

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JULY 1978

Price: Rs. 1.75

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

INLAND

Annual Rs. 18
Life-Membership: Rs 250

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail:

Annual: The equivalent of Rs 47 00
Life-Membership The equivalent of Rs. 680.00

Air Mail:

- 1) To all countries *except* Canada, U.S.A., South America, West Indies:
 - a) Annual: The equivalent of Rs. 125 00
 - b) Life-Membership: The equivalent of Rs. 1759 00
- 2) To Canada, U.S.A., South America, West Indies:
 - a) Annual: The equivalent of Rs 155 00
 - b) Life-Membership: The equivalent of Rs. 2170.00

All Rights Reserved. No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations.

All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002, India

Editor's Phone: 782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

C O N T E N T S

EUROPE 1974: A TRAVELOGUE	<i>Chaundona & Sanat</i>	
	<i>K. Banerji</i>	... 483
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE:		
THE MOTHER—SWEETNESS AND LIGHT		
by Nirodbaran	<i>Review by Peter Heehs</i>	... 486
BOOK NOTICES		
SWEET MOTHER: HARMONIES OF LIGHT		
by Mona SARKAR		
THE ONE WHOM WE ADORE AS THE MOTHER		
OUR MOTHER by Dr. Prema Nándakumar		... 488
STUDENTS' SECTION:		
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION—		
SPECIAL FORTY-FIRST SEMINAR IN CELEBRATION		
OF THE MOTHER'S BIRTH CENTENARY—SPEECHES		
BY HARDIE NAG, DIMPLE ROY,		
SHOMA DUTT	<i>Compiled by Kishor Gandhi</i>	... 489

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 is to stock paper for half a year. We have to pay Rs. 5,000. This will make a big gap in our resources. So we badly require donations of any amount that can be spared by our well-wishers. Very the best of wishes!

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.

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

Published by: P. COUNUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY-605002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-605002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R. N. 8667/63

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

WHEN IS ONE READY FOR THE INTEGRAL YOGA ?

WHEN one has established in oneself a perfect equality of soul in all circumstances.

That is the indispensable condition, the absolutely necessary basis; something very quiet, very calm, very peaceful and the feeling of a great force. Not the quietness that comes from inertia, but the feeling of a concentrated strength which keeps you always equal whatever happens, even in the midst of the most terrible circumstances of life.

Certain signs precede this state and show that you are well on the way.

A time comes, for example, when you feel literally imprisoned in the ordinary consciousness, squeezed as it were within something extremely narrow and hard. You feel suffocated, the constraint becomes almost unbearable, you try to free yourself only to knock against walls that seem to be made of bronze.

That means that the consciousness within has reached a point where the outer mould has become too small for it. The ordinary life, the ordinary activities, the ordinary relations, all appear so small, so petty! You feel within yourself a force that is about to burst open this too narrow covering.

Yet another sign is that whenever you concentrate and aspire, you feel a force, a light, a peace coming down into you,—you aspire and the answer is immediate. This shows that the relation is well established.

WHAT DOES THE INTEGRAL YOGA DEMAND ?

In the integral Yoga, the integral life down even to the smallest detail has to be transformed, to be divinised. There is nothing here that is insignificant, nothing that is indifferent. You cannot say, "When I am meditating, reading philosophy or listening to these conversations I will be in this condition of an opening towards the Light and call for it, but when I go out for a walk or see friends I can allow myself to forget all about it." To persist in this attitude means that you will remain untransformed and never have the true union; always you will be divided; you will have at best only glimpses of this greater life. For although certain experiences and realisations may come to you in meditation or in your inner consciousness, your body and your outer life will remain unchanged. An inner illumination that does not take any note of the inner and the outer life, is of no great use, for it leaves the world as it is.

COMMUNICATION WITH OBJECTS AROUND US

AN EXPERIENCE AND THE MOTHER'S COMMENTS

Sehra's Letter

Dearest Mother,

I am very sorry to trouble you but a certain experience needs to be told so that I may have your guidance.

It has been going on for several months and now it is more intense. All objects around me—including bottles and soaps and even stones and walls—are like living beings. You know that I was always in contact with the life of trees, but this is something new. To make you see how far it has gone I will tell you my experience of last night.

I woke up suddenly from sleep as if somebody had been calling me. I sat puzzled for a while and then thought of going to the bathroom. The moment I entered it, all objects started speaking to me. The mug said, "You haven't put me in my right place near the pail." And the water in the pail said, "You didn't wash your face with me but with tap-water." There were also other things I had not done as usual—things which I purposely do every day to satisfy the demand of the objects.

So I understood that these object had woken me up. I feel as if they were beginning to possess me. I don't mind making them happy, but I shouldn't get cracked. What is happening and what should I do?

The Mother's Reply

There is nothing to be alarmed about. I consider this sensitiveness as natural. It is simply that you are becoming more conscious, and there is not much difficulty in telling these things, before you retire, to keep quiet during the night in order not to disturb your sleep.

With love and blessings.

Sehra's Interview: 1.10.1963

As soon as I went to Mother, she asked, "Are you still in contact with them?"

"With whom?" I questioned, a little surprised.

"With the objects around you."

"Yes, Mother, but I must tell you that after I wrote to you I felt rather guilty. At night they seemed to say, 'So you have told Mother about us.'"

"There is nothing to feel guilty about. And, as I wrote to you, you must keep in contact with them, because you will then begin to see many things. But you must have some control over the objects. To them you are like a God and they

will obey and do what you want. You must be calm and firm with them and not allow them to grip you in any way.

“You know how, when I used to give flowers, the flowers spoke to me, sometimes asking to be picked up. Even when I was in France, objects used to speak. I had a vegetable and flower garden. Often the vegetables would call me from afar when I was in my own room. They would say, ‘Pick us up, we are ready.’ And I would go and see and find they were right. .. It is good to open yourself. You will learn a lot ”

WHO SAID...?

Who said that you are gone?
 That you are amongst us no longer?
 The fragrant air we breathe is charged with you—
 Your light within our hearts seems stronger
 With each passing day.
 We dwell in every curve of your smile,
 The glow from your eyes is our very sun
 In whose warmth that is ever we take new birth
 Moment after moment sheer ecstasies,
 Honeyed sky and honeyed earth;
 Your arms encircling the whole world—
 Bliss, security, continuing the old sweet ties!

18.3.1978

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of June 1978)

The Mother's Compliments and Criticisms

THE Mother, although capable of being a "supreme Diplomat" (a phrase from *Savitri*) when the Divine Guidance required it, could be quite uninhibited both in the tenderness of Mahalakshmi's Grace and in the severity of Mahakali's Grace—both the movements being straightforward acts for the soul's good and having behind them the Grace of Maheshwari's wisdom and the Grace of Mahasaraswati's skill in works.

We must realise that the same soul, for its good, could receive in clear-cut terms at different times the unqualified compliment and the unconditional criticism. It would be wrong to go exclusively by the one or the other. Each is absolutely true on its own occasion. It is meant to touch the soul, the true being within us and either make it move further along the right path on which it is at the moment or else to bring it back to the right path when the direction ahead has been obscured by some wrong impulse in one's own nature or by outside influences of an unsuitable kind.

An example which immediately occurs to me is of one whom the Mother had considered to have "the nature of the Saints" but who happened to drift away from the Ashram after a number of years. I was confused—until the Mother explained that the subconscious could hold the very opposite of the qualities present in the conscious being and this opposite might erupt at any moment under the pressure of circumstances. If one was not sufficiently on guard, the upsurge could bring about a "fall". According to the Mother, the mistake in my psychology was its excessive simplification: I looked at one side with exaggerated emphasis and ignored the rest. To counteract the sadness and discouragement which I felt, the Mother wrote a little later: "I may point out to you that nothing irreparable has happened. Of course the further one wanders away from the path, the more radical will be the conversion needed to return to it; but the return is always possible." (22.12.1943)

Amrita had once referred to the person in question as being almost a part of the Mother. And, with the help of the extraordinarily developed soul-quality which the Mother had spotlighted, the invasion of the subconscious was eventually repelled and, after a long passage through a whole "sea of troubles" not only was the old profound relationship with the Mother re-established, but the storm-tossed wanderer came again to the old "haven-heaven". Now the saint-nature has the chance to be permanently at work.

The Mother's compliments are surely no mere emotional responses, much less tactics of convenience. They reach deep down to some basic trait, particularly when that trait has sent a radiation of itself to the outer being either at a certain moment or during a certain period. However, they must never be regarded as an all-time blanket certificate for a perennial halo. There is a tendency in people to publicise such encomiums, and sincere friends are liable to harp on these tributes, forgetting that, although the words of praise were most apt at the time of their utterance and indicate a permanent potentiality in the being, human nature is very complicated and there could be on the part of the complimented individual even a play of cunning, vindictiveness, dishonesty and various deviations from the Integral Yoga. On the other hand, criticisms, no matter how keen, from the Mother cannot be taken as eternal condemnations. They act on the contrary side the same role as the compliments. They hit out at the upthrust of some base attribute for a while and are meant to awaken awareness of it in the person concerned as well as to put others on watch against the possibility of it at some instant in the future. Actually, there is nobody on whom the Mother has not at one moment or another made some sort of cutting remark for the good of that disciple's soul, but if the piercing flame has gone home and the disciple has received it with the insight of his inmost self it could very well happen that the reverse of the criticism, a luminous compliment, would follow in the very wake of the corrective stroke.

Occasionally what looked like a complete about-turn by the Mother has puzzled the sadhakas no end. A very extreme case came to my notice a year or two before she passed away. A sadhaka took to her all the required details, including the photograph, of a person who wanted to be admitted into the Ashram. He brought back a clear refusal. After the negative news had been conveyed to the applicant, the latter had a talk with another sadhaka and told him of the sad result. The second sadhaka took it upon himself to put the man's case once more before the Mother. This time there was a clear acceptance. Here seemed indeed a poser. Why did the Mother say No and Yes about the same person on two consecutive days? Was she capricious? Was her judgment clouded on one or the other occasion?

It was supposed that the different personalities of the two go-betweens made all the difference. It was said that the Mother's answer depended on the way the case had been presented. Indeed it is true that the proper attitude has a say in all matters and that there is something called incalculable Grace in the Mother's dealings. But an ever-present truth-sense is also at work in her actions. There is a straight plunging into the heart of a situation and a luminous feeling of the future. Behind it all is the drive, sometimes open, sometimes concealed, often direct, often roundabout, towards the progress of every soul. I should be inclined to essay the paradox that the two contrary answers came not because two dissimilar persons carried the application but because the applicant was himself two different persons on the two days. The man who first applied was not the one who had already suffered the Mother's refusal. The man who applied once more had received the rejecting blow and was

thereby a different man. He had felt his ego crumble, the eyes of his soul had suddenly opened and he then approached the Mother not with a demand to be her child but as one who was already in his heart her child and had come in search of his long-lost Mother.

