pours the light but also scrutinises the sadhak to see whether he is ready for the further advance. When he lets him pass, then is the rush of new and higher experiences, the march and progress of divine forces, the Gods and their powers, the transformation in the nature into a higher consciousness.”

Since last year “the inholding of the breath”—its “cessation has become as easy and seems as natural as the constant taking in and throwing out which is its normal action”.^{1 2}

I consider this as the first major divine gift. It gave me a new lease of life. It had its effect on the very texture of the body, but this I attribute to the powerful action of the Mother’s Force in the body. This point demands a separate treatment. Now I realised the importance of the Mother’s saying:

“The body must not rule, it has to obey. Those who live in an inner peace, in an inner beauty, in a light, in a perfect goodwill have a look which is not quite the same as of persons who live on bad thoughts and in the lower part of the nature.” “It is a fact that the body expresses the inner states.”

In continuation of what I have said about immobility, let me add a few words more. In the same talk the Mother speaks about “inner immobility”, to which my mind did not give any importance at the time. I had a faint glimpse of this wonderful state on the much-awaited fateful day of the Mother’s Centenary celebration, February 21, 1978.

At the time everything in the Ashram wore a new look—all white. Even the flower pots placed for decoration round the Mother’s chair had a blooming transparent look. A large life-size portrait of the Mother that was installed to celebrate the occasion seemed to live and respond to devotion. It invoked the heart’s spontaneous adoration and admiration. The number of those who went to receive the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s blessings in their respective rooms had mounted to 8,600 — almost double the gathering of people in Sri Aurobindo’s Centenary year 1972. 8,200 had their hot meals in the Dining Room. A thatched roof was erected on two sides adjoining the main building of the Ashram. The folder that was distributed to each of us contained pieces from clothes that had been used by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. We took them as a gift of the day to be loved and preserved as a souvenir for life. In all 21,000 were kept ready.

The Darshan day scene was unprecedented. People had started pouring in from 2 a.m. One who had reached the Ashram at 3 a.m. could find entrance at 5 a.m. I overheard two people saying that they had been waiting for their turn from 4.30

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 496.

² “...the life ceases to be entirely dependent on the action of the physical organs and functionings, such as the heart-beats and the breathing.” *Ibid.*, p. 495.

1. but could not get in even at 11 a.m. An elderly lady remarked, "The Mother is testing our patience." A rich couple—the owner of an oil mill—spoke in a spirit of utter dedication, "I could easily find access through someone but I have not done so far to exert my influence. I stood at the end of the queue at 5 a.m. only to find entry at 9." Almost the same was the attitude of a man of 60 who had made his first visit to the Ashram at the age of 25.

On his seeking the Mother's advice whether he should marry or not, the Mother reflected for a moment and then said, "Your married life will not be happy."

Failing to lead a bachelor life for long he married but could never find joy in it. After a few years he was compelled to live alone, for there was a vast difference between him and his wife in outlook on life.

By sheer Grace of the Mother he secured a job of Rs. 600/- a month and never failed to offer 100/- at the feet of the Mother.

After six years he was allowed to join the Ashram but could not prolong his stay. At the time of his departure, when he sought the Mother's injunction on the problem, "What should I do?", she simply said, "Follow the dictates of your higher nature." To his wife the Mother advised, "Read at least one line of Sri Aurobindo daily."

As long as he was in the Ashram, almost daily he used to hear a voice at the moment the Mother appeared on the balcony in the morning. Once it said: "I am looking to every detail of your life." On another occasion: "Don't allow anything to resist my working in you."

With his eyes moistened with the tears of gratitude he spoke: "Though I have left the Ashram, I don't feel abandoned."

Do we not find his sentiment echoed in the Mother's own words:

"There is a special personal tie between you and me, between all who have been trained to Sri Aurobindo's and my teaching,—it is well understood, distance does not count here, you may be in France, you may be at the other end of the world or Pondicherry, the tie is always true and living...."

"And this tie between you and me is never cut. There are people who long ago left the Ashram in a state of revolt, and yet I keep myself informed of them. You are never abandoned."

In reply to my pointed question about the 21st, "What was the gift of the Day?" his heart spoke fervently: "This year, I hope, will reveal to me the finest hour of my life."

There is some similarity of thought-content between his feeling and mine. I had to pass through a very dry time before the advent of the Darshan day. It was my desire to sit on the pavement below Sri Aurobindo's room (facing the other's kitchen). Since I could not do this I sat on the opposite side of his room. No sooner had I closed my eyes than I felt the flow of the Force. Just when the meditation was to begin, the gate opened for a time, so people got up to take their chance. I too followed them, led not by the heart but by habit or the impulse

of the moment and hence at once felt an uneasiness within. So, instead of getting in and finishing darshan in haste, I took my seat at the cherished place.

The outpour of devotion even of those who had come from far and wide was unimaginable.

When the gate opened after the meditation, all got up and each tried to go ahead since their patience had come to a breaking-point. When it was past eleven, the mind turned to the thought of going back to my department and relieving the person who was on duty on my behalf. He should not miss his lunch for my sake. "To go to relieve him or have my Darshan" was the question in my mind when there shot forth a voice from deep within: "Go, if you have no patience, but return without fail." This made me conscious, the mind was seeking a pretext to relieve the body of pain. It served to kindle my will-power and I resolved not to stir till my turn came of itself. As soon as the concentration deepened I lost all sense of the surrounding, even of my body. The only thing of which I was aware was the severe pain in the hips which looked like two solid blocks made of darkness. In the place of the body there was a vacant space full of bluish white light. All around me people in hundreds had got up to go in as quickly as they could. I was the only person seated among them unmindful of what was going on. Some part of me wanted to see how far it was possible to maintain the inner poise in that disturbed situation. I remember to have heard an educated lady saying: "The mob is not maintaining discipline, hence it is difficult to form a queue. What can the volunteers do?" At 11 a.m. the man behind me did not like my remaining seated—perhaps the passage was blocked and he wished me to get up. He pulled me by my hand, which I neither resisted nor resented. Thus the inner serenity was reflected in the outer consciousness giving me a concrete experience of "inner immobility".

The moment I stepped into the courtyard of the Ashram, I found myself engulfed by a wave of peace. The atmosphere there was charged with something unspeakable. School girls, all clad in white sari,¹ were there as volunteers. This time people were not allowed to take long in the Darshan room since the half crowd (at 12 p.m.) had been counting minutes; still the Darshan went on till 3 p.m.

There was no rush within the Ashram. Those who had gone in, took their stand in a single line and moved in a very orderly way towards the wooden staircase, to have darshan of the Mother's room, then come down to the first-floor, pass through Sri Aurobindo's room and finally descend to the ground floor and make their exit from the gate facing the Meditation Hall. Thus the serenity of the Ashram was not in the least affected. A high officer of the Government of India held the view: "There was no difference in the atmosphere of the Ashram between the Mother's time and today."

In the opinion of another highly placed officer, "the atmosphere of the day

¹ Each of us including school-children had a dhoty or a sari bordered by the Mother's Symbol. The joy was shared by the Ashram employees as well. In addition to clothes of different types each of them received Rs. 10. All who were to participate in the Darshan had a beautiful napkin.

(21st February 1978) was more powerful than before." Himself posing the question "What was the state of affairs in the Ashram today?", he answered: "The Mother has put to test every child of hers, how far he or she was able to lead a balanced life. So long as the little one is not able to walk, his mother leads him by her finger but leaves him after a time to allow him to walk unaided."

Marking no hubbub of any kind anywhere—even in the Dining Room where not hundreds but thousands were enjoying Ashram food—a Professor exclaimed: "Marvellous! Incredible! Such simple yet such excellent food! One cannot pick out even a single stone-particle from the rice served! And what cleanliness is maintained! The discipline and dignity of the Ashram is never lowered. It is hard to find a condition like this anywhere else in India."

There appeared no sense of *lacuna* even among those who had come from a great distance. All seemed to be in a joyous mood. "What is your view about the celebration?" I tried to elicit a visitor's opinion. He replied: "Very successful—beyond expectation."

Before coming to a close one more experience is eminently worth narrating.

I had started midnight meditation and Pranayama on the advice of a homoeopath doctor: "When you don't feel sleepy, do Pranayama for a few minutes; at once you will feel drowsiness." He was right.

One night there were a lot of mosquitoes and there rose a burning sensation in my bare body. The old habit returned and I started killing them. Since the body had lost its poise, hands went on by themselves to do away with them and I could not check myself. There were other kinds of uneasiness, so I thought no concentration was possible that day. But I felt bewildered, since this view was not shared by my inner part. All of a sudden, within my tangible body I saw another body in the same sitting posture but as if made of white blue light. Was this my subtle body? It was not in the least affected. The lines quoted below perhaps have some bearing on my blissful state:

"We are oriented, we are going somewhere instead of nowhere. We are in quest of another country... The seeker must understand that he is being born to another life and that his new eyes, his new senses are not yet formed like those of a new-born child who alights in the world."

Such lofty experiences could never have been possible, had the sadhana not descended into the regions of the subconscious and inconscient. The most serious and interesting part of the story still remains to be told.

(To be continued)

PAIN

(21 September 1977)

PAIN, nursing, mothering, fostering Pain,
Goddess of bliss,
Deep-levelled and pure.
I met you staring into the vacancy of my heart
Where the void stung.
Cascade-tumbling or intense-shattering,
I have known you for long... thrice million years.
Yet you remain that unknown region
Where I walk guessing horizon-mystery,
Where the sward I tread is exquisite green with delight,
Where the sky is mute even unto itself
Azurely suffering.
And no bird flies, streaking it with blue,
And no bird sings, plumbing its depth with song.
Yet somewhere, everywhere,
The coming of twilight hints a deeper edge
And a glow is seen where the eyes look not,
A swift starlight or an uncaught beam of moon,
Or perhaps a psychic gold.
And they murmur to my ear
Strange voices, as if concentrated infinities
Breathing a human air were made articulate,
Whispering sea-melodies of wave and wind and sand,
And of ripples dancing in the sun,
Uncaptured his gold... and they sang of man.
"That pinnacle," they cried, "yearning, striving,
By pain compelled, struggles to rise
From the shadow of greater peaks into its own sunlight.
O unquenched thirst for eternity's summit-wine,
O blinded prophet-king, lift, lift your visionless eyes
Far above the Kanchanjunga of Himalayan thought,
There fix your mark." And they ceased.
A vast wave came, blotting the sky
Where no birds carolled, from where the twilight fled.
It broke, and came tumbling up the shores of Time
To where my castle stood, unerasd,
And erased it, melting its substance into the original shore,
Waste, wild with wind.

But I walk on, a green flame of aspiring delight,
Horizon unguessed,
Deeply in pain, or bliss,
Under a sky, where sings perhaps a bird
White with infinity,
A sunlight in my hand,
To where all ripples fail.

ARVIND HABBU

WAITING

SITTING on high summits of ecstasy
I'm waiting for an explosion—
my whole being flowing with streams of Life
to quench the thirst of Man.

RAJEN BHATT

THE IMAGE OF MAN

HIS FOUR FACETS

(Continued from the issue of May 1978)

Facet III: The Frustrated Man

WHEN the rebel yields place to the romantic, then as a natural after-effect he sinks down to frustration. It is not possible to sustain oneself upon the elevated point of heroism and beauty for long; one breaks into revolt in order to discover new inner frontiers or social horizons that are yet unmapped. Man's mind and life fall back upon themselves, his little conditioned environment or his own ego, his emotional or sensational and passionate natures. This leads to frustration.