I cannot say the Mother always thinks up and plans out her moves. In her outer consciousness she may not always know what the purpose is of the Divine Force that is her true self. She may commit what looks like a mistake on an occasion. I should state that, viewed from purely external standpoints, some of her actions cannot help being considered errors but through those errors there can take place what we may term spiritual shock-tactics. Something unexpected makes a tremendous impact on the hearer and carves for him a short cut to a truth about himself of which he was unaware. One has always to probe one's own depths in order to realise the dark spot because of which an apparent misjudgment by the Mother has disturbed one's self-complacency. Instead of wondering how the Divine could make mistakes, one should ask: "Why not, if they help to do the Divine's work with a startling swiftness?" The Divine could certainly make mistakes, but even the mistakes are divine.

Of course the benefit of the Divine's mistakes can be reaped only if the sadhaka is ready to look into himself with the conviction that whatever the Mother does is directed to the development of his soul and he has not to rest until by an inlook he has found the wrong turn hiding in some obscure recess of his nature.

Let me recount a personal experience. Sehra and I, when we first settled here together, had at our disposal a fine spacious flat. The proprietor of a flat which we had occupied on a short visit a year or two earlier came to tell me that those rooms which had been once appreciated by us but had later been rented out to another party by him had fallen vacant. Would we like to take them up once more? I thanked the man for coming to us but explained that we were very comfortably lodged already and had no mind to change the apartments. I suggested that if he were in need of a tenant he should go to Amrita and ask him to put someone there. This was at a time when the upper floor of our house, which was occupied by some other sadhakas, was soon to be vacated. We had it in mind to request the Mother to let Sehra's sister Mina occupy it in partnership with us.

A few days after the previous landlord's visit Sehra at the playground put our request to the Mother. Immediately the Mother with a stern face declared: "I have no intention of giving you the upper storey. You have already planned to leave your present flat and go to one you had once occupied." Sehra was absolutely stunned. She could just look her utter astonishment and come away much disturbed and depressed. When I learned of the confusion I at once wrote a letter to the Mother telling her that what she had told Sehra had been exactly the opposite of the real situation. I expressed my wonder as well as the hurt amazement that she could entertain the idea of our having such a deceitful plan in our heads. I related what had transpired during my meeting with the earlier landlord. We could not help marvelling how information could get so topsyturvy and through

whom. I had spoken of the landlord's visit only to Udar. And Amrita was the other person who knew of it through the landlord's own meeting with him. Both of them were dear friends and I could not imagine either of them deliberately misreporting to the Mother. Nor could I imagine them not understanding the true posture of things. So we spent an uncomfortable night.

The next day when Sehra met the Mother, the Mother referred to my letter and said: "I understand everything now. But what could I do when I got that report from more than one reliable source? It meant not only deceit on your side but also the drag on me suddenly to pay the rent of your flat until I found some other occupants. Now it is all right and you can have the upper floor for Mina and yourselves." Here was certainly what one might dub a Himalayan blunder. I was never able to sort things out because neither Amrita nor Udar could conceive of any reason for the Mother's having the impression she did have. But I was convinced that there was some important point in the inconceivable actuality. I peered long and deep into myself and caught a strange velleity which should never have taken shape. It was as if we were not satisfied with the wonderful flat that had come to us and were on the look-out for something else. What I told the old landlord was true, for there could be no comparison between what we had and what he offered. But I remember that, time and again, during our outings in the evening we looked to right and left to know whether any apartment had a sign of "To let" for us to go and see the inside. I cannot rationalise this urge at all: it was something obscure and perverse, indicating a spot of ignorant ingratitude. The Mother's incomprehensible slash brought this spot quivering up to the surface and put a stop for good to the neck-craning this side and that for a possible change of residence.

The ingratitude, on concentrated thinking, disclosed itself as all the more out of place when I recalled how our flat had fallen to our lot. At the time the Mother first expected us to settle in the Ashram and sent out Amrita to arrange for our living quarters he particularly sought to engage the very flat in which we had once stayed and whose landlord later came to offer it to me. In the list of his failures the lack of success in getting this flat was the most prominent. When our exodus from Bombay was postponed but its ultimate occurrence was certain at the beginning of the following year, the Mother kept Amrita on the alert for a suitable flat. At one point Nolini wrote to me that Amrita had found the best possible accommodation and that the Mother had fully approved of it. A few months later he wrote again saying that somehow the ideal accommodation had been snatched out of Amrita's hands: I was asked to come to Pondicherry myself and help find a flat.

I phoned to Navajata's travel agency and booked a train-ticket. The next day I went by bus to collect it. As I alighted at the stop nearest to the office I was hailed by a young Muslim whom I had met a year earlier in Pondicherry.

"Hullo, where are you off to?"

"I'm going to settle in Pondi and I am on my way to collect my train-ticket."

"Where will you be staying there?"

"I have to look for a flat."

"May I make a proposal? I have a flat in Pondi but my business has not turned out well and I want to dispose of the flat. Would you like to take it?"

"I should certainly like to see it. Will you put me in touch with your landlord and request him to show me your flat?"

My friend pulled out a notebook from his pocket and wrote a short letter and gave it to me. I thanked him and went to the travel agency.

On reaching Pondicherry I contacted Amrita and showed him the letter I had brought with me. He was amazed. What I had been offered was the very set of rooms that had slipped from his hands owing to the intervention of a third party. The third party happened to be the young Muslim who had later to leave Pondicherry. It struck me as nothing short of a miracle of the Mother's Grace that the man who had taken away the flat approved for us by her should have been waiting at the precise bus-stand where I had to alight in order to get my ticket for the trip to Pondicherry, which would decide where we should settle.

I believe that the tendency in us not to feel completely content with the result of such Grace was an utterly wrong movement. It is in my view also significant that the question of this flat should have arisen between the Mother and us from the appearance of the proprietor of the rooms which had been sought for but missed by Amrita at the time when, owing to certain unfortunate psychological factors of which I have written elsewhere, the Mother's plan to bring us to the Ashram could not be fulfilled. Everything hung together as though by some occultly planned "coincidence" to create an occasion for the wrong movement in us to be touched by the finger of light. But how could it have been touched without that inexplicable misunderstanding by the Mother which shook us up, sent us nearly out of our wits and made us cast about for some reason for the apparent irrationality?

The Mother's actions were always inspired by an inner truth—and the inner truth has many facets. Almost from hour to hour, if not from moment to moment, there is a kaleidoscopic switch from one to another, though not always in a very marked manner. Naturally, the Mother's direct and immediate insight into this truth gets expressed variously. Of course, a certain central mould of soul-personality persists throughout a life-time, but it is not a rigid cast either. Always the outer mental-vital-physical being is a constantly changing mixture, and according as the sun-white rainbow-shimmered soul looks out or not, the Mother responds with compliments or criticisms, while keeping always the vision of the soul's ultimate unfoldment before her. In the story I have recounted, her action, impelled by that vision, took two contrasting forms, one of which was more bewildering in its radical sweep than usual. Most often the criticism is attuned more to the apparent play of a fault and is not so subtly oriented.

The lesson for an observer of the Mother's diverse "reactions" is that he must

not jump to easy and final conclusions. Rarely, even one who has been very highly complimented may lose his way and his life may terminate not with a celestial bang but with an all-too-mundane whimper. I may end with an example which is rather saddening, especially to me who knew the person intimately. Sri Aurobindo once asked Nirodbaran, if this sadhaka, along with another well-known name in the Ashram was not doing the Aurobindonian Yoga, who was doing it. He also declared him a born Yogi. I remember how the Mother used to direct newcomers very frequently to have a talk with this friend of mine who had a radiant dynamic personality. Normally he led a somewhat secluded life. When the Ashram expanded and a lot of new activities involving youngsters came up, there was a sudden change in his poise. Later I could see a gradual loss of perspicacity in him and a lowering of the ultimate ideal. Finally he went out of the Ashram. His bent of leadership remained and he could influence people along fairly fruitful lines in the ordinary world-field, but the Mother lost all interest in his movements and even expressed her dissatisfaction now and again. His failure to consummate the initial lofty promise has been to me the most tragic episode in the Ashram's history of sadhakas' ups and downs serving as occasions for the Mother's compliments and criticisms.

AMAL KIRAN

VESPERS

THE sea bears the cross
 Above the waves of vespers.
 The distant rims prospecting for gold
 Plumb for the jewelled spill of heaven.
 A looming murk of still water,
 Stretched in etherised breath,
 Awaits the whispering witch
 To spell out its drops.
 Across the burgling dusk,
 Stealing the embers far away,
 Wings and time rush apace.
 Peace silvers into fruit
 Ripening to rounded fragrance—
 While through the spine of the poles
 Runs a shiver of fission,
 Splitting the globe to stir and sleep.

G. VISWANATHAN

IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

“FOR centuries and centuries humanity has waited for this time; it is come, but it is difficult,” said the Mother to a group of disciples whom she had called, on April 2, 1972, expressly to tell them that? (*Bulletin*, August 1972). She did not dwell on this occasion on the nature of the difficulty except to refer briefly to the difficulty her body had been passing through in order to hasten the process of the transformation. Her body, as we know, she had made an epitome of the material world. All the difficulties of that world, the difficulties that we who live in the material world have to face almost daily, were being fought out in the Mother’s physical frame.

On this particular occasion, she did not say much. But what has been published (in the *Bulletin*, and later in *Mother India*) gives the gist of what she had to say about the way to meet the difficulties—the only way that is truly efficacious. She asked for “heroism” in the true sense, that is, in the sense of becoming fully “unified”—around one’s central or psychic being—and lose the sense of ego. She added, “Take what you can, do what you can, my help will be with you. All sincere effort will be helped to the maximum.” The Mother has always been harping on this theme.

*

Why do difficulties come?

No matter from what source they come, no matter what their apparent cause, there is always a deep import behind them, a supreme purpose, there is a very good reason why they are allowed to come. The Mother answers: “Difficult times come upon the earth in order to compel men to get over their little personal egoisms and turn themselves exclusively towards the Divine and receive the help and the light. The wisdom of man is ignorance. Only the Divine knows.” (7. 12. 1971).

Men do not like to believe this. They like to think that they can by their unaided effort find a solution to all their problems, overcome all difficulties. It is only when they find that things are getting beyond their depth that they think of asking for help—from Someone or Something they consider as being superior to them in power and knowledge.

“When,” as the Mother says in one of her Talks, “even people who know nothing find themselves in circumstances altogether difficult,—they are faced with a problem to solve, or just an impulse to overcome, or something that has upset them,—and they find that they are lost, they do not know what to do, neither with their heads nor with their wills nor their feelings,—they do not know what to do,—then at that time there is something like a call that takes place within them, a call to Something that is able to do what they cannot” (15. 9. 1954).

“If you call, if you aspire,” the Mother goes on to say, “and if you expect to get a response, you will open yourself naturally enough to the Grace... The Grace will respond to you, the Grace will pull you out of your perplexity, the Grace will give the solution to your problem and bring you out of your difficulty.”