We are employing the term in its widest connotation. Frustration is not only disappointment, neutralization, or balking, but a departure from the inner source of truth of being, the truth of one's soul.

The image of frustration that strikes us most significantly is in the modern novel. The modern novel itself has travelled a long way from the heroic myths of the *Mahabharata*, the Scandinavian folk-lore, the *Shah-nameh* or the fables *Kathasaritasagara*, or Aesop. Even the exotic tales of the *Decameron* of Boccaccio or *The Arabian Nights* are far cries from the modern novel.

The novels of the eighteenth-or nineteenth-century England or France have long been overpassed in their genre, character, approach and texture. The documents of Leon Uris or Arthur Hailey are worlds apart from *Tom Jones*, *Emma* or *David Copperfield*. Even a Maugham of today, or Greene, or Hemingway would fight shy from attempting anything on the colossal lines of Balzac or Tolstoy. Critics are deliberating whether the novel as a literary form is doomed to failure. Alberto Moravia expresses his opinion very trenchantly, "I cannot keep wondering whether the novel, the last in the series, is also doomed to the same fate." (*Man as an End*, p. 64) He is referring to the epic and the verse-drama as predecessors of the novel. Earlier, in the second decade of the present century, D. H. Lawrence opined, "Books are not life. They are tremulations of ether. But the novel as tremulation can make the whole man alive." (*Selected Literary Criticism*, p. 105)

This means that a span of thirty or forty years has gone to alter radically the attitude of the writer and the reader. The novel has "expressed, and in part shaped, the habits and feelings and language of the Western bourgeoisie from Richardson to Thomas Mann. In it, the dreams and nightmares of the mercantile ethics, of middle class privacy and monetary-sexual conflicts and delights of industrial society have their monument. With the decline of these ideals and habits into a phase of crisis and partial rout, the genre is losing much of its vital bearing." (*Language and Silence* by George Steiner, pp. 421-22)

The causes of this frustration are numerous. To cite only a few: the two wars, industrialization, the dizzy speed of modern existence with its entire accent on sex, the break-up of the family life and, the chief of all, the being losing trace of man's profounder truth of existence.

We are poised in fact in a middle term, between the dream-world of heroes and kings and the world of reality of man's veritable self. Till we can discover this the experiment will continue, the exploration will be pursued into newer forms, newer modes and channels to reach ultimately into a reality that remains elusive to the materialistic mentality of the present generation.

Our study will not deal with the characters or heroes but the authors themselves who are the creators of the characters, in whom they put something of themselves. Because, "the novel that contains characters belongs well and truly to the past, it was peculiar to the past, that of the apogee of the individual." (*Snapshots and Towards a New Novel* by Robbe-Grillet, p. 60)

Hence the study of the characters would be futile. "The crisis in character obviously corresponds to the concept of man. Modern man can be seen as a mere numerical entity within the most terrifying collectives that the human race has ever known." (*Man as an End*, by Alberto Moravia, pp. 70-1)

Further, "the novel seems unsure of its steps because it has lost what used to be its greatest support — the hero." (*Snapshots and Towards a New Novel* by Robbe-Grillet, pp. 60-1)

Therefore, we cannot continue our study in the way we did in our earlier essays. We have to alter our attitude and our method. Further, the novels are not distant and objective creations, but facets of the author's personality, his life, his hopes, his joys and frustrations — the sum-total of all he is, all he longs to be, and in the present case all his chaotic personality formed by the present-day world's unrest, failures and deep-rooted objective heart-breaks.

In this context, we must not be oblivious of the national characteristics as well. For example, the novels of Munshi Premchand reflect the pathos, the failures and bitterness that come from poverty. The current Indian fiction reflects a mixed image, the impact of the Western mind, the leaning towards the past and an aping of the Western examples; the European fiction mirrors the disillusionment of social chaos, it has a documentary faithfulness to the various aspects of life, manners and cultures of diverse lands and historical events. And, on the whole, "English novels," comments an American critic, "were parochial and inward-looking and dealt with questions that were trivial or unintelligible to the outsider. American fiction, on the other hand, communicated directly and forcefully." (*The Situation of the Novel* by Bernard Bergonzi, p. 56)

This is the background of our study.

What is the reaction of the contemporary world to the modern western mentality? "Life is not," said Virginia Woolfe, "a series of gig-lamps systematically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from

the beginning of our consciousness to the end. It is the task of the novelist to carry this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible." (*English Critical Essays, 20th Century*, ed. by Phyllis Jones, p. 393)

This is a subjective reaction, a philosophical approach to the reactions to life. But the modern mind has no patience with this subjective idea. Hence the present generation "made up its mind. Not so much to rebel against the order of authority and standards, but to refuse to vote for it. Some of the dissentients are in fact working for the overthrow of the exhausted but tenacious ideas...." (*The Angry Decade* by Kenneth Allsop, p. 9)

This dissatisfaction, which however does not wax into open rebellion, expresses itself in three different modes: (a) in political activities; (b) derisive disgust with authority, terming it "shining barbarism"; (c) and neutralism out of despair or sheer laziness.

The frustration finds crude and cryptic expression about man who, "eats, defecates and fornicates. It's all simultaneous." (*Graham J. Ackroyd*, quoted in above, p. 110)

A writer, nevertheless, gives the following verdict: "If books didn't sell I'd like to wrestle with bears." (*Ernest Hemingway*, quoted in above, p. 95)

These statements do not touch the central issue. But Rose Macaulay sums up the writer's position thus: "A young man who has spent his adult years at high tension, among perils, discomforts, tears, adventures, will not see or write of life as if he had lived at ease; he will be either toughened or insensitized." (*Ibid.*, p. 25)

Perhaps such general statements, which are like focuses upon a wider field, could be made more explicit if we examined some authors and their reactions.

Graham Greene, from his books, could be taken as a cynic and a frustrated individual. He sees the world through the warped and cracked lenses of his imbibed cynicism. The only relieving feature is, however, his conversion to Catholicism and his implied allusions to divine grace. The last factor remains an understatement, a reading between the lines rather than an obvious phenomenon.

He began publishing in 1920, and in 1926 he was converted to Catholicism. "He shares with Auden a common symbolism of frontiers, spies and betrayal." (*Tradition and Dream* by Walter Allen, p. 202) Hence the subject of his novels are: strikes and political murders (*It's a Battle-field*), the machinations of an armament manufacturer (*A Gun for Sale*), the irresponsible powers of international finance (*England Made Me*), the Spanish War (*The Confidential Agent*), conflict of religion and Marxism (*The Power and the Glory*), the Vietnam War (*The Quiet American*), Cuba on the eve of the Castro revolution (*Our Man in Havana*), and Congo before the Belgian withdrawal and in the background of a leper colony (*A Burnt-out Case*).

Greene writes of different locations but the theme remains the same as a common integer: violence.

"Yet Greene," assesses Allen, "is by any means the special correspondent novelist. Rather the outer violence mirrors, as it were, the violence within the character, and gives a universal situation a local habitation. These representations of contemporary history as the element in which his characters live come as naturally to Greene as the use of the thriller in its simplest and most classical form, that of the hunted man." (*Ibid.*) And this element of being pursued is the truth of man's fate. Also the plight of the fallen man is Greene's concern; he attempts to portray the split in a man's mind, his insidious attraction to evil and reversely to good; and lastly he attempts to paint the vulgarity of a society "living without the sense of God". (*Ibid.*, p. 205.)

In *Brighton Rock*, Pinkie stands for evil and damnation. He is a gangster leader. Contrasting him stands Ida Arnold who is "good-hearted, sentimental, life-loving and good-time-loving and promiscuous." Squalor, dirt, "terror of life" have been delineated powerfully.

Pinkie is dedicated to evil and has a "starved intensity". He is a divided personality having at one end a hideous, unnatural pride and on the other a suppression in himself of any stirring to pity.

Greene has a fundamental contempt for all virtues, which sharply contrasts with his Catholic faith. But this issue, this attempt to "clothe theological speculations in flesh and blood, produces psychological absurdities". (*Ibid.*, p. 205)

George Orwell has pointed out this apropos of Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*. This psychological absurdity engulfs Greene in a mess which he is unable to get out of. That is why "If he felt that adultery was a mortal sin he would stop committing it; if he persisted in it, his sense of sin would weaken. If he believed in Hell, he would not risk going there merely to spare the feelings of a couple of neurotic women." (*Ibid.*, p. 206)

The End of the Affair is typical of Greene and is not a self-parody. The story is about a jealous lover. Maurice Benedix, who is not attractive and who is a frank atheist, has an affair with the wife of a senior civil servant, Sarah Miles, with the ulterior motive of getting a copy of the lives of Civil Officials, to be used in a book he is currently engaged in writing. But the affair ends in his truly falling in love with her, and it is physically terminated in a mysterious manner when the house they are making love in is blasted by a bomb. "Tortured by jealousy, Benedix sets a private enquiry agent on Sarah's trail, who manages to purloin Sarah's private diary and so Benedix discovers the identity of the rival who has supplanted him. The rival is God. When one reads Sarah's diary one realizes that the theme of Greene's novel is not sexual jealousy at all, but the working of divine grace." (*Ibid.*, p. 206)

Here we are at variance with Allen and the question of divine grace can be argued both negatively and positively. We are afraid that this is another example of Greene's anomalies. Even when he writes what he terms entertainment, such as *the Istamboul Train*, the elements of murder and frustration are at play.

But D. H. Lawrence, essentially a poet and an introvert, is poles apart in temperament and attitude from Greene, though frustration of another profounder kind is present in his books. It is the frustration of a poet in a drab and ugly world. Lawrence too presents an anomaly, a division between the inner and outer parts of his being, between his sexual passion which he terms something elemental and his inner urge for self-discovery. Externally his *milieu* and his middle-class origin are invariably present. This is because he is an egocentric person and not a selfless observer of things and events. To him, the problems are not social enigmas; the problems are between man and woman. And this alone is one element of concentration.

Allen comments: "*Sons and Lovers* is autobiographical. Lawrence is much closer to his characters, much more passionately engages with them." (*Ibid.*, p.22)

His poet's sensitivity made him identify himself with his creations, a fact absent from Greene.

Sons and Lovers marks "The struggle between him and his father." (*Ibid.*) His mother, belonging to a higher class, more refined both in intellect and spirit, was high-minded and, as he was later to confess in one of his letters, born "to play a superior role in a god-damned bourgeoisie." (*Ibid.*), while his father "was a miner, practically illiterate, often drunk, but possessed of an extraordinary vivid apprehension of natural life and living." (*Ibid.*)

In spite of the impact of a first romance, the marriage itself was unhappy with the children caught up between the father and the mother with the inevitable results of frustration and clashes. Lawrence, however, sides with his mother.

The White Peacock, another novel of his, refers by its title to Annabella, the narrator, Cyril's mother, who is a high-born lady, "a very soul of a lady, a woman to the end" yet the "soul of destruction." Cyril's father deserts his wife and children and dies half through the book. In this piece, Lawrence sides with the father, who was wronged.

The battle of the sexes assumes a contrary aspect to that in *Sons and Lovers*. Cyril's father is defeated by his mother.

Lady Chatterley's Lover deals with extra-marital sex between Mellors, the game-keeper, and Lady Chatterley. Here Mellors makes up for Annabella's defeat in *The White Peacock*. Lawrence has very daringly and vividly described sex-scenes, which could be termed pornographic. But Lawrence was too great an artist to be contaminated by common-day morality and social ethics.