But the trouble is that once out of the difficulty, most of us like to imagine that it is our great ability, our mighty intelligence that has really solved the problem. There's the rub. And it is this kind of stupidity that makes the recurrence of difficulties possible, almost inevitable. For this kind of stupidity needs to be broken if man is to arrive anywhere near the Truth and the Felicity. "It is for this reason that the blows go on multiplying and sometimes they become terrible; for, that is the only thing that breaks your stupidity" (*ibid.*).

This sounds harsh. But it is the truth and the sign of a supreme Wisdom.

But man can perhaps learn to be wise, without the necessity of this kind of hard lesson.

*

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have never made any secret of the fact that the integral yoga of theirs is a most difficult affair and should not be undertaken except by those who feel sure of the call. But once on the path, it is perilous to give it up for fear of the difficulties when they begin to assail. Has the Mother anything to offer by way of making the path easier to tread? She has. One has to note carefully what she says in one of her Talks; she considers it very important.

This is the advice she gives to all who have taken to the path: "Never take lightly all the circumstances of each day, all the little things of the life, all the small events, —never take all that lightly. Never react with your lower being; every time you are told to do something or not to do something,—one does not tell you very often,—but every time you are told, reflect before reacting, try to find in yourself which is the part that reacts; do not react just like that, with what is most ordinary in you. Enter into yourself, try to find the best in yourself and it is with that that you must react. This is very important, this is very important" (22. 12. 1954).

This is the surest way to minimise the difficulties of the way. Those who care to observe this simple rule, of obeying strictly the instructions as to what they are asked to do or not to do, "seem to fly", as the Mother puts it, "so fast do they go. And those who do not obey always put the blame on the Divine. They accuse the Grace. They say, 'It is You who have deceived me, it is You who have put me in difficulty, it is You who have made me stumble'... And naturally, they make their case worse, because they push back even the help they could have had in their difficulty, that is all" (*Ibid.*).

*

Those who have had the supreme good fortune of receiving the direct guidance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, those, that is, to whom Sri Aurobindo or the Mother has given express personal instructions as to how to proceed generally or how to meet a given situation, what one has to do or not to do, have an easy task: all they have to do is to follow strictly what they have been told to do or not to do. It does not matter in the least what instructions others may have received from the same

source; that is their business. And even if those instructions are or seem to be quite other than the ones they themselves have received, it does not make the slightest difference. For, each case is individual and, as in homeopathy, the same medicine does not always fit all cases.

The sole "difficulty" here is that one is often apt to ask questions. "For example," as the Mother explains, "when the guru asks you to do a thing and you begin to ask, 'Why should it be done, what is the need for doing it? Explain to me why it is necessary for me to do it. Why is it that I should do it?' that is called questioning. Or one is apt to 'resist'. That means trying to evade the order, and not to carry it out. Naturally, all this does not help. That increases the difficulties very much." (12.1.1955).

*

But all have not had the opportunity to receive personal directions. And of course there is the case of those who cannot now have the Mother speak or write to them and who are not absolutely sure of the intimations they may receive from within. What are they to do? They can and do in fact turn to someone in whom they have faith, and whom they can trust to guide them or help them in their difficulty. They can also, if they choose, consult the writings and the recorded talks of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. To make this task easy, the Mother has left a set of instructions which she has expressly said are of *general* application; in some cases she has emphasised that a given rule is *absolute*. To follow these instructions is to save oneself from trouble.

Some of these "do's" and "don'ts" we may have occasion to elaborate. Here, to conclude this brief outline, are a few words of the Mother which we might care to remember.

"In the difficult hours of life, the imperious duty of everyone is to overcome his ego in a self-giving, total and unconditional, to the Divine ... Then the Divine makes you do what you have to do."

"The Divine is present in our midst. If we always remember Him, He gives us the force to cope with all circumstances in perfect peace and equanimity. Become conscious of this Presence and your difficulties will disappear" (7.11.1970).

"We must let the Lord see and arrange things for us; then we shall be out of trouble."

SANAT K. BANERJI

THE MOTHER'S SADHANA IN ALL

I CAME here in the year 1931. At this time the general sadhana of the Ashram was going on very intensely. Visitors had to get prior permission and sometimes had to send their photographs in order to obtain the privilege of seeing the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Even so, many of them were not allowed to attend all the Ashram functions. Some of them had to cut short their stay because of the powerful pressure in the Ashram atmosphere which they simply could not bear. The Mother has said in reference to this period that she could work on the sadhaks day and night as there was a great receptivity. Probably during this period, the general sadhana was coming down from the level of the Mind towards the Vital plane; and there was a wide opening, much aspiration, enthusiasm and a passion for self-giving and progress.

Visitors' children were not allowed to enter the Ashram compound, much less to be brought before the Mother or Sri Aurobindo. Families with young ones were asked to take lodgings far away from the main Ashram building. The intensity of the pressure would not spare the young ones! In this connection one incident may be mentioned. On the night of 31st December the Mother used to play the New Year Music. Everyone went to listen and to receive the Mother's New Year Blessings. One year a family had come to attend this special function. The parents left their young daughter with someone outside the Ashram on the footpath and proceeded towards the main gate. But immediately after coming near the Ashram the child began to weep. She could not stand the vibrations of the Ashram atmosphere. All sorts of tricks were tried in order to soothe her so that her parents might go and offer their Pranams to the Mother and come back. But nothing seemed to work. Her weeping only increased the longer she stayed there. Finally she began to sob. Her psychological state could not bear even the aura of the Ashram. She became quiet only when she was taken far away from the Ashram building.

When I look back to those days I wonder how we four youngsters were allowed to become permanent members of the Yoga Ashram. As I have mentioned in my book, *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, I had no background, religious or even cultural, before becoming an Ashramite.

Although I came in 1931 I did not begin my correspondence with Sri Aurobindo until 1933. However, sometime during those two years, long before I began to do yoga, the Mother told an old inmate that Nagin had made a remarkable progress! I could not understand what that progress was nor by whom it had been done. Personally I have never pretended to know anything about yoga, at least consciously. And yet what the Mother said could not be wrong. Who was it then that performed that miracle of "remarkable progress" behind the veil? Even after I started the sadhana in 1933 I had to wait two long years to understand that. It was in 1935 that Sri Aurobindo explained to me a little about that action of the Mother's Force:

“Naturally the Mother does the sadhana in each sadhak—only it is conditioned by their zeal and their receptivity.” Not satisfied with such an occult type of sadhana, I asked the Master: “Is it not necessary for us to understand what the Mother’s Force is doing in us for progress in our yoga?” His reply was: “Plenty of people progress rapidly without understanding what the Force is doing—they simply observe and describe and say ‘I leave all to the Mother’. Eventually knowledge and understanding comes.”

So it was only then that the mystery of the “remarkable progress” was solved. During those years I read little about anything spiritual nor attempted seriously any profound meditation. Neither had I any idea of what was meant by aspiration, will or surrender. My mind was preoccupied only with the work assigned to me by the Mother and with learning a little of English and French. All this I carried out not as Karmayoga, but as a mere duty. Thus it is clear that it was the Mother herself who achieved that “progress” without my being aware of it in the least.

NAGIN DOSHI

ANSWERS TO TWO UNBELIEVERS*

Which is your native place? How old? Qualifications?

These are all stock questions of my "previous birth". Let us be beyond these.

Why do you stay in this Ashram?

Because I have found my home here at the Mother's feet.

Why have you changed your clothes?

Because my consciousness has changed. Change of clothes has only whitened the world-shrinking red flame. My tapasya has increased. Then I believed that I should have something to fall back upon. Now I realise that humanity is a child in Her lap and I am also no exception to the truth.

What is your sadhana here?

My sadhana here is to become more and more Her truthful, faithful, obedient child—to live and have my being in Her consciousness.

Why did you give away your money?

Money! Why, I possessed nothing. Only She possessed a few coins through me. They have been rightfully surrendered to the Divine. None can hold but Her gold. When the cow is given, shall the calf be withheld?

How much money?

How much? Not even a week's expense of our commune.

How long are you going to stay here?

I will be here as long as She makes me breathe on earth.

Have you forgotten your Motherland?

First Mother, then Motherland! I am Her instrument. She is the Master-Heroine. She will use it in the proper way. Why should I bother about anything.

* This text, in the form of questions and answers, was written in mid-1929 by a sadhak of the Ashram.

Why have you suddenly changed?

Changed? I have become a link of another chain altogether.

What is that chain?

The Chain of Consciousness that connects me to the holy feet of Sri Aurobindo through Radha the Mother.

Do you truly feel improvement?

Improvement or not, I don't care. I can't weigh Her Will in the scale of scrutiny. She sees me twice a day and knows whether I improve or not. I am Her silent child. The Mother takes better care of the dumb child. If I improve, the improvement is Hers. If I go down, it is She who gives this pulley a downward momentum to raise it up higher! Her Will be done everywhere!

What is your real impression about the Mother?

The impression about the Mother is beyond expression. I cannot express myself beyond what the Lord has Himself done in the book *The Mother*. Read it.

SNAKE FALL

TIER upon tier
Of towering trees
Hover over
This stream's steady descent
Down rocky plateaus;
Winding white water
Splashes through sunlight.

With clambering lunges
In and around
The diving sound
I followed
And mastered its plunges,
Until suddenly stumbling
On a verge unknown
I fell, blankly humbled,
Down to black stone.

Is it so easy
To give up the light?
One last caress of matter,
Then the quick, giddy-ride,
As on a child's slide,
Emptying into the night.

On a bleak, hard ledge,
Wet with my head's blood,
I revived from extinction's edge,
Released by flow, in need of root,
A refugee from that fatal flood
Still noisily tumbling on.
Then amid its tumultuous rush
Came sound from another source:
Soft, rustling orisons
Of a hierarchy of inviolable trees,
Those massive, patient fathers who sway
Gently over the stream below,
Blessing the water on its way.

GORDON

VISION OF THE GOLDEN CHILD

INFINITY's cipher beheld the Golden Child
Asleep beneath a tall wide-limbed Aswattha tree,
A vision of dear peace, alone amidst the wild
Domain of Nature. The ferocious jungle beasts, free

To roam at will; to feed upon unwilling prey,
Did not disturb her slumber, anchored by the Grace
Of the Unique which stood, a sentinel, a grey
Presence: It was the Tree. There was upon her face

A mute surrender so divine, expressed by trust,
That he who watched, enchanted by the shining scene,
Felt that he, wretch of the world, of quickened dust
Created, was an interloper in some serene

Vision which sages with illuminated minds
At times see. And he, a seeker of The Supreme,
Who toiled, endeavouring to conquer the strong winds
Of Nature, wondered at her secret. Was this a dream?

With hesitant feet he came close. And she awoke
And smiled as one who meets a friend within her home.
"Who are you?" she inquired. "You see, my doll has broke!"
She held up a distorted doll which seemed a gnome.