In *The Plumed Serpent* we find the destruction of instinctive man by the woman. In *Women in Love* the question of religion has been tackled by Lawrence in a negative manner. Here, "Lawrence poses the problem of human destiny in view of the fact that his character (hero) cannot believe in God... This of course was the central problem for Lawrence himself throughout his life: how to maintain and preserve the sacramental quality in life in a world in which God is dead." (*Ibid.*, p. 28)

In Lawrence sex was a thing sacred and he poetised it, its role and functions.

He said, "I conceive a man's body as a kind of flame, like a candle flame, and the intellect is just the light that is shed on things around. (*Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 180) "Life for Lawrence was essentially a mystery," remarks a critic. Perhaps we could delete *Life for Sex* and we would not be far wrong.

Also, "we deduce emotion from gesture. But Lawrence's problem was to express emotions, feelings as they exist far below the gesture." (*Tradition and Dream* by Walter Allen, p. 24) Again, "In a sense one feels that Lawrence's characters are always 'unconscious and superconscious.' What is lacking is the middle term." (*Ibid.*, p. 25)

Lawrence also speaks of the "immediate and instant self." It is most probably the vital emotional self in man which he set upon a high pedestal and which remains a debating and arguing point with the critics.

"These 'shameful' dark regions like the lower organs, the genitals, are the underworld of the consciousness and the body, the Hades, the world of pre-conscious, amoral fertilizers of life, the origin of the 'daemons' which are not mere devils (though conventionally regarded as such) but spirits of great power animating and controlling life." (*D. H. Lawrence, Body of Darkness* by R. F. Pritchard, p. 25)

There is in fact a twist, a wrong turn somewhere in this basic stand of Lawrence. In the first place, body and consciousness are not coeval terms, though body does possess its own consciousness. Secondly, sex is referred to as the 'daemon', the fertilizer of life. This is essentially a Tantric idea with a twist. It is not sex as such but the "coccyx", the *muladhara*, where lies the seat of man's psychophysical energies.

He regarded homosexuality with both fascination and horror; the sex-act was a possession but it had its own joy. In *The Plumed Serpent* the killing of the horse by the bull stood for the phallic power. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* sex-life in its varied modes is imaged as a compulsive force which yet liberates one from the shame of the body. It is imaged as an entry into a forbidden paradise.

These are Pritchard's opinions. He further maintains that life and art in Lawrence cannot be reduced to "Freudian" analysis, in order to explain his basic stand. But he has not offered an alternative explanation to Lawrence's experience.

Of the "dark reality buried in the body" Lawrence says, "There is that which we cannot love, because it surpasses love or hate. There is the unknown and the unknowable, which propounds all creation." (*Phoenix* by D. H. Lawrence, p. 136)

This was in most probability the physical consciousness at its highest or the physical ego in its crudest form.

To Lawrence, sex was a strange phenomenon. a struggle, a submission and an overpowering and finally a death. He remarks, "Sex contact with another individual means a whole meeting, a contact between two alien natures, a grim rencontre, half battle and a sense of renewed and deeper being afterwards." (*Complete Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 126)

Lawrence also sums up the woman's attitude towards sex: "... sex, mere sex, is repellent to me. I will never prostitute myself again unless something touches my very spirit, the very quick of me, I will stay alone, just alone. Alone and give myself only to the unseen presence." (*Kangaroo* by D. H. Lawrence.)

It is only Sri Aurobindo who gives us the ultimate verdict. He says that Lawrence was "A seeker who missed the issue, I should imagine — misled by the vitalistic stress to which the mind of today is a very harassed captive." (*Sri Aurobindo Birth Cent.* Vol. 9, p. 535)

Also, "Lawrence had the psychic push inside toward the unknown and Beyond at the same time as a push towards the vital life which came in its way." (*Ibid.*, p. 535)

And finally, "I suppose Lawrence was a yogi who had missed his way and come into a European body to work out his difficulties." (*Ibid.*, p. 536)

(To be continued)

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S A B D A

HAMLET—AND FATE VERSUS FREE-WILL

Is the grim tragedy that befalls and engulfs Hamlet the inevitable result of the exercise of his own free-will or is it the outcome of the hidden workings of inescapable Fate? This is a question which suggests itself to every student of *Hamlet*—a question that is at once interesting and intricate, a question that cannot be answered definitely.

O'd as the world itself, belief in Fate did in the past, does in the present and will in the future sway the minds of men. That this Fate is inexorable in its effect, that it is more cruel than kind, that it plays with human lives as wantonly as boys sport with flies, as recklessly as adults play a dice-game, that Fate is the fruit we reap from the seeds of our own conduct and character, that Fate alone and nothing else is responsible for the rise or ruin of individuals, that not even the minutest thing ever happens save at the bidding of Fate—all these are age-old convictions, borne out by facts and illustrated by experience.

As opposed to this belief—we have the theory of Free-will, the theory that the world is ruled not by the forces of blindness and darkness but by the law of cause and effect, that men are not automatons but beings with power to reason, to will and to do, that as such they have in them the power of becoming the masters of their fate and the captains of their souls and that a powerful Free-will has the capacity of smashing the forces of Fate. This theory too appeals to facts and experience for support.

As to which of these two is the more correct view is a question whose answer is beyond the scope of certainty. The difficulty arises from the fact that almost all human beings believe both in Fate and in Free-will at the same time. This, again, is due to the fact that we see the two operating successfully even in the common spheres of our experience.

If this is so in life, how should it be in Drama? A Drama being a work of art, man-made and not God-fashioned, may give preference to one or the other of the two theories. A Shakespearean drama—being more true to life than any other kind—does not take sides but reflects both the viewpoints in an almost equal measure, leaving the business of drawing conclusions to the readers and spectators. It is part of Shakespeare's universality that he does not—at least, does not seem to—take sides. This is exactly what we find represented in the character of Hamlet. He is the agent both of his own Free-will and of invisible Fate.

"Character is Destiny"—the dictum is applied to the hero in a Shakespearean Tragedy. According to it, the tragic hero comes to grief mainly on account of some fatal flaw in his character. He possesses many outstanding good qualities, but they are of no avail in the blasting effect of his one foible. He gives us the impression that but for his weakness he would have been a mighty man, and not been broken like a butterfly on the wheel. Take Hamlet, for example. A young man of about thirty, he has many virtues—enviable gifts of intellect and imagination,

noble ideals and generous impulses, love of reason and righteousness, a high conception of morality and conduct. Had he developed his God-given faculties without frittering them away in the pursuit of a blood-bath, he would have probably become a great poet, a great statesman, a great scholar, a great man in many ways. That is the impression we get when we contemplate what he would have become if he had chosen a different path of action. But as it is we know that this Prince of Denmark is the prince of vacillation also, a prince of irresolution and inaction, of postponement and procrastination, of moodiness and melancholy. It appears to us, therefore, that it is on account of this weakness in his otherwise splendid character that Hamlet falls upon the thorns of tragedy. Character is Destiny in the case of Hamlet—such is the idea that strikes us.

On the other hand, a different viewpoint also claims our attention and demands our consideration. Fate like Death is no respecter of persons, of status, of dignity. The rich man is as much subject to its whims and caprices as the poor man. The good man as well as the bad man is its plaything. There is nothing more freakish than fate, nothing more inscrutable than its working. The prince of today becomes the pauper of tomorrow; and the pauper of today becomes the prince of tomorrow. The righteous man is made to carry his cross to calvary, while the evildoer rides triumphantly laurelled. Mysterious are the ways of Fate indeed. No wonder that tradition represents Fortune as a blindfold Goddess turning a wheel—blindness being a symbol of her seemingly inexplicable dispensation of favours, and the wheel an emblem of mutability.

It is this whimsical and tyrannical Fate that does both good and evil to some persons almost simultaneously—and turns them into battlefields of conflicting purposes, to become finally the graveyards of glories, memorials of monumental failures. According to the upholders of the theory of Fate, a tragic hero is an “apparent master of his world, of rare talents, eminence, prosperity—on whom through some miscalculation or sinister mischance another and unseen world begins to encroach. Power fails him, reason fails him, gifts fail him; his vessel, dragged from secure moorings, is dashed ashore”. In such critical circumstances—of what avail is his character? It shrinks into insignificance or else becomes an entanglement! So “character is itself a strange and terrible thing and assuredly has a place in tragedy, but to be admitted as a factor only, no further than as a part of the interminable web, the side of the pattern visible to us, or that portion to which our human perspective assigns a nearer and thus clearer station”.

Take the case of Hamlet. A noble youth with noble gifts—ending in rack and ruin! What else is this but the handiwork of Fate? Why should Fate place him in uncongenial circumstances, throw in his path insurmountable obstacles, and make sport of him withal? Who else but the marked bandit Destiny perpetrates such ambushed treachery? A man of high intellect and clear reason who has the power of probing the deepest depths of philosophy—to be forced by Fate to fluctuate “between the thought which leads nowhither and the action which is narrow and

profoundly unsatisfying"! That the instruments of his crucifixion should be the noblest qualities of his own mind—what an irony, what a fate!

The opinion that Hamlet is a victim of Fate gains colour and strength from certain scattered lines in the play in which he appears as a believer in the idea of Fatalism. In fact, the play almost begins and ends with them. In Act One, scene five, overruling Horatio's objection that he should not follow the Ghost, Hamlet says: "My fate cries out..." Again, towards the close of the play, in Act Five, scene two, he tells the same Horatio: "there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow." In between we have his famous words which have justly become part of the world's proud heritage of thought:

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we may. . . .

Do not these utterances clearly show that, at least now and then, Hamlet himself believed in Fate?

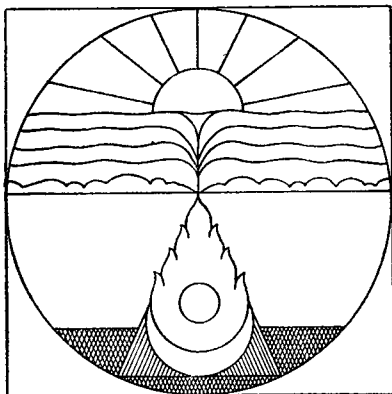
Before endeavouring to answer the question—if such a thing is possible—whether it is Free-will or Fate that guides (or should one say misguides?), we must realize that Hamlet is primarily a dramatic character, not a creature of flesh and blood—though he has come to be more than that by the magic art of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is a dramatist first and everything else next. And no one will deny that to him 'the play was the thing,' the first consideration, all others, if any, next. We will not, therefore, be wrong in concluding that Shakespeare's dramas and his characters are to be looked at and valued essentially from the dramatic and artistic point of view. The opinions expressed by the characters about philosophy, religion, morality, humanity, good and evil and a hundred other things may be deemed to be their own. Or even if they are to be identified as Shakespeare's own, they should be taken as the casual remarks of a dramatist, not as the confirmed convictions of an expert in those subjects. But Shakespeare, being myriad-minded, being as vast as the sea, has made his world of Drama not a fragmentary reflection of just a slice of life but of almost the whole of life—life with all its joys and sorrows, with all its good things and bad, with all its contradictions and conciliations.