He saw his image, with broken leg and arm
And cracked head. He gaped at the small doll, amazed;
Then he said, "My name is Self. In your hands that form
Resembles me. Is it my sight or am I crazed

Still with some mad forbidden lust, a desire
Which I have slain but, like a devil from his grave,
Comes back to torment me? I have consumed myself in the fire
Of tapasya to find the Lord who will save

And grant me bliss of final release; I seek
But do not find; He eludes my eager search.
I! Who have abandoned all for Him! So weak
Am I! He gives me nought and leaves me in the lurch

With bare pain." And he fell upon the earth and wept
His acrid tears; and the forest seemed to echo his sobs.

She, with compassionate mien, to his side crept
 And stroked his hair. "It's not the loving Lord who robs

You of the fruit you seek. You are yourself the thief
 And from yourself steal. It is good to strive at first
 With strong and sincere search, but now give up your grief,
 Surrender self to Him and He will quench your thirst

In His own way and His own time. To give yourself
 Without expecting spiritual return is best.
 Have you a shopkeeper's heart? You seek not the pelf
 Of the world, but celestial results. This is the test:

To give and give and give; and if ill-fate shall come
 Or bliss, take each as the Lord's wise touch which is meant
 To make you One with Him; be ready to die. Some
 At least would only take, their hearts as hard as flint.

And do not forsake here in the woods the sad earth,
 Your mother, for the incommunicable Inane.
 Return to the world and live your second birth
 In works dedicated to Him. Let Him conquer pain."

And at the Golden Child's touch, a thrill of bliss
 Invaded his being and changed his heart. "Who are
 You, O Child with the gold aura? To speak like this
 Needs wisdom's tongue. You no doubt descend from afar,

From some high world of Ignorance, Pain and Grief void.
 Your word strikes my heart like a fiery thunderbolt,
 And I feel pass to me from you Bliss unalloyed.
 I'm captivated by your grace and my revolt

Against the Lord has been put down, overthrown by your
 Hand. From Earth's night, our common mother, to escape
 Seems like a coward's flight. His Grace appears as sure
 As the sun's rising." The majestic tree seemed to drape

Its branches around him. With beatific glance,
 The Child kept silence. Then she stooped, picked a white rose,
 Bestowing it on him. As though in profound trance,
 He watched her go and saw the jungle her form enclose.

DONALD M. REEVES

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of June 1978)

CHAPTER V

DESCENT INTO THE INCONSCIENT

This hidden foe lodged in the human breast
Man must overcome or miss his higher fate.
This is the inner war without escape.

Savitri (VI. 2)

(I)

SINCE my lower vital and the subconscious centre had opened from the very beginning to the action of the Yogic force, I had been subjected to a continuous attack of the adverse beings, "whose very gaze was a calamity". But this opening did not give me any measure of mastery over myself. It simply prepared the way for a new adventure and unwittingly forced open the much-feared domain of the inconscient which virtually drove me to the verge of death. Had Sri Aurobindo, the Great Explorer of that nether land, not come to my rescue unasked and in the nick of time I would have been swallowed up by the mouth of darkness at the very first stroke, for I was "an ill-armed warrior facing dreadful odds". Often I was lifted to an abnormal mental height only to be dashed to the abyss the very next moment. For more than three years I was like a log of wood drifting on the tide of events.

The answer to the age-old question—"Why is there pain in the world?"—is that the forces of falsehood cannot tolerate any kind of encroachment on their right to rule the earth. So they hit hard whoever dares to challenge their might. Sri Aurobindo firmly holds that the only remedy is the descent of Light into the native home of Ignorance—the Inconscient.

Consequently, when one goes down to the lower regions "one must face the falsehood of the body", as the Mother puts it, and that means disease and death. The reaction, the after-effect, of my passing to that obscure region was so great that even after restoration to normal health I was terribly afraid even to bring the word 'sadhana' to my lips. I was told, again and again, 'No more sadhana in this life.' I avoided, as far as I could, doing anything that could lead to sadhana and lived like a terror-stricken haunted creature in my own "house of life". I was in such a flux of mind that I never knew what would happen to me the next moment.

From time to time I had to remain lying unconscious on the burning sands. Drawn by the voiceless inner cry, sometimes the clouds gathered and it rained but this was followed by the scorching rays of the sun. Yet my life is not a tale of

woes. Despite the beatings of life, the call of the psychic could never be stifled. The darkest hours were replaced by shining dawns leaving no trace of ordeal in the consciousness. The eclipse over, the inner moon regained its lost lustre.

Action in the lower vital was not something foreign to my nature. I had the luck to receive from Sri Aurobindo some highly elevating remarks about my experiences in that region of gloom. I shall quote one. Before I was given a chance to stay for good I had a terrible experience. When I sought the master's view of it, the reply he gave is still imprinted in my consciousness:

"... There should have been nothing horrifying in this last experience. It meant only a descent into the subconscious physical plane but under very favourable conditions, a descent of light, not into obscurity. A tempest also may mean only a movement of inner change, the action of *Indra*, the *Maruts*, to clear the atmosphere of the *Vritra* forces. Whatever the experiences, the fear or alarm should always be rejected."
(19.2.1933)

It should be noted that it was in November 1933 that I was accepted. But the moment the higher force touched the Inconscient, there was such an inner upheaval that I was thrown into a very precarious state. The mind began to reel and all that was around me looked swirling. I seemed to be confronted with a world turned upside down. No bodily consciousness was there except that of an extremely agitated sex-centre, causing a severe burning sensation. A vague idea of the creation of the world by the dance of the *Shiva-linga* crept into the mental consciousness, which kept me occupied for a considerable time, but it was accompanied by astounding incoherent visions. The most comforting aspect of the extraordinary experiences was the complete absence of any lower passion. Finding me in a delirious state some family members got confused but I had no sense of what I was doing and where I was.

When the descending force delved into the deeper layers of the Inconscient it caused almost a volcanic eruption. I ran the risk of being driven into insanity. Much more alarming was the dreadful vision of *Pralaya*. The English rendering of the word—'dissolution'—does not bring to the eye the specific picture of the horrifying scene which was more shocking than an earthquake. The Mother has used the word *Pralaya* in one of her talks in 1956¹. Long afterwards I learnt that *Pralaya* denotes the dissolution of the old personality. This gave me the consolation that my suffering would not end in a vain chimera.

Imagine a lonely figure, oppressed by the tormenting clouds of fear, lying flat on a rock², amidst a roaring sea, helplessly looking at the mountainous waves tossed and retossed. No tree, no building could stand the might of the tidal current. All round me there was a sea with a range of hill-tops partly sunk in water a little away from my prostrate body. No strength was left in me to keep myself aloof from witnessing this breath-taking scene. The whole picture of the experience is still fresh in my memory except for those days when I was under the spell of a nightmare. For

¹ Also in the Mother's Cent Vol. 5, p. 353.

² The Inconscient is said to have been termed the Infinite Rock by the Vedic Rishis.

two days I did not know when the day dawned and the evening set in. No food, bath, or natural call. The mind was in a state of swoon. The tortures of the day were followed by worse torments at night. My starving body grew weaker and weaker. No one was there except a friend who had been appointed by the Mother to look after me when I was sent out for a change to Shillong.

Since I lay dumb on the floor and did not utter a word in reply to his repeated queries he got fed up, threatened again and again that he would report to the Mother by a lengthy wire regarding my obstinacy, my negligence of the body, etc. I was so much overpowered that I could not even open my eyes, so he was alarmed and called a doctor to examine me. After a thorough examination the doctor declared there was nothing wrong in the system. The patient seemed to be under the effect of some shock. How could the doctor fathom the depths of the inner turmoil?

Here I relate two awe-inspiring visions—one before being sent to the General Hospital and the other while in the special ward.

At dead of night, in my sleep I saw a giant hand with awful open claws approaching me. Just when it was about to lay its hold on me I jumped from the bed crying, 'Ma, Sri Aurobindo' and it disappeared. This was sometime in the early nineteen-fifties.

While in the grip of hallucinations I saw my inert, senseless body played with by a huge serpent—entirely green in colour—as a rat is played with by a cat. Here I suffered meekly, for my nerves were so deadened by pain that the inner being could not raise a call for help.

Finding no improvement in my health, my friend decided to take me back to his home. Tortured and exhausted almost to the point of collapse, I returned from Shillong. Luck did not allow me to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Himalayas except while travelling to Shillong from Gauhati. During the return journey I was given some oily stuff brought from the railway station to eat. It was repugnant to my system and I fell victim to dysentery.

Before I could recover I got gas trouble. At the very sight of food there was a sense of nausea. Day by day my condition deteriorated. Each hour heralded a new kind of trouble, a fresh complication in the already tangled state of mind.

I shall relate in my next article what led to this state of things.

(To be continued)

THE IMAGE OF MAN

HIS FOUR FACETS

Facet III: The Frustrated Man

(Continued from the issue of June 1978)

THE third of the English novelists we are about to examine is Aldous Huxley. He has intellectual erudition but as a novelist comes far below either Lawrence or Greene. Yet he exerted considerable influence upon contemporary life by his literary attitude. It is said: "The twenties and Huxley are inseparable; he helped to create its atmosphere in which the decade ended." (*Tradition and Dream* by Walter Allen, p. 41) Not sincerity nor depth of vision but cynicism is at the base of his creation. Hence, "Cynicism is the key-note of Huxley's character. This trait has come to stay in spite of his interludes in *Chrome Yellow* and *Antic Hay*." (*Ibid.*, p.42).

His attitude becomes evident in the following extract where, after emphasizing "the weariness, to the adult mind, of all these merely descriptive plays and novels which critics expected one to admire", he remarks: "Just a huge collection of facts about lust, and greed, fear and ambition, duty and affection, just facts, imaginary facts at that, with no co-ordinating philosophy superior to common sense and the local system of convention, no principle of arrangement more rational than simple aesthetic expediency... If you considered them dispassionately, nothing could be more silly and squalid than the themes of *Phèdre*, or *Othello*, or *Wuthering Heights* or *Agamemnon*." (*After Many A Summer* by Aldous Huxley)

We might perhaps wonder what was the elusive element Huxley termed *his* co-ordinating philosophy and considered superior to Racine's epoch-making play *Phèdre*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, or *Agamemnon* of Sophocles. Has he ever written a novel, a play or an essay which could excel these creations?

A facile or sweeping criticism is an easy matter. But to point out something positive which could replace the things eliminated involves a vast mind, a creative intelligence at work.

But Huxley is neither a writer with a vision, nor a creative genius. Perhaps a parallel could be drawn between Shaw and Huxley. Both possess no particular or outstanding creative force that could elevate their work to distinctiveness but while the former has intellectual subtlety, the latter has to take recourse to cynicism as a pose of conceit. Because of the lack of true creative faculty this pose becomes inevitable to maintain the show of a writer of genius. At the root is frustration, a modern man attempting to gain prominence, but failing, and taking a stand behind a mask of cynicism to hide this glaring poverty either as a thinker or a writer.