That is why we find in *Hamlet* the presence and activity of both Fate and Free-will. As a dramatist with an abiding interest in the portrayal of character—he emphasises the relation between character, conduct and catastrophe, and how very often we make or mar ourselves. But at the same time, the universality in Shakespeare prompts him to recognize and represent the part played by Fate—accident, chance, divinity or whatever we choose to call it—in life. No one can escape these two—the call of Free-will and the lure of Fate. If we can we shall no longer be men but something higher—in which case we have no business to be in this world where those two contending forces operate. It is true that we cannot choose our circumstances; at the same time it is also true that there are certain circumstances at least

which we can choose or which we can control. An undue emphasis on the supremacy of Free-will, on the theory that man is the undeniable architect of his own life, is as absurd as an extreme blind belief in Fate, in the theory that man is nothing but a pawn in the hands of Destiny. An acceptance of both seems to be the only wise way out. To vote, therefore, either for a Free-will-guided Hamlet or a Fate-driven Hamlet will be the card-index of impertinent egotism. Hamlet and Fate *versus* Free-will: Where is the secret?— What is the truth?— we ask. Echo answers— where and what? Hamlet warns us—the rest is silence! And he, the creator of Hamlet, the sphinx-like Shakespeare, who has his dwelling-place in the heaven of heavens—

Spares but the border, often of his base,
To the foiled searching of mortality.

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THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of May 1978)

The Yoga of *King Lear*

V. The Gloucester Subplot

IN the opening scene of the drama we are introduced to Gloucester and his bastard son Edmund and his legitimate heir Edgar before we have even heard the names of Cordelia, Regan and Goneril. Throughout the entirety of the action the Gloucester subplot is skillfully interwoven with the main fabric of Lear's story and—to the disapproval of many critics who feel that its theme is unnecessarily and painfully repetitious—it represents a movement which closely parallels the main plot. To criticise the existence of the subplot on purely dramatic grounds is to overlook the fact that it expresses something quite characteristic of life itself. Bradley calls it a "structural weakness" which emotionally fatigues the reader but he also touches on a truer view when he says:

This repetition does not simply double the pain with which the tragedy is witnessed: it startles and terrifies by suggesting that the folly of Lear and the ingratitude of his daughters are no accidents or merely individual aberrations, but that in that dark cold world some fateful malignant influence is abroad, turning the hearts of the fathers against their children and of the children against their fathers, smiting the earth with a curse, so that the brother gives the brother to death and the father the son, blinding the eyes, maddening the brain, freezing the springs of pity, numbing all powers except the nerves of anguish and the dull lust of life.

Hence, too, as well as from other sources, comes that feeling which haunts us in *King Lear*, as though we were witnessing something universal,—a conflict not so much of particular persons as of the powers of good and evil in the world.¹³

There is no event in life which occurs in isolation or is self-contained. Each action has its result and leads to further action. When a train of similar or related acts occur in close sequence we speak of a movement in life. A movement may continue and perpetuate itself by repetition in time or extension to other areas or other persons. The latter appears to us as a subplot such as we see here. Or the movement may continue as a reaction to or a reversal of the original direction such as we see in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* where the force released finally turns back on the

initiator. Or it may extend itself in one direction and reverse itself in another. Each man responds according to his character and circumstances. In any case the movement continues.

The subplots in life are an expression of the hierarchy in nature revealing the universal aspect of action. There is never just one subplot but many smaller reflections in nature of each major event or vibration. The details of the subplot reveal both the common basis and the differences of character and circumstance. In very broad life movements the appearance of precise repetition is often blurred by the multitude of contributing factors, while in smaller more localised instances the extension may be almost an exact reproduction or a close parallel.

There are many such instances in *King Lear* of these smaller movements. Robert Heilman noted that Lear introduces a "spirit of calculation" into the division of the kingdom by attempting to equate personal devotion with material reward and he is ruthless in punishing what does not contribute to his personal advantage. When Goneril and Regan come to power they too bring in the spirit of calculation. They reduce Lear's retinue of knights on "practical grounds" when in fact the chief value of the knights is to maintain the king's self-esteem and prestige. "There, he insisted on an inappropriate calculation; here, he is the victim of an inappropriate calculation by the very daughters who had profited from his own misapplied arithmetic."¹⁴ Similarly Lear disowns his youngest daughter and exiles her only to be disowned and exiled by his elder daughters. These two are instances of the original movements coming back on the initiator as a repetition of his act. Much of what is called irony is simply the working of this life principle.

The Gloucester subplot is a reflection in life of the major movement involving Lear and his family and it substantiates the universal character of that movement. Close evaluation of the similarities and contrasts between the two can shed light on life's processes. Quoting Bradley, "The parallel between Lear and Gloucester... is, up to a point, so marked that it cannot possibly be accidental. Both are old white-haired men; both, it would seem, widowers, with children comparatively young. Like Lear, Gloucester is tormented, and his life is sought, by the child whom he favours; he is tended and healed by the child whom he has wronged. His sufferings, like Lear's, are partly traceable to his own extreme folly and injustice, and, it may be added, to a selfish pursuit of his own pleasure. His sufferings, again, like Lear's, purify and enlighten him: he dies a better and wiser man than he showed himself at first. They even learn the same lesson, and Gloucester's repetition... of the thought in a famous speech of Lear's is surely intentional. And finally, Gloucester dies almost as Lear dies."¹⁵

Gloucester is a weak personality of small build. He is dull, narrow, gullible and superstitious. His confession to Kent in the first scene reveals an ordinary man without positive strength or idealism for good, seeking ordinary satisfactions within social bounds.

Kent. Is not 'this your son, my lord?

Glo. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him that now I am braz'd to't.

Kent. I cannot conceive you.

Glo. Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-womb'd, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?" (I.i.7-15)

When he next appears he is silently mulling over the events at court. Edmund cleverly and easily raised his suspicions. With a few words and a forged note Gloucester is convinced that his true son Edgar has been plotting his murder.

Gloucester, unlike Lear, is not the initiator of his own undoing, he is more the victim and dupe of others' initiative. That initiative comes in a narrow sense from Edmund who unleashes his plot against Edgar and in a broader sense from Lear who has released forces and a movement which have their repercussions all around him. But from the viewpoint of life we must consider Gloucester equally responsible for his fate. Lear's weakness is his pride and vanity. Gloucester's is his dull, gullible and superstitious mind. And it becomes obvious from life's response to both of them that ignorance and egoism evoke similar responses from life. Both are weaknesses of character which must be overcome by further growth, both are openings through which forces from within or without can strike at the personality. Despite their differences in character, both Gloucester and Lear give a similar response to their circumstances. Both respond with passion, anger and precipitance to cast away from them what was nearest and dearest and leave themselves at the mercy of what is false and evil. Heilman observes:

Lear, without questioning his own rightness, imposes his will upon others, Gloucester accepts the will of others without effectively questioning their rightness. Thus Lear and Gloucester are... not duplicates, but complements.¹⁶

As we see in Lear the character traits and propensities which find clearer expression in his good and evil daughters, so too we may see Gloucester's personality reflected in that of his true and bastard sons. To quote Heilman:

Edmund's worldliness is an amplification and a positivizing of Gloucester's. Gloucester wants to do as the world does and be comfortable, Edmund wants to have what the world has — "have lands by will", as he puts it — and 'grow' and 'prosper' in it. The shallow foxiness which Gloucester exhibits in his imagined detection of Edgar ripens into an effective wiliness in Edmund. Gloucester forgets morality; Edmund flouts it. Edmund is half of Gloucester, liberated from the other half, and motived in its own terms.

Gloucester's gullibility—the ironic failure of his self-conscious worldli-

ness—becomes the whole of Edgar as Edgar is seen at the beginning of the play; the emergent moral mastery of Gloucester is paralleled in the development of personal force in Edgar; the kindness of Gloucester to Lear is the same love and loyalty which came to Gloucester himself from Edgar.¹⁷

The relationship between Gloucester and his sons parallels that between Lear and his daughters and his fate too follows a parallel course. Gloucester being a passive, open, gullible person is easily infected by the movement initiated by Lear and the atmosphere of doubt and suspicion which has arisen suddenly among things that were taken for granted. His personal relationship of affection with Lear, his age and court position add to the association. But that is not the only reason for his similar fate. Equally important is the role of Edmund. It is Edmund who immediately responds to the atmosphere of evil and destruction and takes initiative to betray his father and brother to gain their inheritance. Like Goneril and Regan he has a share of "the undivided energies of the beast." He is an adventurer who acts without scruple, compunction or hesitation. His being is fully integrated in its pursuit of selfish ends. His acts are cunning, determined and powerful and for this reason they are accepted as true. This power issues out of his lack of morality and culture which are great restraining forces that absorb a good portion of man's energy. He is totally free of any such restraints. The movement started by Lear spreads to Edmund who has dynamism and initiative. Furthermore because of his dynamism the movement does not stop merely with Gloucester's inheritance. Goneril and Regan woo him and offer him command of the entire kingdom.

Bradley feels that Gloucester's ready acceptance of Edmund's scheme against Edgar lacks credibility. He cites it as one example of a long list of dramatic impossibilities and inconsistencies in *King Lear*. Bradley fails to appreciate the cleverness, power and conviction with which Edmund executes his plot. It is with the same type of cunning if not the same mastery, that Iago attempted to convince Othello of Desdemona's at least equally improbable affair with Cassio. But he also overlooks the fact that Gloucester is harbouring a pressing guilt all these years for the illicit birth of Edmund. He is anxious to make up for his dissipation and the wrong issuing out of it by fully accepting Edmund as his own—"The whoreson must be acknowledged." He tries to prove himself by an overcompensation, a rejection of his true son Edgar and a bequeathal of all his property to the bastard. Edgar is a constant reminder to him of his sin. By finding him guilty of treachery, his own error becomes very pardonable in comparison.

Edmund is fully open to the forces of evil but he cannot be strictly classed with Goneril and Regan. Like Macbeth, he has some "reason" to justify his acts. There is no sign in him of a conscious enjoyment of perversity for its own sake which we feel in Regan. Edmund finds support in the atmosphere and presence of the two evil sisters. Without them he would lack half his energy for destruction.

Gloucester is absent during the crucial court scene between Lear, Cordelia and

Kent. When Kent brawls with Oswald and is put in stocks, Gloucester addresses an objection to Cornwall but no more. When Lear arrives at his castle he tries to calm the enraged king to avoid a confrontation with the Duke. He is again absent when Cornwall, Goneril and Regan abuse Lear and drive him out into the storm. Fearful, Gloucester raises only a mild protest. This is a man too weak for active good in life. He has learned to avoid conflict by absenting himself from it and meekly submitting where he is compelled. This same trait expresses itself in Edgar when he buries himself in the beggar's disguise.

Gloucester seeks out Lear on the heath. As he approaches, the Fool speaks of the desire in an old lecher's heart.

Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart; a small spark,
all the rest on's body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire.

(Enter Gloucester with a torch) (III. iv. 110-112)

The timing of this remark is more than dramatic genius. It is one of the true expressions of simultaneity in life which make Shakespeare so much more than a mere dramatist. Finally life's injustice and his own heart compel Gloucester to brave all risks and do some good. His capacity for true loyalty emerges. He finds refuge for Lear, Kent, Edgar and the Fool. No sooner is Lear given a place to rest than Gloucester returns to inform them of a plot to kill the king and they are forced to leave at once. Lear is deprived of much-needed rest. Gloucester takes his first and only positive initiative. A few moments later he pays for his goodness with his eyes.

Gloucester confides in Edmund news of the French army's landing and his help to Lear. As soon as he leaves, Edmund hastens to inform Cornwall who issues orders for Gloucester's arrest and gives Edmund the title of his father, Earl of Gloucester. Edmund was born of Gloucester's adulterous affair and that affair is the seed for his later suffering. As Edgar tells Edmund in the closing scene:

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us:
The dark and vicious place where thee he got
Cost him his eye.

(V. iii. 172)

It is not irony but fact and law of life. The same truth is expressed by Lear, now fully mad, when he meets the blind Gloucester, near Dover: "What was thy cause? Adultery?" (IV. vi. 109.) Gloucester's act of darkness and dissipation led to his blinding. His dark act grew up as Edmund and turned against him. So long as he remained morally uncommitted, he lived at the level of his adultery.

Though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged.

(I. i. 19-22)

By his initiative to help Lear, Gloucester transcends the plane of moral neutrality and commits himself. That commitment becomes the sanction in his mind for his later suffering. His naïve acceptance of Edmund's plot against Edgar results in the loss of his loving son. His equally naïve confiding in Edmund the whereabouts of the king and the French landing result in the loss of his title, his property and his sight. Ignorance and gullibility and foolishness are the mental counterparts of blindness.

(To be continued)

GARRY JACOBS

NOTES

13. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley, Macmillan & Co., 1965, pp. 214-215.
14. *Casebook: King Lear*, Edited by Frank Kermode, Macmillan & Co., 1969, p. 177.
15. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 243-4.
16. *Casebook*, p. 173.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 175.

SURRENDER ROSE

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

(Continued from the issue of May 1978)

SURRENDER Rose felt desperately in need of a recipe. When she had asked aunt Tulip for help and a method, the answer had been rolling the pastry. On another occasion when they had been knitting and she complained that she didn't believe that aunt Tulip could still wield her rolling pin, the reply had been: "Don't think about it: you'll drop a stitch, and slip one at the end of alternate rows to get your edges neat." And that's how it went. The more material Surrender Rose collected and jotted down in her notebook the further she seemed from finding a method. She went on and on remembering every detail of what had happened to her in the last few weeks and trying to make something of it. In the end she found herself with a list of advice on embroidery, knitting, cooking, gardening and clearing out cupboards. She had to stop because she had given herself a headache. She put a wet handkerchief over her brow and went to bed.

When she woke up next morning she no longer had a headache but she felt tired and cross. Aunt Tulip took a look at Surrender Rose and said, "Why don't you go up into your tree house after breakfast? I'll pack you some peanut-butter sandwiches for lunch." Surrender Rose had the distinct feeling that aunt Tulip wanted her out of the way, which did not much please her as she was anxious to show her aunt that she was on the right path—difficult to manage when one is being kept out of the way.

"That is very kind of you, dear aunt Tulip," she replied, "but I don't care to do that today. I think I have more important matters to attend to." She imagined this was the way princesses spoke: it certainly wasn't her usual way of blurting out the first thing that came to mind. Surrender Rose had thrown aunt Tulip a significant look at the end of her declaration. As it had not been picked up she decided to make her point.

"I think it is important to persevere." "Persevere" was a word she had sometimes written in her compositions, but had never said.

"I dare say, I dare say," muttered aunt Tulip, rolled her eyes and turned her back. It seemed that she had decided to be unfriendly and contrary. This strengthened Surrender Rose's resolve. It could only be a matter of time before her aunt realized that she was no longer a spoiled child who threw things around when she didn't get her way, that she was indeed...royalty.

At breakfast she said to her father, "Would you be so kind as to pass me the salt for my egg, dear father?" He looked up from his newspaper in surprise. Everybody looked at her. Her father smiled,

"Dear father? Is that me? Golly!" Her manners had suffered somewhat of late, so of course he was surprised, but he too would soon realize who she was. Everybody

would. In fact even as he was passing her the salt he exchanged a look with her mother. She continued to behave and speak in a way appropriate to her standing throughout breakfast. That is, she took very small mouthfuls of bread and butter and ate only a quarter of her egg, also in very small mouthfuls, and when she had finished all that she had planned to eat she said,

"Will you excuse me now? I know it's not very good manners to get up from table before others have finished their meal, but as aunt Tulip knows I have some rather pressing matters to attend to."

Something like a snort was heard from aunt Tulip's end of the table. But father said,

"Can this resplendent person be my daughter?"

For a moment, Surrender Rose was tempted to enlighten him regarding her royal lineage but something choked her. So she merely grinned knowingly and walked out into the garden as elegantly as possible. What were the pressing things that princesses attended to? Having neither horses nor servants to see to, Surrender Rose finally decided to work on her diary. She went up to her room and opening her diary to a fresh page wrote at the top in very curly princess-looking writing: "Here begins the diary of H. R. H. Surrender Rose."

"This morning," she continued in her new curlicued writing, "I really came into my own. I am almost sure that my putative father received the truth. I'm not sure however that his wife, my putative mother, understood. This is not surprising as she is slower than my father though a very dear lady. No doubt he will have to explain it all to her as he does political matters but I am sure she can eventually grasp the idea. Though slow in certain areas there is no organic deficiency."

She was so pleased with the mastery of words which had suddenly come to her that she reread the lines several times before continuing. "Both these people who have acted as my parents are good and simple souls. Though ignorant, they have never been savage or violent with me. When everything turns out as it must, I shall reward them. I don't know what to think of aunt Tulip. It sometimes seems that she would like to keep the secret of my status to herself. Obviously, that is not possible. Her behaviour of this morning can only be described as crotchet. It is possible that she has a streak of bad fairy in her. I must attempt to be gracious to her. A princess is always gracious to those around her even when she has been unjustly wronged. How strange to think that only yesterday princess Surrender Rose was the little girl who lived down the lane."

Finding that she had nothing more to say, she wrote:

"Here ends the brief and by no means complete account of princess Surrender Rose's first morning. She has to stop in order to attend to her royal duties."

Surrender Rose glided into the room where as usual aunt Tulip sat sewing at this time of the day. Instead of sitting down, she remained standing waiting for aunt Tulip to notice her. It took aunt Tulip some time to do this and when she did all she said was,

“Well now, your majesty, pull that chair and sit down.”

She seemed in better spirits now but there was no doubt that her present humour was at Surrender Rose's expense. After the small battle with herself, compassion prevailed and Surrender Rose decided against having aunt Tulip cast into a dungeon at the first opportunity though the decision of course would have to be reviewed from time to time.

They worked in silence. Surrender Rose had never had less taste for her work. It was torture pulling thread through the cloth. It seemed to be pulled through her nerves till she felt like screaming. And then she was screaming, and stamping her foot, and, yes, the embroidery had been thrown on the floor.

“I don't care if you think I'm a princess or not, you silly old fool,” and then she burst out crying, and when the first burst was over she didn't know what to do, so she just went on crying. She knew now that she wasn't a princess and she didn't care and that wasn't what she was crying about but there was nothing else to do. Then she heard her aunt's voice say,

“I don't think you are. I know you are.”

Surrender Rose hung her head. For a while she couldn't stop crying but it had turned from the noisy rather messy kind, which had required her to retrieve the half-embroidered handkerchief for immediate nose-blowing, into a quieter sort of weeping. This went on for a long time. She was no longer aware of aunt Tulip at all but only of aunt Tulip's words. And now she began not to see but to feel something in herself, a quiet spot like a lake that is never rippled and she allowed herself to be soothed by it and as it drew her more and more away from all the unpleasantness and misunderstanding of the morning she saw that it had a shape, a familiar shape. And as she tried to see what it was it grew into the luminous forehead of the beloved princess and she saw for the first time that she was indeed always there, smiling, entirely undisturbed by the worst or best things that could happen in the whole world.

★

Time passed and Surrender Rose encountered many difficulties, but at least she knew now that it was of absolutely no use to try to be the princess. Yearning for her however, as aunt Tulip has said from the beginning, was another thing. But even over this she had no control. Sometimes when she least expected it she was overcome with a great nostalgia. One day, she was skipping rope with Tom and suddenly she felt a pain in her chest. She knew she was too young for angina, and anyway it was a different kind of pain, a dull ache, really, and deep, very deep. It was a bewildering feeling and she was compelled to stop skipping, doing whatever she was doing in order to give it her full attention.

“What's the matter?” asked Tom.

“It hink I want to sit down.”

"Got a pain?"

She nodded not knowing whether she were unable to speak or unwilling to speak and feeling a fraud because she knew it wasn't the sort of pain Tom was asking about.

"Must be a stitch from skipping."

"Suppose so," she said in a small white voice, for she couldn't see herself explaining it all to Tom. "I'd better go home." When she was by herself she knew what it was: the princess had come and when that happened she absolutely had to be alone. The only person she could bear to have around was aunt Tulip.

She went and sat by the window. Her mother came in.

"Rosie, what on earth are you doing. I've told you a hundred times if I've told you once that you're to take all your summer dresses out of the basket and wash and iron them."

The impatient words were like stones thrown at her. She sat quite still, unable to reply. Her mother left the room banging the door. Gradually the commotion that had been left in the room withdrew from around her to the walls and seeped out through them until she was once again alone with herself. But then the door was thrown open, and her mother cheerfully threw an armful of summer dresses onto her bed.

"There now. This is all your aunt's fault and I'm going to tell her that if she goes on encouraging you in your mooning she'll just have to take her gimcrack ideas elsewhere." Surrender Rose felt more anger rising inside her than she could hold. It came in waves and more and more of it came up so that she felt her head would blow off if she did not let it out. Suddenly words jerked out of her.

"You're horrid. I love aunt Tulip a million times more than you. If she leaves this house so shall I and I'll certainly never speak to you again. And I mean every word of this even if I apologise a hundred times."

Of course she apologised within the hour and during the next few days her mother's red eyes caused her to apologise many times more. But though her mother said that it was all right and that of course she accepted the apology and that the redness was merely caused by an allergy, Surrender Rose felt miserable.

"What should I have done, aunt Tulip?"

"You might have tried washing your clothes."

"Just when. . . ."

"I know. But princess-clothes get just as smelly as anyone else's."

"Aunt Tulip!" It was perhaps the first truly idiotic thing that she had heard her aunt say. The whole world was going mad.

"What if it's just Surrender Rose who doesn't like washing clothes? Perhaps a princess wouldn't mind it at all?"

"Perhaps," said Surrender Rose, being careful not to start another argument. And though she knew it was absurd she even gave it a try. But there was no lurking the princess to the wash-tub.

The very next week something happened which made her wonder whether she wouldn't be better off without the princess altogether.

Tom had long since stopped pushing her onto the rubbish heap. And since the day he had apologised for doing that and said that she really was a princess for him they had become good friends. They went on a picnic which they had planned for a very long time and on the way Surrender Rose, glad to be out of the angry house, realised that she was also glad to have a friend like Tom. It was a very beautiful day. The sun was shining and Surrender Rose wore one of the summer dresses which had caused all the trouble. It was the first day she had worn a cotton dress this year and she was glad now that she had washed and ironed it just right. As she got further away from the house she felt more and more comfortable with herself and the world. It was the first time this had happened since the terrible words she had said to her mother. Her mother liked Tom, and she had admired the way the dress looked while she packed the lunch basket for them.

The sun was shining and birds were singing in the trees which threw just enough shade, and Surrender Rose was glad to begin her first carefree day in a week, and she was glad of Tom. She told him a little, just a little, of the trouble she had been in at home but not its cause. And he listened sympathetically and said that parents could be hopeless at times and were usually too old to mature.

It was almost lunch-time and rather hot as they approached the river where they were to have the picnic, so it was beautiful when they plunged into the deep green shadow from the trees near the river and it was even better when they dangled their feet in the gently flowing water. They had fallen into a contented silence even before reaching the river. But now Surrender Rose felt herself being drawn into a deeper silence. Tom was staring at the water. He too seemed deeply absorbed. With a sigh she closed her eyes and let go.

Suddenly it was another river without banks in another country and she could see every wave separately and the whole river at the same time and also each leaf of each tree. But then the scene split down the middle. She felt like a fish dangling at the end of a line. She saw another fish goggling into her face. The fish grew into Tom. He was laughing, slapping at her face, tugging at her hand.