Abstraction fills his novels. "So *Point Counter-point* (1928) borrows heavily from Gide while *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) plays tricks with chronological time.... Then

the characters become caricatures, lath and paper dummies with gramophones for bellies, existing as it were in a perpetual brain-trust session, indulging more and more in what are in fact detachable essays. Moreover, they are repeated from novel to novel." (*Tradition and Dream*, p. 42-3)

It would be difficult to arrive at any central idea in Huxley, because he does not possess a central theme, except perhaps the dogma "As a man sows, so shall he reap." This theme is not exclusive to Huxley, for other great authors have treated it with singular success. Moreover, " . . . what we are conscious of in Huxley is not the degradation which is the consequence of wrong choice but only the jigging of puppets. The drama of puppets is horrifying enough but we are unaffected because it is not played out in flesh and blood." (*Ibid.*)

He introduces gratuitous horrors such as a dog dropping from a aeroplane and bursting beside two naked lovers as in *Eyeless in Gaza* or a girl being seduced as a bet by her fiancé's best friend and the fiancé committing suicide as a result. These are devoid of meaning, either to a story-teller or the reader. The possibility of such occurrences may be there but has no true significance in life. The shock-therapy, which is the main objective of Huxley, fails in its purpose.

The fact is that Huxley is agonisingly aware of the terrible contrasts and irreconcilable conflicts within himself between ideations in art and realities of existence. These contrasts are most pronounced in *Ape and Essence* and *After Many A Summer*.

An artificially sophisticated attitude vitiates Huxley's travelogues as well, as in *Jesting Pilate* where among other things he dubs the Taj Mahal "a top-heavy, disharmonious and definitely ugly edifice".

His *Brave New World* is an experiment at pseudo-science fiction without much outstanding success. Only perhaps his *Grey Eminence*, a biographical book, is superb.

At the end of his life, to atone for his cynicism he went in for philosophy as a personal solace. *The Perennial Philosophy* attempts to get rid of his frustration and arrive at some convincing truth of existence.

To turn to American novelists. John Steinbeck deals with biological unanimism. That is, he does not differentiate between the man and the tiger as biological entities. He does not accept the individuality either of man or of tiger as such. To him they belong to different grades of evolution. He is a lover of Life.

This vision can be a broad all-encompassing gaze regarding all things with an equal view, or else it can be the subnormal gaze of the animal. If it had been the former, Steinbeck would have been a philosopher and not a novelist dealing with abnormal or rather subnormal individuals who in effect were slightly elevated animals. If it was the latter, then he was a frustrated man who, carried away by his elemental and raw dynamism, saw all things in a state of animality. That is why Steinbeck is best when he is dealing "with human beings living at something approaching the animal level".

His *Of Mice and Men* is perhaps the most representative work. It "is a pathetic story of human beings at what is almost the lowest level of articulation, to be distinguished from animals mainly, perhaps, by their capacity to dream, though what they dream can never be fulfilled in reality". (*Ibid.*)

It is a "buddy" novel with its inherent suggestion of latent homosexuality. It describes Lennie, the feeble-minded giant protecting his puny friend George. Lennie loves all little creatures like puppies and mice but kills them seemingly out of accident though truly out of inherent instinct.

In Dubious Battle (1936) deals with communism. It is "a story of radical heroism of the illiterates and oppressed restored to their dignity as men by their own efforts and by those dedicated revolutionaries". (*Ibid.*, p. 161)

The Grapes of Wrath functions on a much vaster scale than *Of Mice and Men*. It deals with Americans and their experiences during the 'thirties. It is sentimental at places, pretentious at others, but achieves three-dimensional status. It possesses on the plane of biological unanimism a remarkable power. Unfortunately, Steinbeck cannot always maintain this level. Dealing with a few individuals like Joad and his family and their fortunes, the novel deals with social injustice as did *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. R. V. B. Lewis remarks, "For where Steinbeck failed is in effort to engage with the resources of fiction, the complex realities, the evolving motifs, the outlines and images of things, the very sense of life which make up the matter truly, if deeply and almost invisibly available to the American novelist." (*Modern American Fiction*, p. 266)

Commenting on *The Grapes of Wrath* Lewis points out, "But the relation between the elemental, the felt division, the rebellion and the ordering power of art, is extremely complex. It is partly Steinbeck's habit of oversimplifying both life and art, that has kept him from seeing and taking hold of the complex entirety." (*Ibid.*, p. 268)

Though Steinbeck has written over twenty novels, his image emerges very clearly and authentically in *Of Mice and Men*.

To a God Unknown, *In Dubious Battle*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *East of Eden* are not impressive in their portraits of their heroes. In them, "Steinbeck the sage, the renegade doctor, the renegade minister or the renegade philosopher in puzzled involvement with action helps to give the action such force and meaning as it may possess." (*Ibid.*)

Steinbeck reveals to us two images: (a) an American one where his unanimitic image emerges very clearly; (b) another which has a continental bearing. It is here that he is a failure, for he is out of his element. He can never equal Greene, Silone, Malraux and Camus. He cannot paint the division between man and man with so much intensity and declare like Camus, "I rebel, therefore we are", almost echoing the Cartesian standpoint or confess like Silone, "What determines my rebellion was the choice of my companions."

But Steinbeck can never rise to open revolt as did Malraux or Camus; his frus-

tration leads him instead to a subhuman level.

In *East of Eden* he attempts to recreate and establish the image of Adam, the typical American. He makes an effort to interpret Genesis in his own way, which is in fact a literary disaster, so total is the failure. He has failed to grasp the true import of the central theme of Genesis in general and the fall of man in particular. Instead, "its content is so well suited to suggest the maturing calamities which can befall the American Adam, neglectful of sin and evil, uninterested in paradox and impatient with tragedy which he too confuses with gloom". (*Ibid.*, p. 272)

If Steinbeck is the frustrated, elemental and primitive American, Hemingway is the heroic American with international affiliation creating the image of Papa Hemingway which is the lasting image before us.

Hemingway possesses 'a strange dynamism which is typically American in character, unlike O'Henry, for example, who seems almost English in his temperament. His frustration is of another kind. Although his ulterior motive is personal honour, violence seems to be his watchword. Violence does not and cannot solve any problem; it does not do so with Hemingway. If it had done, he would not have ended his life tragically by suicide.

Basically, he was a dissatisfied individual, in search for the resolution of his problems, which perhaps he never chanced to discover. Allen has summed him up thus: "Hemingway is the dramatist of the extreme situation. His overriding theme is honour, personal honour, what shall a man live by, by what shall he die, in a world the essential condition of whose being is violence.... Hemingway poses the questions but fails to answer them". (*Ibid.*, p. 93)

Curiously his best work remains his early novels such as *In Our Time*, *Men Without Women*, *Winner Takes Nothing*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *Fiesta* and *Farewell To Arms*. But his later books such as *Across The River*, *The Old Man And The Sea* and *For Whom The Bell Tolls* are imitations of his earlier ones, the Papa Hemingway figure merging with the hero, specially in the last-named book. In *The Old Man And The Sea* there is a certain artificial simplicity.

Hemingway, condoning violence, remarks, "Violence, whether that of hunting and fishing, of sex or childbirth or of war, is the condition in which a man must learn to live." (*Ibid.*, p. 94) He never does or can go out of the periphery of physical sensations. He concentrated, therefore, on hunting, fishing, sex and death—and all emotions linked with them. The honour he inferred was the honour of the hunter or lover. He never was surprised at death.

More subjectively speaking, to Hemingway courage lies first in facing death, and next in bearing the stigma of death itself. In the first case is also entwined sex as a dominant factor. Rather we could say the two elements represent the positive and negative aspects of the same principle. The stabbing of the bull and its death represented, in a way, the entry into the female body and death was its culmination, to speak in Freudian terms.

Melvil Backman sums up Hemingway thus. "Running through Earnest

Hemingway from *In Our Time* to *The Old Man And The Sea* are two dominant motifs, the matador and the crucifix. (*Modern American Fiction*, ed by R. B. V. Lewis, p. 201)

In Our Time deals with fascination with death and the miraculous rending of the life of the senses. Nevertheless, in spite of the striking language and description, the book is not a success, the main theme somehow does not emerge.

The Sun Also Rises deals with American and British ex-servicemen living in France, doing nothing except drink and have sex. The hero Jake Barnes, an American newspaperman, castrated due to a war wound, is in love with Lady Brett Ashley who suffers from the unhealed trauma of her fiancé's having been killed in war, which turns her into a nymphomaniac. But she quickly abandons Barnes for Pedro Romero, the bull-fighter, who gets beaten by an ex-champion of Princeton.

The whole book reads as if it had no fixed theme, except to depict the aimless existence of a few men and women, all frustrated individuals, all deprived, low and true representatives of Hemingway's own language.

For Whom The Bell Tolls deals with the civil war in Spain where Robert Jordan, an idealist, finds himself in a group of rebels, mostly gypsies, among whom is Maria. Maria falls in love with Jordan. But Maria's dream of marrying Jordan and later becoming an honourable citizen is dashed when Jordan dies, almost by wrong calculation and as if he invited death, in his attempt to blow up a bridge.

That Hemingway was not a Marxist is apparent in the following passage, where Robert Jordan says, "You are not a real Marxist and you know it. You believe in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. You believe in life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. . . You have put many things in abeyance to win the war. If this war is lost, all of those things are lost." (*Ibid*, quoted by Ray B. West, p. 245)

Curiously, Hemingway was scared of high-sounding words; they went against his "premeditated casualness", as he called it. In fact he confessed in one of his novels, "I was always embarrassed by the words 'sacred', 'glorious', and 'sacrifice'. I had heard them and had read them on proclamations and for a long time. I had seen nothing sacred, the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done to the meat except to bury it." (*A Farewell To Arms*)

This is a highly cynical attitude and on the whole smacks of over-simplifying and deliberately ignoring the issue. Could Hemingway be oblivious of the struggle and the sacrifice that went to build America from the Pilgrim Fathers to the American Revolution? What about Jeanne d'Arc, the Crusades, the great explorers, Dante—to cite only a few examples? The whole pageant of human history is replete with examples which went to make humanity great—and these are not mere words, but concrete facts.

The thing is, Hemingway was a frustrated man, who dabbled in different modes, attitudes, each contrary to the other.

This makes the position of the critics rather delicate. Some considered him a

naturalist, specially in view of *The Old Man And The Sea* with its artificial and studied simplicity, whereas critics like Ray B West maintained that Hemingway was neither a materialist nor a naturalist, not even a Marxist

Perhaps he was all of these and maybe none of them at all

Most revealing is the following passage in which Hemingway remarked about the suggestivity of the naturalist "The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of its being above water. The visible areas glint with the hard actual light of the naturalist. The supporting structure, mostly invisible except to the patient explorer, is built with a different kind of precision, that of a poet-symbolist" (Carlos Baker in *Modern American Fiction*, p 228)

Hemingway possesses a complex nature and this complexity is both baffling and can be subject to patient investigation. He is in love with violence in all its forms. But he is not elemental like Steinbeck nor does he attempt to explore the hidden unconscious like Lawrence. He is American to the core but his affiliations are international.