"Cricky," he said, "I thought you'd hypnotised yourself. Come on." He gave a sharp tug. "Let's go for a swim." He was actually laughing. He had pulled her out from where all her life she had wanted to go and he was laughing.

"Tom, you are an oaf." She said it in exasperation. As soon as she saw Tom's honest freckled face blush a deep unhappy colour, she said, "I didn't mean that, Tom."

"It's all right, princess." His attempt to smile hurt her; she had never felt so mortified before. They ate lunch and walked home in silence.

She went straight to aunt Tulip. "What happened today? Was it my fault or Tom's?"

Silence.

"All right, what should I have done?"

"If you go on a picnic you go on a picnic. And if you go off into another world and leave your body lying around for someone like Tom to yank and prod at you've got nobody to thank but yourself."

And that was that. Life was bruising. People were bruising. And now aunt Tulip was getting to be the worst of all.

She went into her room to cry.

But once she was there she decided to get away altogether. No sooner had she sat down beside the window than she was back at the river of her inner country. And this time there was nobody to disturb her. So for a long time she floated down being each wave or the whole river as her mood commanded and then she came to a bend where three glinting waves arose and started talking. They took no notice of her, nor did they bar her passage but she was stayed by curiosity.

And now comes the strange part of the story. They were speaking about her, and they spoke as though the fate of the whole universe depended on what she did.

"She doesn't want to go back," said the first wave.

"If she doesn't, all will perish," said the second.

"The prince is waiting for her," said the third.

"Ah but she is beginning to be afraid."

"And fear dissolves."

"The prince is waiting for her." It was the third wave again.

"But she is no longer sure that she wants to be a princess."

"She finds it difficult."

"Only the passage is difficult."

"But she cannot know that."

"And must not be told."

"She must weave her own courage."

"It is what makes her the princess."

"And without it the courage of the prince unravels."

"And the universe is dissolved."

Here the waves subsided murmuring the incomprehensible language of the river, an indistinct bubbling and purling, and Surrender Rose found herself sitting at her window looking at the new moon. She could still see three glinting waves but she could remember nothing of their conversation. She never did know, and soon stopped wondering, whether it was the experience with Tom, or what the waves had said that made the difference, but certainly from that day on, certain things were much clearer. For example, Surrender Rose now realised that trying to fit things and people into her life just because they were close at hand and familiar only brought pain and confusion. What did fit, fitted and what didn't, didn't and that was that. And finally what aunt Tulip had always insisted upon became possible: whether she were eating or sleeping or walking or reading something of the luminous girl was always with her. There were no brief luminous visitations.

It was as though a more or less comfortable chair had been found for her to sit in.

When she and aunt Tulip were together now, it was different. There was more silence between them. Sometimes out of habit or for fear that her aunt might feel unneeded she turned to her for advice, at which aunt Tulip would say,

“Oh go on!”

“What will happen now, aunt Tulip?”

“What will happen will happen.”

“I sometimes feel that something strange and awful is about to happen. We’re in for trouble. It’s such a mix-up.

“Let it happen. Let it.” Aunt Tulip was more reckless than ever.

“Let the mixture boil and bubble
Even though it smells quite rotten
And the recipe’s forgotten.
Let the mixture seethe and surge,
Don’t give up: it’s only trouble.
When your hope’s reduced to rubble
Something lovely will emerge.”

Surrender Rose was soothed by the song so that she even took her mother’s questions about Tom without losing her temper.

“I suppose he doesn’t come because he has other things to do,” she told her mother.

“Tom’s good clay,” said aunt Tulip, “but he is not baked and had better be left alone or he may crack.”

This was something on which Surrender Rose’s mother had very different views and aunt Tulip’s outspokenness on the subject showed clearly just how undiplomatic she had become. “The old trout will have to go!” agreed Surrender Rose’s father regretfully.

One day, not long after this Surrender Rose’s mother said to aunt Tulip:

“You see, Tulip, it’s as I’ve always said. You’ve encouraged Surrender Rose with all those improbable stories until she’s no idea of what’s what any more. Princesses and princes, while Tom, the nicest boy in the whole country, is frightened off. I admit that in the past few weeks our Rosie has become more lovely than we could ever have hoped. But what good is that if it defeats her hopes of happiness? Tom’s such a good boy,” she sighed, “and his land adjoins ours. I’m afraid we’ve decided we can’t extend our invitation to you any longer. I have a letter here from Daffodil,” (Daffodil was the youngest sister) “who says she would love you to go and stay with her and the children.”

“Why, how perfectly lovely of her,” said aunt, Tulip. “I’ve always wanted to go and see Daffodil’s children.” (In case you’re wondering what Surrender Rose’s mother was called, she was called Hollyhock and the very youngest and last sister

who, it had been hoped, would be a boy was called Sweet William.) "I have enjoyed my years here so much."

"The hardest part is going to be remembering their names. I have a list here: Sweet Marjoram, Buttercup, Snapdragon, they had hoped she would be a boy, Cherry Blossom and Hyacinth. And then of course there are all Sweet William's children. There are twelve girls and one little boy. I would like to try my hand at a prince just for once though I'm told they can be very tricky. I hear Sweet William has been making discreet enquiries about me."

Surrender Rose groaned. To be without Aunt Tulip. Unthinkable. Worse than death. Yet she had known all along that that was where things were leading to.

"I knew there was going to be trouble and you can sing as much as you like but I'am not ready."

"You're ready when you're steady
So let the trouble brew
And when the stew is stinky
You'll find a toad or two
But thank your lucky stars for them
They'll bring you something new."

"Sometimes I hate your little songs. Something new and putrid like your going away."

"No, something new and gorgeous," said aunt Tulip rolling her eyes.

(To be continued)

MAGGI

A HITCH ON THE WAY AND A MYSTERIOUS DEATH

(An abridged translation by Dhiraj Banerjee of a chapter from volume 2 of Promode Kumar Chatterjee's 1976 Academy-Award-winning Bengali book, *Tantravilashir Sadhusanga*.)

I HAD seen something of the region at the base of the highest peaks of the world. But not everything. I cherished a long-standing ambition to explore the outback of the Himalayas, ancient holy spots meant for the daring few, and the aloof, untroubled caves or hide-outs of the ascetics. So I called on my Guru Sri Paramananda Swami to inform him about my desire for fresh adventure and ask his blessings for safety and protection. When I seated myself at his feet after bowing, gurudev, in the course of conversation, brought in the name of Hemanta apropos of the journey.

Young shaver Hemanta Mitra worked in the office of the British Indian Association. Newly married, he had been enjoying many fun-filled days during his two years' stay in Calcutta. But all on a sudden he began to sense as if he had dyspepsia.

My gurudev had a soft heart for Mitra. When I told him about my plan of the holy voyage he casually proposed, "Hemanta has two months of holiday. Why don't you take him along? It would be good for him to stay away from the family life for sometime. This could be a very good opportunity for him to blow away the cobwebs from his mind."

He wryly added afterwards, with tongue in cheek, "And also he will learn the art of detachment in your company."

First of all, to a *chela* (disciple) the merest wish of the guru is a command. Furthermore, Mitra was my gurubhai, that is, both of us were the disciples of the same spiritual master. So there was absolutely no question of any hesitation over our master's proposal; it had to be carried out. So we packed our bags for the great escape. Hemanta and I hit it off well together.

Calcutta was out of our mind as soon as we arrived in Mussoori. Mussoori! The great outdoors. Ravished by the very first glimpses of the mountain sceneries, Hemanta almost started dancing. I believe this was the first time that he experienced an irresistible, overpowering delight. When a man is satisfied with what he has, why unnecessarily trouble him with more? Moreover I was sceptical that possibly he might not endure the gruelling conditions of the way. That was why I decided to continue on my way alone, leaving my friend Mitra here.

Always has it been that man proposes one thing and Fate brings about something quite different. Hemanta was simply carried off his feet when I told him about my going to Jumnotri. He exclaimed, "Sir, I too will go, please!" I had prior experience of the inconvenience of the journey and by now I had got to know my friend, the sort of chap he was. Disturbing visions appeared in my head about how his constitution would react higher up in the thin cold air of the abode of snows. I sat down beside him and verbally reeled out from memory the cruel tests he would be

put to. I tried to reason with him.

"The entire way bristles with difficulties," I warned, "you may come to a sticky end."

My advice and warning did not cut any ice with him. He was most ambitious and determined. His enthusiasm was inextinguishable. He was hell-bent on accompanying me, cost what it may.

He purchased for himself special boots to wear in the mountains. I always felt more at ease barefoot. We bought a few more articles that day and in the glowing freshness of the next morning we left Mussoorie early and headed for the raw heights.

Crossing Mussoorie's border we first entered into what was then called the Garhwal Rajya. The most popular pilgrimages were here. Tihar Garhwal was an ancient Hindu Kingdom nestling in the Himalayan foothills. Formerly this entire region bore the name Tihar Rajya. From about 1840 the hilly southern portion of the Alakananda (a reach of the Ganges river) right up to the base of the Himalayas came into the clutches of the British Government; hence it was referred to as the British Garhwal.

Happily for the Rajdurbar, it did enjoy some freedom. Except for politico-administrative considerations, all other departments were under its own jurisdiction. For example, punctually opening and closing the massive gates of the Kedar and Badrinarayan temples (where thousands of devout Hindus flock to shake off their load of sins), and other similar functions were fulfilled according to the directives received from the Tihar Durbar. The few roads that were there were made and repaired at the expense of the Durbar.

The first 20 miles or so of the 40 miles between Mussoorie and Dharasu were quite smooth and for the most part pleasant. Not only was there no upward slope but, on the contrary, we were lucky enough to have enjoyed a long and gradual incline. Problems, however, were there, mainly of a psychological character. For example, we had to hold our breath when we tip-toed down a path which had, on one side, an abyss so deep that we did not dare to be curious about the extent of its profundity; and on the other, a gradually rising dark and mysterious jungle which could have been anything from a playground of the cheetah, leopard, wolf, etc., to a family affair of a *ajagar* (boa constrictor), cobra, viper or some such innocent children of Nature. And the straight little path under our feet was by no means a red carpet. Strewn with a variety of stones, walking barefoot on it had been painful. Some of these stones could be so pointed and sharp that they made incisions in your feet. Once my foot was pricked by them. A few days had gone by before it healed completely. Of course, I could go on in spite of it. Such had been the way in those far-off days. Perhaps touring these areas has become somewhat easier in the present advanced and new-fangled times.

This incline ended in Daturi village, about an hour before midday, and gave way to level ground. Here we washed ourselves before our meal. When we started

again, after having dozed off for two hours, we resolved to traverse a much greater distance than the mere 6 miles that we had leisurely done in the morning.

I would never have believed that Hemanta could flit so rapidly had I not seen him in action. A'most like an explorer. Bristling with energy, his gaiety was contagious. That bewitching charm, of which the Himalayas have been the fortunate possessors down the ages, had captured my friend. In effusive language he poured forth his passion. Everything thrilled him:

A cloud-kissing peak—"Terrific!"

A leaping waterfall—"Wow!"

And a lush green valley—"Smashing!"

Sometime later we realized that we had spent disproportionate energy, especially Hemanta. We were tuckered out too quickly and had to stop to renew our wind, a little before 3 o'clock. Then we got a move on, straight, smooth, no hitches.

My 'saathi' laughed blithely with sheer excitement—"Arrah! it's so easy to flit about here, as easy as winking. I wonder why people are scared about beating the quarters of the Himalayas. I shall stalk about this entire region with you." Already he had started blustering. Words came to him without any difficulty, like the air around. In Mussoorie we had had a troublesome climb, so I reminded him, "Have you forgotten the hill in Mussoorie?" He smartly waved his hand in complacent confidence—"Oh that! but that's over, today we've had no such hurdle. Have we? Perhaps just the beginning was like that, from now on we shall have only this kind of push-overs. You'll see, *dada*".

"All right, boy, we'll see... we've still miles to go!"

We had made over 5 miles by the time we reached a hamlet called Moldhār. This name probably derives from *mūla* (main) and *dhārā* (stream). Queer, we had seen practically no stream here. A shy little fountain was there at the end of this hamlet. It trickled down a moss-covered, algae-filled mountain. Such was the situation, that its water could not be drunk.

Like little boys we hopped over this stream. To our surprise a rising slope suddenly materialized as if by Aladdin's magic lamp. This time Hemanta's face blanched and I thought his knees also wobbled, although here was not a steep cliff. Watching his movements as he struggled up this three-mile-high rock-face, I took fright. He would crouch down very often to take breath. I had fearful doubts whether he would be able to manage it after all. Only this particular climb he had found rather tough. His enthusiasm had by no means flagged, that is why he did not complain. Now, having reached the top we went down, on the other side and found ourselves in a village called Ghoripa. We descended on a village shop where we decided to pass the night. We were mighty tired after all these 20 miles of travel that day. Our coolies, who were following us at a great distance, had not yet caught up with us.

The shop-owner was hospitable. His wife and daughter prepared *chapatis* and greens for us. Hemanta wolfed down the food with large helpings of pickles. Then we relaxed on our respective beds and soon slipped into sleep.

A chilly breeze woke us up when the sun was about to rise. Hemanta was surprised—"Goodness gracious! *dada*, if it's so chilly here in summer just fancy what it would be like in winter? What would be the degree and nature of that cold?"

"Why, haven't you heard of snowfall? In winter you'll see only snow here. Towards the end of winter it breaks into streams; that is the season of pilgrimaging".

That morning happily for us, when we started a level way fell to our lot. Sometimes it ran through a jungle, sometimes it turned itself into a mountain ridge, meandering in numberless curves. The sight of it was so picturesque that one could be driven to think that one had suddenly got into a marvellous canvas of a painter like Constable or Gritin. To our wonder there heaved in sight a waterfall, not very big, falling over a precipice. This completed the picture.

To throw fatigue off our backs we halted very near the fall. Down a short-cut by this fall a bouncing girl abruptly came along. A basket hung on her back.

"Hallo Khoki, what's the name of this place?" I greeted her.

"Chapra," came her reply.

She became interested in knowing where we were off to. I told her. She officiously informed us, "In Khaal Terha my father runs a shop. There please put up at my father's, he's a good man." Hemanta expressed his curiosity in a laughable smattering of the Hindi that he knew, "Why on earth are you living here so far from your dad?" She blushed and said, pointing up, "My father-in-law's house is here." The girl was *ingénue* as most country people are.

She wore a black "Ghagra" (skirt), a full-sleeved "Kanchuli" (an upper garment), and a cloth, four-folded, covered her head, serving as an *ābrū* (veil). That chit of a girl enquired, "To which place do you belong?" When she was told "Calcutta", she further wanted to know its direction, north or south. When she was explained that it was in the south-eastern direction, she quite candidly looked in that side for a while.

We had enough rest. Our long way stared at us reproachfully for the delay. We waved good-bye to the girl as we started again our march. She remained standing there for a long time looking at us. Quite sure she stood there as long as she could perceive us. I guess this must have been her first visit to "sasural" (in-law's family). Recalling her suggestion that we could put up in her father's shop, Hemanta lightly jeered, "Ha, come to think of it, did you observe? a business man's daughter indeed; just how she took this opportunity to canvas a bit for her father? These people are born with a business acumen."

We smoothly padded 4 miles, talking only about that bit of muslin. It goes without saying that it was Mr. Hemanta Kumar who evinced a great interest in sticking to that one subject. She was still in there in his mind. That young Romeo seemed to have a profound understanding of the feminine. With boisterous enthu-

siasm he marched forward. And his main source of inspiration—that solitary high-land lass!

Presently we reached a district—Andhiari—where we took refreshments. This district consists of only four or five families of farmers. We left it within a short time. Now I had to face a different kind of headache. This Hemanta was as amiable and sweet-natured a youth as ever lived on earth. Too amiable sometimes. I had never heard a cross word from his lips. But there was that about him, he was an incessant talker. The riddle was how to check his palaver. Everything would have been fine if he had walked in front. But, haplessly, right since we had left Mussoorie he had kept on walking close to me, *pari-passu*, and talking nineteen to the dozen. The previous day it did not matter so much, but now it got on my nerves, it had crossed the limit. I was out of patience with him.

If I managed to slip forward extricating myself from his web of words, he would soon begin racing with me, and once at my side again he would talk my head off. Worse still, he harped on the same string, which was that never had he felt better, the clean crisp air made him feel like a million. The last two days he had repeated that at least twenty times.

Even after much brooding I could not excogitate a better plan than to tell him frankly,

“Er, Hemanta, may I trouble you to walk a little ahead of me? I shall be behind you.”

Taken aback, he exclaimed, “H m, have I done anything wrong, *dada*?” It had touched him on a sore place, no doubt.

He put me in quite an embarrassing situation. How to deal with such a man? How to make him understand my point. I did not want to tread on his corns.

At the end I lovingly threw my hand round his shoulder and delicately put across the truth with a whitewash.

“Understand me, Hemanta, I’ve no complaint against you. In fact I’ve the highest opinion both of your character and of your capacity. The thing is, while I walk I also try to repeat my *mantra* softly to myself. If you please co-operate with me in this matter then I shall be thankful to you.”

“Oh really?” he let out with a mixed feeling of curiosity and disappointment, “Good God! can one carry on *japa* even when one is moving about?”

“Even so,” I reaffirmed.

“How come our *bapu* never told me anything about this? I always had the idea that *japa* should be done ceremoniously while sitting cross-legged in meditation.”

I replied knowledgeably,

“Well, you see, you live in Calcutta, one can’t possibly imagine chanting the sacred mantras in the rough and tumble of a city street. Do you get my point? That was perhaps why swamiji kept you from it.”

This made the usually genial boy fall into a worried trance. Wherefore I hastened to add,

"Furthermore, you're an office-goer, recently married, you've so many duties, people like you are not required to do these things."

"I see, then what ought I to do, do you think?" he seemed to be a little disgruntled.

"Nothing much. Just walk ahead of me or follow me from behind. That would solve the problem. Don't you worry, every time we stop to take rest we could have a hearty talk-fest."

His face fell. I consoled him rather in a intimate tone, "You call me '*dada*'; if for your own good your 'elder brother' makes a request, won't you respect it?"

"Certainly, certainly!" he exclaimed and, to my astonishment, pressed more close to me than a moment back.

Taking no apparent notice of that, I suggested with a wise nod of the head, "You must practise speech-control. I wish you had known the amount of energy wasted away in chatter, it's simply staggering."

"Yes, Swamiji also said this to me once," my friend retroactively agreed, "but at that time I didn't quite grasp all that he meant. Now that I've understood it, it seems so true... All right, *dada*, you may walk ahead of me if you please."

I shook my head, "That won't do. It's you who have to remain in front so I can keep a watchful eye on you all the time."

"O.K., sir, as you please." My *protégé* was a gentleman's gentleman. Discreetly distant from Hemanta, I could stride in peace now.

Alas, not for long! I developed a great personal unease. I mused: "Perhaps Hemanta is feeling mortified and lonely. Maybe I acted as a brute in forcing him to do a thing which goes against his grain. But it's also true that human nature is such that a man can never be alone, his thoughts always give him company." The only worry was I had no idea where Hemanta's thoughts might drift to...

Before long, thanks to the peaceful beauty of the hills, my qualms melted into thin air. Even the awareness of the hardships of the journey was not there. The entourage was not only scenic but it inspired you to glide effortlessly into a meditative tranquillity. There was also enough to get you high and happy!

(To be continued)

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL FORTY-FIRST SEMINAR

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

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER

Speech By Astha Samsukha

THE Divine Mother, wherever she has found it possible, has showered her jewelled bliss, a little jasmine here, a dew-drenched leaf there, a luminous star, a rain-washed pebble. Into all these things there steals a spark of God which reveals itself in secret whispers. Each little object reflects her bright face and suggests celestial thoughts. A small gilded wayside flower echoes its sweetness's home and its far destiny to Man.

But in spite of all these beautiful gifts, Man suffers. He burns in agony, he tries to forget his pain, but never is he able to overcome it. He finds himself surrounded by suffering and creates around himself a net of bitter sadness. Yet there come moments when in an intense aspiration he realises that even pain is helpful to progress. He understands that without pain man's life can never transform into the life divine. And as Sri Aurobindo says: "Through the shocks of difficulty and death Man shall attain his godhead."¹ All this pain and misery suddenly vanishes when the Sweet Mother smiles. As the deep night melts into a pearly dawn, our sorrows too melt. Her tender smile captivates all and casts the net of a compelling charm. Serene and tranquil is she; how can Man do anything but adore her with uplifted heart?...

As my memory turns back the pages, I recall the happy days of my infancy, those tender innocent moments when life was a brilliant rainbowed dream. I remember having been told that to hurt a flower would make the Mother unhappy. Once as I was sitting on my staircase and the evening violet-sandalled was creeping in silently, a little flower caught my attention. Quickly without a thought I crushed the flower. That night I wept myself to sleep. I suffered. It was not a mental pain, but a physical one. I felt it concretely. The following morning I crept hesitatingly to the Mother. There she was at the head of the staircase radiant with beauty. She smiled and that pain deep down within my heart just passed away like a dream. She smiled and her eyes glowed with warmth and tenderness. She

¹ *Perseus the Deliverer, Collected Plays* (Centenary Edition, Vol. 6), p. 8.

cast on me a spell of intoxicating sweetness. I ran to her and flung myself into her arms. All my suffering was lost in her immortal smile. Soon a shower of "*ma petite*" dipped in honey and a cascade of caresses enveloped me. Such is the power of her tranquil smile to dissipate all suffering. Let me at this point quote a few lines from Sri Aurobindo: "Grace and charm and tenderness flow out from her like light from the sun and wherever she fixes her wonderful gaze or lets fall the loveliness of her smile, the soul is seized and made captive and plunged into the depths of an unfathomable bliss."¹

All these thoughts of the past leave me now with eyes tingling with tears and an intense urge to fly back to those days wrapped in celestial light.

And as a rose trembles with ecstasy and opens its blushing petals one by one to the warm sunlight, so may all of us melt in fondness in the arms of the Beloved Mother who will be waiting for us eternally. This is my prayer, O Sweet Mother.

Speech by Aravinda Akki

This year we are celebrating the birth centenary of the Divine Mother. There is a great joy in attempting to recollect what one has learnt directly or indirectly from her, and to offer our mind's and life's consecration and our heart's deep gratitude at her feet.

The subject though apparently easy is rather difficult because it is not a general topic but is concerned with individual and personal matters and therefore in speaking about it sincerity is demanded.

Personally I had hardly any privilege of external contact or correspondence with the Mother. But I was fortunate enough to have her blessings on my birthdays for a number of years, and her Darshans which she used to give on the four special occasions in a year. The most unforgettable day was her Mahasamadhi on the 17th November 1973. Before her body was laid in the Samadhi on the 20th, during those few days I had her last darshan a number of times. I have very seldom breathed such heavenly silence as was created during her last physical darshan.