(To be continued)

ROMIN

THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of June 1978)

The Yoga Of King Lear

V. The Gloucester Subplot (Contd.)

IN an atmosphere of intense and frightful evil, Gloucester has overridden his fears and selfish concerns to do one single good act. For this act he is blinded and cast out of his home to wander on the heath like Lear until he dies. The act of helping Lear required all the courage and strength of which he was capable and more. With that one act his energies were exhausted and he was powerless against attack. Earlier we said that the Gloucester subplot is a reflection in life of the major movement concerning Lear and his daughters. That reflection is made possible by the character and circumstances of Gloucester and his sons and the general state of the kingdom. But the living link between the fate of the King and the Earl is Gloucester's place in the court and his sympathy for Lear. The bond of sympathy puts Gloucester in direct relation to the atmosphere and forces surrounding Lear. That atmosphere is one of destruction and the forces active are of extreme cruelty and evil. Lear has taken the initiative to destroy himself and made it impossible for anyone to save him. When Gloucester persists in trying to help, the only result can be that he is pulled down along with the king.

Lear has rejected the love of his daughter and friend and cast them out of his kingdom, in favour of two evil daughters. He loses his kingdom and power, the support of loyal subjects, he is refused even physical shelter and loses his mental vision, his sanity. Gloucester has rejected his one devoted son and forced him to run away for safety. He has abandoned his one point of real support and arranges to give all to his cunning bastard son. He loses his title and property, his physical vision and is cast out blind from his castle.

This subtle bond of connection is made apparent in a scene in which Shakespeare portrays the horror of evil in the most vivid form possible. Cornwall has discovered Gloucester's support to Lear. Regan and Goneril reveal fully in an instant what lies beneath their feminine appearances.

Reg. Hang him instantly.

Gon. Pluck out his eyes

(III.vii.4)

Goneril, Edmund and Oswald exit as Gloucester enters and is tied to a chair at Cornwall's instruction. Regan plucks the old man's beard as Cornwall interrogates

him. To their insistent question why he sent Lear to Dover, Gloucester responds:

Because I would not see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs. (III.vii.55)

What Goneril proposed a few minutes earlier is expressed again by Gloucester and then executed by Cornwall. What Gloucester says is true. He sent the king away to save his eyes and his life and for doing so he must pay with his own. But, in fact, it was Lear himself who planted the seed long before during his bitter conflict with Goneril at Albany's castle.

Old fond eyes,
Bewep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,
And cast you, with the waters that you loose,
To temper clay. (I.iv.301)

These words carried a power for effectuation. The blinding of Gloucester is the inevitable expression of the forces of life active at the time and a direct result of his aid to Lear and his rejection of Edgar.

Cornwall removes one of his eyes and is challenged by a servant. They fight and Cornwall is wounded. Regan slays the servant from behind. Cornwall completes the blinding of Gloucester and then retires to die shortly thereafter. The servant's opposition and Cornwall's death are the first mortal blow to the evil which has arisen in the country and a clear indication that the ultimate balance of power is in favour of the forces of civilisation. Evil has its play but the result for all who lend themselves as its channels or its instruments is self-destruction. The strength of one servant to resist and the active concern and determination of the other servants to help Gloucester is a clear expression of the established force of good in the country which, even if it cannot save Lear, must certainly assert its strength to save the civilisation from destruction. The forces of good are not established enough to prevent the tragedy. They are a part of a firm social foundation that begins to stir when things go beyond a limit. It is significant that the first good act comes from a servant and not from a high-placed person, indicating the weakness of goodness in general. Along with Cornwall a loyal servant loses his life which is the cost of fighting the evil.

Bradley claims almost universal condemnation for the blinding of Gloucester on the stage "because the mere physical horror of such a spectacle would in the theatre be a sensation so violent as to overpower the purely tragic emotions, and therefore the spectacle would seem revolting or shocking. But it is otherwise in reading. For mere imagination the physical horror, though not lost, is so far deadened that it can do its duty as a stimulus to pity, and to that appalled dismay at the extremity of human cruelty which it is of the essence of the tragedy to excite."¹⁹

Yet what Shakespeare is aiming at here cannot be limited by theories of tragedy. He is giving true expression to a reality of life, not of man's normal surface existence but of the type and action of forces buried deep in man and capable of erupting on the surface. It is not tragic sympathy or pity that is called for, but a face-to-face confrontation with the horrible reality of evil in the world. That reality is expressed in the gruesome blinding scene and could not have been effectively served by its omission

But we must also not fail to see that it is the blinding which brings Gloucester to really see the truth.

Glo. All dark and comfortless! Where's my son Edmund?
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature
To quit this horrid act.

Reg. Out, treacherous villain!
Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he
That made the overture of thy treasons to us,
Who is too good to pity thee.

Glo. O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd.
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him. (III.vii.83-89)

Again,

Glo. I have no way, and therefore want no eyes,
I stumbled when I saw: full oft 'tis seen
Our means secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities. O dear son Edgar,
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again! (IV.i.18-24)

In his pitiable blind condition Gloucester meets Edgar disguised as a beggar who leads him to Dover, all the time concealing his true identity. During their journey Gloucester reveals the growth of his personality since his act of self-sacrifice to save the king and his own blinding. It is characteristic of his similarity to Lear and the universal aspect of the movement which encompasses them both that the experience or realisation, which Gloucester has, closely parallels Lear's. Compare with Lear's experience (III.iv.28) Gloucester's:

Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly,
So distribution should undo excess,
And each man have enough. (IV.i.67-71)

Were this underlying movement, in which Lear, Gloucester and the whole country

are embraced, the creation and initiative solely of evil forces and not containing in it both an individual and collective evolution, no such words could possibly come to men so abused and downtrodden.

The response of life to ignorance and gullibility is even more clearly seen in Edgar than in his father. Edgar is the one major character in the story that does not suffer due to some initiative on his own part. His father can at least be accused of implication in Lear's folly by his silence during the court scene and when Lear's daughters cast him out in the storm and then by the help he offers by sheltering the king. Not so with Edgar. His only initiative, if it can be called one, is his implicit acceptance of Edmund's story of Gloucester's anger and the advice to keep hidden.

When we meet him, Edgar is young, good-natured and inexperienced. He lacks the unbridled strength, dynamism and active evil of Edmund. He is mild, low-keyed and timid but he also possesses a certain nobility, purity of mind and buoyancy of spirit. Young Edgar is a neutral unformed social personality of small build like his father. Both lack the expansiveness and generosity, the depth and intensity, so notable in Lear. There is neither motivation nor strength for active goodness, rather a general concern for self-preservation and a self-preoccupation issuing from that concern. Dullness, fear and gullibility make Edgar an easy victim. Edmund describes him thus:

A credulous father! and a noble brother
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy! (I.ii.170)

In his anxiety to escape detection Edgar takes on the habit of a wandering madman and hides in a deserted hovel on the heath. Lear enters with Kent and the Fool. The king is on the verge of real madness himself. Edgar, acting his part as Tom O' Bedlams, adds a further element to Lear's crazed state and fosters his disintegration. The sight of the mad Lear does not move him to forget his own woes and succour the king. He rants like a madman to conceal his true identity. Bradley writes, "At sight of Edgar, in a moment something gives way in Lear's brain and he exclaims:

Hast thou given all
To thy two daughters? And art thou come to this?

Henceforth he is mad."¹⁹ Even when Gloucester appears unaccompanied on the heath in search of Lear, Edgar does not reveal himself and seek an explanation from his father. Had he done so, Edmund's plot might have been uncovered and Gloucester retained his eyesight.

But from here on we begin to notice a development in Edgar's character. Gradually the horrible impression of Lear's suffering and later of Gloucester's

brings forth a strength in Edgar to overcome his fear and self-concern and experience the suffering of others with an open heart and true compassion. This is first brought out during Lear's mock trial of his daughters in the house near Gloucester's castle while Edgar is disguised as the beggar

(*aside*) My tears begin to take his part so much
They mar my counterfeiting. (III.vi.59)

Soon after, Gloucester returns and warns of the conspiracy to kill Lear. All exit but Edgar.

When we our betters' see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,
Leaving free things and happy shows behind;
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
How light and portable my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the King bow—
He childed as I father'd! Tom, away!
Mark the high noises; and thyself bewray,
When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
What will hap more tonight, safe 'scape the King!
Lurk, lurk. (III.vi.103-115)

Lear and Gloucester awaken to a truer vision and feeling of life through their own suffering and that suffering leads them to make a growth in consciousness. But for Edgar and Cordelia the most painful suffering is not their own. Edgar is tormented by the suffering of Gloucester and Lear and through the experience of that suffering comes to shed some of the restraints and limitations of his own personality. Physical suffering comes as a response to some latent or overt capacity for violence and cruelty in oneself as revealed in both Lear and Gloucester. Where the nature is pure, sensitive and noble as it is to a high degree in Cordelia and a lesser degree in Edgar, the experience of suffering comes outside oneself. The intensity and pain may be equally great in either case. The nobler spirit is acutely sensitive to what happens around him and his nature opens under the shock of it without the necessity of being personally inflicted. In Edgar the suffering of the king and his father brings out the nobility of his nature, inexperience and gullibility give way to the wisdom of a patient endurance and equanimity, fear for self gives way to concern for others.

When next Edgar meets his father, Gloucester is blind. Once again Edgar is contemplating his own very bad fortune (IV.1.1). Immediately the blind Gloucester enters with bleeding rings where once were eyes. Life shocks Edgar

out of his self-concern with its brutal display of pain and suffering.

But who comes here?
My father, poorly led? World, world, O world! (IV.i.9)

His capacity to play the beggar vanishes with the pain of seeing his father.

Edg. Poor Tom's a-cold. (*Aside*) I cannot daub it further.
Glo. Come hither, fellow.
Edg. (*Aside*) And yet I must—Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.
(IV.i.53)

At the same moment father and son are deeply touched; Edgar for his father and Gloucester for all those in life who do not have enough.

Later Gloucester and Edgar are confronted by Oswald carrying a message from Goneril to Edmund. Oswald thinks to slay the old man.

A proclaim'd prize! Most happy!
That eyeless head of thine was first fram'd flesh
To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor,
Briefly thyself remember. The sword is out
That must destroy thee. (IV.vi.228)

Gloucester is content to be killed but Edgar intervenes and after a brief duel kills Oswald. Again it is the vibration of pure evil confronting the neutrality of common man and forcing him to fight for survival and by that struggle to grow. Oswald is the smallest, weakest and most despicable of the evil characters who submissively serve the inhuman desires of his mistress Goneril. Edgar is compelled by Oswald to a positive initiative. Oswald believes he is battling an unskilled peasant when, in fact, it is a nobleman trained in the arts of warfare. He is overconfident. Edgar has the edge of knowledge, the confidence and energy which are available to man when he deals with those of a lower station in life. It is not merely personal strength but also the strength born of his position and social personality that expresses itself. Oswald is the second of the negative characters to fall. The letter he was carrying from Goneril to Edmund falls into the hands of Edgar who gives it to Albany just prior to the battle. Thus Albany learns of Goneril's plot to kill him and marry Edmund. Oswald's attempt at murder not only results in his own death but by the discovery of the letter leads to the exposure of Goneril and Edmund and ultimately to their demise.