Haven't we heard the famous saying of Sri Aurobindo which we are all familiar with: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you; because she is indeed, always present." The Mother, commenting upon this very saying, elucidates thus, "This is not a mere phrase, not simply words, it is a fact. I am with you in a very concrete manner and they who have a subtle vision can see me."² Won't we feel the presence of the Mother when we hear these reverberating words?

Long ago some doubts had crept into my mind about the divinity of the Mother. But when I read Sri Aurobindo's small book, *The Mother*, it had such a powerful influence on me that it tore off all doubts regarding her. And I despised my stupidity and ignorance. It is a wonderful book. It is indeed a spiritual biography of the Mother.

¹ *The Mother* (Centenary Edition, Vol. 25), p. 31.

² *Bulletin*, February 1958, p. 75.

A few years back I was very much inspired by the talk of the Mother on *Savitri* with a young sadhak. It thrilled my whole being. A great thirst and curiosity drove me to read the poem. Reading *Savitri* was a great experience. It gave me a state of peace and joy. Sometimes, in the period when I used to read *Savitri* quite regularly, I used to hear some lines during sleep in my dreams. One day when I woke up in the morning the feeling was so strong that I began to note down on a paper some lines which I could recollect and the rest followed quite spontaneously. Here is what I wrote. It is on the Mother and is due to her grace.

She is the Mother, the golden bridge,
 A luminous deity with a wonderful fire,
 She is the cosmic Truth.
 Earth refuses to link with heaven;
 But she weds heaven to the earth,
 To bring a greater light of delight
 In the sombre world.
 What she does none can conceive.
 She is brighter than the Sun
 And quicker than the lightning.
 She is the fire of the Supreme Truth.
 In her we live, in her we move,
 The grandeur of immortality is she.
 To be in her is transformation.
 To be away from her is destruction.
 I have known her since eternity,
 So I speak of her all the time.
 I am an angel, half gold and white,
 Of Truth and of Love.

I shall narrate one more significant incident to show how the Mother's grace has worked on me. One year, during the holidays, I had gone to my native place. One day my elder brother took me to a hotel. It was my birthday. For sometime I felt very uneasy. The fact was that I was going to miss the rare opportunity of seeing the Mother. I think I prayed to her that I should receive something from her. I remember Sri Aurobindo once said: "One may be physically near the Mother and yet as far from her as the Sahara desert"¹ and even if physically far away, if one is inwardly open to her, she is close and near. In the hotel, as we ate a dish, the waiter gave each one of us a piece of newspaper to wipe our hands since our hands had become oily. Before I proceeded to wipe my hands with the paper given to me, I saw to my utter surprise that there was the picture of the Mother in it. My happiness knew no bounds. With overwhelming joy I said to my brother, "Look

¹ *The Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 25), p. 170.

here! What I have got!" It was indeed the grace of the Mother. I may add that like myself many other devotees have had several kinds of experiences through her grace.

The Mother's teachings have a great impact on me; especially her views on education and future society are splendid. In her *Prayers and Meditations* she shows how we should learn to pray to the Divine in the true spirit. In *Tales of Long Ago* she teaches us how we should develop noble qualities and high ideals.

At the same time I also learnt the art of remembering dreams through her instructions. One can find all sorts of solutions, from the material plane to the spiritual plane, from her wonderful writings. Perhaps there are many things we have learnt indirectly from her. So it is rather hard to specify or analyse these through our minds. Here in the Ashram we are all in a very real sense breathing constantly the Mother's consciousness. She has said, "Here, at Pondicherry you cannot breathe without breathing my consciousness."¹ And she adds, "Further, my consciousness can be felt in the material vital, then on the mental plane and other higher planes, everywhere."²

Whatever I have learnt from the Mother is mighty little and there is still mighty more to be learnt. The Mother does not demand anything from us. She gives boundlessly all she has. I have learnt from her what true love is. Let us all try to be worthy of her divine mission upon the earth. Let us all help, however little it may seem, in building a new world of tomorrow. Let us pray and collaborate in her great task. Let us remember these soul-stirring words of the Mother:

"No human will can finally prevail against the Divine's will. Let us put ourselves deliberately and exclusively on the side of the Divine, and the Victory is ultimately certain."

Let Her Will be *done!*

Thank you.

Speech by Jitendra Sharma

I am asked to speak a few words about my relation with the Mother and what I have learnt from Her. I find it rather a difficult task. Our relation with Her is so sweet, loving and personal that words cannot express it. The human mind has a tendency of deforming and colouring the Truth, and it may bring in several elements of insincerity and egoism. And then, how can one make a list of the things that one has learnt from the Divine Mother? It cannot be doubted that each one of us has learnt something from Her. The Mother's contact, whether direct or indirect, has brought a radical change in our life. Her divine touch has moulded and is always moulding our lives according to Her conception. We are the children of the Divine Mother and have to fulfil the task that She has entrusted to us.

As far as I am concerned, I had the privilege of having a personal contact with

¹ *Bulletin*, February 1958, p. 73.

² *Ibid.*

Her during the last years of Her physical existence. And I am ready to share with you a few of the things that She has taught me. Whenever I had some question, I wrote to Her. And She always answered with much love and sweetness. At times She was even witty.

Once I asked Her, "Sweet Mother, why has God created so many human beings?" The Mother replied, "In the hope of having one good one."

These words reveal a great truth. We human beings are not what the Divine expected us to be. We have lost the sight of the goal for which we are on earth. If there had not been the supreme reason of discovering the Divine and becoming one with Him, manifesting Him, realising Him even externally, earthly life would have become something monstrous. We must never forget that we are here to realise the Divine.

We are surrounded by all sorts of people. Each one of them has his own way of feeling, willing and thinking. Naturally, one is bewildered and finds it difficult to distinguish between Truth and Falsehood. Then, how to know the Truth? When asked, the Mother replied: "You can know the Truth only when you are conscious of the Divine."

Every human being carries in himself his own spiritual law. It is not the same for everyone. Each individual being has a direct and unique relation with the Supreme, the Origin, That which is beyond all creation. It is this unique relation which must be expressed in one's life, through a unique mode of living in relation with the Divine. And for that, the first step is to know oneself.

Once I asked the Mother, "How can a child know, without the help of his parents or teachers, what he really is?" The Mother replied, "You must find it out yourself but not with your mind. It is only the psychic that can tell you."

The most important lesson that I have learnt from the Mother is that the highest aim of life is to find the truth of our being, our real self, our divine essence which "carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity."¹ This, in fact, is our psychic being, the Divine person in us, other than our outer ego-personality. But in our present condition it is thickly veiled and therefore we have to find a way to discover it. How to do so? The Mother Herself has provided us with a practical way to make this great discovery and I would like to read Her own words which I have found most inspiring:

"The path to come to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with traps and problems and to face them demands a determination that must be equal to all test and trial. It is like the explorer's journey through virgin forest, in quest of an unknown land, towards a great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery to be made requiring as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few words of advice may be useful to one resolved to undertake it:

"The first and most important point which must never be forgotten is that

¹ *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education* (1966 Edition), p. 74.

with the mind it is impossible to judge of spiritual things. All who have written on yogic discipline have said so, but very few are those who put it into practice and yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental judgment, mental opinion and reaction.

“Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as a help for progress and make at once the progress required.”¹

And She concludes:

“In brief, never forget the purpose and the goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there soaring over you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.”²

True knowledge comes from the deeper being or the higher reality and expresses itself in action. The mind has a formative and organising power, and it is that which puts the different elements of inspiration in order, for action, for organising action. True knowledge acting in the outer being gives true power. On another occasion, the Mother told me, “It is only when we have a strong background of knowledge that we can face life successfully.”

In brief, I shall say that my personal sweet relation with the Mother has helped me a lot. She has always solved my problems and will always guide me in future. I am sure about that. Her contact has made me conscious of the purpose of my existence. I aspire to become Her sincere, docile and perfect instrument so that She may act freely through me. That’s all!

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

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MAN AND WOMAN

(Continued from the issue of December 1977)

GIRLS must be taught from early childhood to be careful about two things in their personal life, two things which will help them to maintain good health and keep them free from the terror of painful disorders in their monthly periods. These two things are proper diet and regular physical exercise. Though we are what we eat and food plays a very important role in our lives, we give hardly any attention to the items of food that are essential for keeping us in good health. Health, we have come to believe, is something beyond our reach and as such we rarely make an effort to know things about our body, how it functions and how to maintain it in optimum health. Recently with the spread of Health Education and Natural Health Movement some knowledge is finding its way to the intelligentsia, but the majority of women do not have easy access to it. Even the so-called highly educated modern women have many wrong notions about what food is good for health and which one will harm it. Most of them indulge freely in dieting in the hope of gaining graceful looks and a trim figure, but very few devote proper attention to their health. Health is more than graceful looks and a trim figure. Health means strength, plasticity, endurance, capacity for hard physical work, cheerfulness and many other things including absence of disease and other annoying symptoms, like impatience, tiredness, weakness, nervousness, etc.

A girl who grows up in an atmosphere of freedom and equality, who has been taught from early childhood to take care of her health and does regular exercises like Asanas, walking in the fresh air, etc., will be the ideal woman when she grows into maturity. If faced to do any hard type of physical work she will do it willingly and, at the same time if the situation demands of her to prove her mental qualities, will be equally successful in tackling her job properly. Whether at home or in any other field she will be able to face every challenge.

Those girls and women who have or had no chance of going to school and college and learn special exercises, can do well to learn some particular asanas, which will help them to strengthen their abdominal muscles. It will be better if these asanas are learnt from those who know and are doing them regularly. Sarvangha Asana, or shoulder-stand pose is good for the whole body. Hala Asana (Plough posture), Bhujanga Asana, Garbha Asana (Foetus posture) Pawanmuktasana and Dhanurasana, are all very good for exercising abdominal muscles. These Asanas help one to maintain balanced weight and keep one in proper health. Asanas must be done in a quiet place and very relaxingly, without any strain. They should be done on an empty stomach, the best time being early in the morning or in the evening. After Asanas one should relax for 10-15 minutes to get the full benefit out of them. During the monthly period also one can do Asanas without harming one's health. But one should not do them when one has a cold and

cough, fever or pain in the body. At these times one may do Shava Asana (Dead-man's posture) with benefit as it helps to relax all the nerves of the body, if done rightly.

Regarding food also, a girl must be conscious about what is good for her health and what is injurious. In their competition for equality with men, some women have started smoking, drinking alcohol, etc. which is very harmful for health for both men and women, specially the latter, as they will have one day to give birth to a new body, which must be built from a healthy body. Fresh vegetables, juicy and sweet fruits must be eaten regularly by girls who want to be healthy. Instead of tea and coffee, which spoil one's digestion, one should drink fresh sugar-cane juice or juices of other seasonal fruits or lemon-honey water, which help the digestion and thus improve one's health. Too much fried and oily food, full of a lot of spices, is injurious for the inner mucous membranes of the digestive organs.

To be healthy a girl will need to be trained from very early in life to be particular about the food she eats and also the need of exercise and physical work to keep the body in proper shape. Exclusively mental work makes the body sick. The body needs movement to keep on working properly. Previously our women used to do a lot of hard physical work at home like grinding cereals or pulling water from a well, brooming the house, looking after plants, etc., and automatically they enjoyed good health. Of course, we do not have to go back to old ways of life to gain health, but we can try to cultivate habits of physical work of any kind, instead of hating it as many modern women have a tendency of doing. Health must be maintained if a woman wants to be equal to man and be strong enough to compete with him in external life.

(To be continued)

PUSHPA A