(*To be continued*)

GARRY JACOBS

NOTES

18 *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley, Macmillan & Co., 1965, p. 205.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

LIVING PRESENCE

ONE who believes in God has his own Ista Devta, Chosen Deity. Some worship Krishna, some Ram, some Shankar, some Buddha, some Christ and so on. One keeps an idol or picture of his Ista Devta. But if one considers the idol or picture as mere idol or picture, the Ista Devta is not pleased. One must consider it as a living Presence.

In this respect I am reminded of a story told by a friend. Here it is.

There lived in Rampur a person named Ramlal. He was a devotee of Shri Ram. He had kept an idol of Ramji. He had been worshipping Ramji for the last ten years and more, but Ramji was not pleased.

A friend of Ramlal came to see him. In the course of their talk Ramlal said to his friend, "I have worshipped Ramji for the last ten years and more but to no purpose. He is not pleased. What should I do?"

The friend said, "You are a simpleton. You should worship Shankar, who is very easily pleased. He is called Ashutosh, the boon-giver. So begin worshipping Shankar Bhagwan."

On the next day Ramlal installed an idol of Shankar by the side of Ramji, and began worshipping Shankar Bhagwan.

Some days passed and another friend of Ramlal came. He had with him incense-sticks of a very good quality. He gave some to Ramlal for Puja purposes.

The next day when Ramlal was on the point of doing Puja and lighting an incense-stick, an idea came to him: "The idol of Ramji is near Shankar Bhagwan's idol; now if I light an incense-stick, naturally Ramji also will have the pleasure of its good scent. Ramji has done nothing for me; why should he have the pleasure of the good scent? I must stop it." So thinking, Ramlal took some cotton and closed the nostrils of Ramji. When Ramji's nostrils were closed, he said to Ramlal, "Up till now you were considering me a mere idol carved out of wood, now you have considered me as a living Presence. I am pleased, ask what you want."

VALLABH SHETH

SURRENDER ROSE

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

(Continued from the issue of June 1978)

AUNT Tulip was packed and gone by the time Rupert's card came. It said:

"Dear Surrender Rose,
I'm in trouble. Come and save me

Rupert

Rupert, Surrender Rose thought she remembered, was the name of the Prince and ever since aunt Tulip's last little song that was the only gorgeous thing she could think of. So she went to find him. She found the palace easily enough, for she had often seen it in her dreams. At the gate there was a guard of course and she was asked to wait while her name was taken in. Soon she was led to a small arbour to the right side of the garden. There was the prince waiting on a wrought-iron seat and flicking the end of his riding crop against his leg. When he saw her he stared in surprise for a moment, then gave a pleasant smile.

"Oh so you're Surrender Rose. I remember you. The little girl who was stretching and yawning when I slipped off my horse."

Surrender Rose smiled. So that was the way he had remembered her all these years. It wasn't exactly the sort of meeting that she had envisaged but she wasn't much put out. yet.

"I'm glad you've come," he said. "It's nice to have someone beautiful and graceful around. My councillors have been driving me mad. They're a bunch of old women. They want me to get married. And each of them has a daughter uglier and more ill-natured than the other that he secretly wants to palm off onto me. I say, I've had a marvellous idea. Why don't you marry me?" He started laughing wildly. "They'd go green and purple, specially as you're a nobody. I trust you're a nobody."

"Well," said Surrender Rose whose new-found poise now stood her in good stead, "it depends on how you look at it, I suppose." He started laughing again.

"Look here. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude. But I like you. Or I would n't have suggested it at all, you know "

"I dare say."

"Oh you think me rude too. Well, I suppose I am, diamond in the rough, you know." That started him laughing once more. Surrender Rose listened incredulously. There was something definitely jarring in his laughter. Then he stopped rather suddenly and said,

"Now look, do give it some thought. It takes a diamond to polish a diamond. I mean, I know it must have taken you by surprise. Beautiful young maidens are en-

titled to more romantic proposals. They're sentimental about things like that. "

"Sentimental..."

"Now don't get cross. Just hear me out. You know I like you. I have never really forgotten you. Perhaps it's because I fell off my horse that day but how many boys can say they've never really forgotten a little girl they saw more than a dozen years ago. You must admit I recognised you immediately "

"Well, yes..." He was talking so quickly, everything was going so quickly that Surrender Rose started saying, "B-b-b-but " It was probably the first time she had ever stuttered in her life.

"Please say yes. No, don't hesitate. Now quickly. Those old fools are in there waiting for me to give them an answer right now. If I don't, they are going to choose for me. I had just decided to run away and abandon my princship altogether when you came along. So, you see, your coming was truly providential, as those pious old frauds in there say "

Here the prince rolled his eyes in imitation of his councillors and wagged his head. Yes, thought Surrender Rose. He is charming in a way and amusing, I suppose, but where is the prince in him? There was nothing of the nobility of the young prince who had ridden past her window. And though his features were still fine there was the first beginning of coarsening and he was a few pounds heavier than he needed to be. She looked into his eyes trying to find the prince, but he started talking again.

"Look," she said, "can we just be quiet for a little while."

"Oh all right," he said grudgingly and, hunching his shoulders, he started pacing up and down in front of her. This, after her long journey, made her feel dizzy. Then he started doing something much more disturbing. Flourishing his riding crop in the air, he began cutting off the heads of some bright double zinnias. Now, as you might have guessed from their names, everyone in Surrender Rose's family had a great affinity with flowers.

"Hey, what are you doing?" she asked, beginning to feel very faint

"It's very good for the eye," he said and he moved onto a rosebush and started whipping off the heads of those flowers.

"Don't," said Surrender Rose, and fainted.

When she woke up she found herself lying on a silken couch. Prince Rupert was holding her hand. He squinted with guilt. When she looked at him he smiled with relief and just for a fleeting instant they looked into each other's eyes and she saw him, but very fleetingly, because he said,

"Phew. You gave me a start. I thought I was going to have to run away after all."

And then turning away from her he said, "This is my princess "

And Surrender Rose saw that the room was full of old men in councillors' robes, rolling their eyes and wagging their heads. They all bowed, but mostly very stiffly and as little as possible and Surrender Rose's heart sank. For a moment she was about to sit up very straight and declare that she wasn't his princess yet, that she

hadn't at all consented. She got as far as propping herself up on her elbow, but what with one thing and another she hadn't the strength. Her elbow which wasn't used to silk and satin slipped on the smooth material and she lay back thinking that of course she was the princess and there was no use denying it or trying to shirk the consequences, so it was just as well that her elbow had slipped. In fact for a moment she had a curious sensation that aunt Tulip had pushed it.

Suitable apartments were aired and prepared for the princess and preparations for the Royal Celebrations were under way, but Surrender Rose did not see that there was anything to celebrate. There had been no real meeting with the prince except for the most fleeting of glances and she did not know what to do. She wished that aunt Tulip was here to wave her rolling pin about Rupert or crack him. If only she could have foreseen in her wildest imaginings something like this, she would have asked aunt Tulip what to do. She wrote to aunt Tulip care of aunt Daffodil but the letter came back "address unknown", so she wrote home for aunt Sweet William's address. In the meantime she had to endure the prince. And the only way to do this was to remember him as he had been on that day that he had ridden past the house so many years ago shining and noble and seemingly cut out for great things, and also those all too brief seconds when she had come out of her faint. She also had to endure the councillors who were not merely unfriendly, but barely respectful. Surrender Rose looked and behaved like a princess but since she hadn't yet presented her credentials the councillors were puzzled and suspicious. None the less they were much easier to bear than the prince.

One day the prince, who was always trying to get Surrender Rose to join him in playing tricks on the councillors, said, "Let's put toads in their beds."

"But I haven't come here to put toads in anyone's bed," she said in a musing way so that he let the toad leap away and turned to her with a curious expression.

"Come to think of it, why did you come? You never did say."

He didn't even know! She tried to think of something to say. But in fact she knew that he would have to find the answer for himself and that until that happened they couldn't even get started. So she sat there on the wrought-iron bench where she had found him sitting the first day. He didn't even know who he was! He thought being a prince had something to do with having a crown embroidered on his royal pyjamas. She just looked at him wondering what to say and suddenly something dawned on him. He let his hands drop by his sides and looked at Surrender Rose and there he was, the person she had come for, smiling and smiling. It was like the first time that she had seen the prince. But just when something in her had sighed very softly and thought "at last", he blinked and said,

"Drat it. I let that toad get away," and Surrender Rose was left staring at a slightly overweight young man in a white and gold silk tunic running and panting after a toad.

One evening when the preparations for the wedding were drawing to a close and things seemed urgent she said,

"Why do you think that I came here?" And once again he was there, and they were looking at each other. But this time even more swiftly than the last the moment fled. He blinked and looked at her in bewilderment.

"Why, to save me from having to run away from marrying one of my councillors' ugly daughters. "Well, didn't you?" asked Rupert anxiously, seeing the look on Surrender Rose's face. "I mean why else? I like you and I'm having lots of fun and the councillors don't know whether they're coming or going any more. Even you laughed the other day when they were arguing about the size that your crown should be. We'll have lots more laughs, you'll see."

And then up cropped what is usually spoken of as a major problem. My Lord Boniface, one of the chubby councillors (as opposed to the long sour ones) who seemed more fond of, or at least more patient with, Rupert than most of the others, came and said that it was his sorrowful duty to report that three of the councillors had refused to give permission for the preparations to go on until the princess Surrender Rose produced her credentials.

"Off with their heads," said prince Rupert spitting out a grape-pip.

Surrender Rose grimaced. She was always looking into his eyes in the hope of seeing the prince and now caught a glint of something quite else. It frightened her and although Rupert turned and winked at her she had sensed a streak with which she could not cope.

"You can tell them," said Rupert, seeing that he had disturbed Surrender Rose, "that unless they want their heads to roll about, oh all right, Surrender Rose, that if they want to eat their dinner in peace they'd do well to remember, that's the phrase they're always using on me, yes, they'd do well to remember that I'm entirely satisfied with the princess Surrender Rose's credentials and since I'm the one who's marrying her they're not to worry their dear old ugly heads about her." And again he burst into that hard laughter which so worried Surrender Rose.

She woke up in the middle of the night thinking, "I can't go through with it. I'm sure aunt Tulip wouldn't want me to." There was now only a short while to go before the celebration and she was sure that he could never change in time. And the thought of being married to this half-savage boy was terrifying, no less so was the thought of losing the true person there, but she'd seen him so rarely that she thought it would be easier to hold those moments in her heart than live with the other and more constant Rupert. She got up and in her court dress took the bus to the house of aunt Sweet William.

And there she found aunt Tulip trying to remember the names of the twelve girls.

"For practical reasons only," explained aunt Tulip, "though there are some promising ones among them but for the moment it's the little boy, Sweet Pea, I'm concerned with. *There's* a prince. His trouble is that he's so small there's almost no room to hold it all. I have to keep getting my rolling pin out to stretch him. Talking of princes. . ."

"Aunt Tulip, I couldn't stand it. He is not a prince. He is just a lout with crowns embroidered on his pyjamas."

Aunt Tulip considered this in silence for a while and then she said, "He is a prince", but what Surrender Rose heard was something that had been said long long ago. "I don't think you are. I know you are." And a hundred images came crowding into her mind. She thought of Rupert's remark about the councillors' heads though she had felt that he had never entirely meant to do it. And suddenly she remembered the morning she had dreamed of having her aunt thrown into a dungeon.

"You ran away," said aunt Tulip. It was the nearest thing to a judgment she had ever uttered.

"Yes, I did," said Surrender Rose. "I couldn't stand it. So she hadn't behaved like a princess either because running away is the one thing not done. "But you see we were getting near the celebration and it didn't look as if there were going to be anything to celebrate I couldn't even talk to him about it."

"One never really can until it's done "

"You mean I have to go back?"

Surrender Rose was sitting and thinking about this in the kitchen while aunt Tulip prepared a fragrant meal for the thirteen children who would soon return from their outing, when Rupert came into the kitchen.

"Surrender Rose," he said. She knew immediately from his voice what he was going to say: "Now I know why you came." And this time when they looked at each other it lasted for a very long time. It lasted all evening and all the way back to the palace, and for several days. Surrender Rose knew that in all likelihood it hadn't yet come to stay finally and forever, so it came as no shock to her when one day he started blinking and muttering about the councillors' heads again. It had taken her a number of years to become fairly steady as a princess and she still sometimes got wobbly, so why should she expect it to take fewer for Rupert? And in fact it did take a number of years for Rupert. He kept forgetting, but the better Surrender Rose got at remembering the quicker it went for Rupert until one day finally he really was there. And not a moment too soon, for they were no longer in their first youth. But they were still young enough for the task before them, which was to live happily forever and ever.

(Concluded)

MAGGI

A HITCH ON THE WAY AND A MYSTERIOUS DEATH

(Continued from the issue of June 1978)

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

WE reached Tehra Khal at the end of 5 miles. I knew that a very unpleasant surprise sat in ambush for my companion—a steep rise of four miles. I remained discreetly reserved about it. Nearby a bridge spanned a mountain spring. The climb started from its other side. This area over which we were moving, was a Mecca for *bhang* addicts. We were encircled by a regiment of trees of that narcotic. One “Pakur” tree stood out like a commander. A rock or two marked with “Sindur” (minium) and neatly arranged at its foot made it clear that some priest-like villager had been touched by the purity of the ambience and converted the base of the tree into an altar.

Another tree, quite wizened, displayed many colourful bits of cloth, all tied to its old and leafless branches. Stones hung at the end of strings, knotted to these branches. We sauntered up to that landmark of a tree.

I flopped down under it. I who knew what was in store for us could not help pondering in a cynical vein: “Today, till now we’ve had a bonus in the form of a more or less easy route for a total nine miles. Now we’ll have to compensate for it.”

Hemanta threw a rock-piece into my pool of thought:

“So, dada, what about passing the blessed afternoon here? We’re in no mortal hurry, are we?”

I was itching to get back to work. Hemanta’s tone was one of request. My eyebrows joined, eye-lids dropped. I was at a loss to know how to swing the deal.

“Look here, brother,” I began with a get-the-job-done spirit, “now we’ve only to go on for a little more, then it’ll be up for today. There’s only this one more ascent, let’s finish it off—the back of the task would be broken, then we’d be free to have a bath, a hearty meal and a siesta. Later on in the evening we could end the day with just a stroll. What do you say, isn’t this an excellent idea?”

He seemed to weigh the matter. Moments of silence elapsed. Following the adage *Qui tacet consentit* I guessed that my suggestion had sank in without any notable objection. Then he himself corroborated my assumption by actually giving his consent instead of letting it be understood by his silence. He had really no obstinacy in him, that was another of his plus points.

After having winded ourselves for a while we cupped our palms to tip up our bellies with fresh water from the spring, and off we went to launch an assault on the formidable ascent that confronted us like a real challenge from the god of the highlands.

My comrade picked up the gauntlet, putting a bold face on the act. He went ahead like an athletic champion, I had no need of pumping zip into him. Surprising what he could do when he was set to it! However, I prudently kept my fingers crossed.

At that moment I did not realize that it was a mistake. I had done a great injustice to my companion by coaxing him to continue. Yet there seemed to have been no other go. There was no suitable place here for taking rest, no shelter of any kind. At the most we could have prepared our meal under that *Pakur* tree; but even that could not be done because all our things were with the coolies who were far behind us, invisible. This course had to be taken for want of a better.

We scaled about one and a half miles, then the inevitable occurred. What I had been fearing deep within the subconscious—that materialized. The flash in the pan, I mean. It was that blunderhead; he had been progressing well, but after making that much distance he began to clump and too frequently stopped to take breath. He seemed to be already on his last legs. I was afraid of letting him do it alone, so I remained by his side.

This darned route had shaken me too, I was also quite winded by the climb. The first half, that is, about two miles, gave no trouble. After that we had to fight our way up a formidable slope or two. Over and above this, a few places were such that we had difficulty in finding or following on the right course. Because sometimes it wickedly disappeared in some rough terrain; we then had to creep up a knoll, or dip downwards stumbling along jutting rocks, leap over prickly shrubs, ascend a sloping ridge along a trail of broken bits of rocks and loose stones, skirt around ravines, before we could trace again the lost course.

In this way when we had covered about three-fourths of the distance my friend could not stick it any longer. Exhausted, he slumped down on a boulder. With his face wet and wan, the head drooping, he appeared to have been completely battered.

“Oh dada!” he moaned, “I’ve had enough of it, I can’t bear this any more.”

Unable to keep sitting he laid himself down, perhaps to sleep. The time was about one o’clock. I was jittery, being left high and dry amidst nothing but rocks and trees...a howling wilderness.

I reached out with gentle ministrations; I massaged his head and rubbed his chest. I was overwhelmed with regret—it was worse than a crime, it was a blunder.

“Bhai Hemanta, I am to blame,” I apologized, “I didn’t listen to you. It would have been far better if we hadn’t attempted this climb in such a hurry. It’s the high altitude effect, do you understand? It’ll go away.”

Hemanta, almost inaudibly, let out, “We don’t have any provisions—that’s the trouble.”

This had occurred to me also. As luck would have it, our coolies were nowhere to be seen. Furthermore, their usual practice was to prepare the food at night, eat half of it then and there, and save the other half for the next day. So from where could we have procured food in mid-afternoon? And actually, my friend’s greatest need was water; but being luckless, we had not come across any spring this way up.

Even then, suppressing the consuming fire of regret, I desperately threw myself about in search of water.

How ominous—all my efforts went in vain. I found no sign of any water. I felt a sinking of the heart. Decidedly, all in the surrounding seemed to me as being in unconscious league with the Devil to floor my friend. The tension and the stress mounted as I returned empty-handed to see that Hemanta was in near coma. Poor boy, he did not look more alive than the rock-bed on which he lay. No other medicine, only a little water was all that he needed.

He became aware of my presence. Noting my ponderous and gloomy look, he uttered, "Dada, I'm feeling much better. Oh, if I only had some water I could just now stand up on my legs and continue."

I knew that only to clear my conscience and to put me at ease my considerate companion assured me that he felt better. He could sense that within me I kicked and condemned myself, being overwhelmed with a guilty conscience. He did not miss the signals of stress under my calm exterior. For a moment I wondered what type of madness had taken hold of me—by what right had I assumed I could take such a risk with a boy, and a trusting innocent?

Half an hour had elapsed when Hemanta spoke, "I'm quite all right now", and sat up bolt upright. He did appear to have recovered a great deal. It was a pleasant surprise. Prudently I hastened to advise, "Lie down, boy, lie down for heaven's sake, take some more rest. Why all this hustle?"

He was going to object, but just then the porters made their entrance on the scene. They quickly unburdened themselves of all the paraphernalia on a rocky knoll and whistled out their breath. Imagining that they, at least they, might know of some water resource, I urged, "Cut along and fetch some water for my sickly friend—hurry."

One fellow shrugged, "I beg your pardon, *huzoor*, but even if you move heaven and earth, yet you won't find water here—it's available only up there. So willy-nilly the remaining portion has to be scaled anyhow."

As soon as the coolie announced this, Hemanta promptly rose to his feet, took up his stick and, faking an air of bravado, gave the green signal for resuming the struggle in no uncertain terms,

"*Gooch parواه nehi, am all right. Choloon.*"¹ For a wonder he really started trotting, slowly but with firm steps. Bit by bit he eased himself forward. I stared in bewilderment.

Ter-ha Khaal, our destination for that day, could not be far away. We had ascended about three miles, no more than a mile remained.

Ha! I breathed a sigh of relief to see my friend on his legs again. Even a moment earlier he had given me quite a turn. Who could have imagined that he would bob up like a cork so soon? However, I decided not to halloo before having been out of the wood. I stepped, in fact, heart-sick with premonition.

"Have no fear. Am all right. Let's be off"

As we neared the summit I could hardly contain my admiration for Hemanta's gallant attempt at completing the rest of the ascent.

"Bravo!" I exclaimed.

We all attained to the top safely by 2-30 p.m. Now I could excuse myself and say that indiscretion sometimes serves us well!

Not before finishing another down-grade did we discover a locality. Hemanta's recent traumatic condition was still very much there in my memory. So I cautiously observed, "We had better postpone our journey to Dharasu. Don't forget those four ghastly miles of climb. Let's somehow stay on here, you need rest. Otherwise, God knows what."

Hemanta perked himself up and assuaged me,

"Never fear! first things first—please come, let us now think out something about filling our bellies."

A very practical boy, this friend of mine. And how cheerful and magnanimous. He did not agonize over his plight for which I was to blame. Already he had forgotten all about it.

We descended on a quaint dwelling of a *bunna* answering to the name Bhagwandas. We gave, all told, one rupee. Rice with boiled potatoes, *dal* cooked with plenty of *ghee*, and curd were offered by his wife for our refectation. The delicious curd was certainly the *pièce de résistance*. But my personal experience is that nothing could be more delicious than sleep when you are tuckered out.

After merely an hour of siesta Hemanta jumped up,

"Today itself let us march to Dharasu."

I quailed before the idea. The coolies of course countenanced him. They also thought it would be better to continue. One of them tried to reason me out of my fears,

"There are only seven easy miles to go, the whole way is nothing but a gradual descent. There..."

He waved his arm as if it were a magic wand, to indicate a far-away mountain. "At the base of that mountain is Dharasu."

Hemanta was also not in the vein of hearing me contravene the above statement. *Sans cérémonie* he started off. After a few strides he turned about and shouted,

"Come on, dada, come along! what are you waiting for?"

His call was irresistible. Naturally I had to give in. I developed a liking for this naive young enthusiast. He led the way for seven miles till we landed in Dharasu close to evening. The porters took their payment on the spot, and retired to prepare their food. They were to pass the night near by.

The spectacular mountain scenery which we drank in from this point of Dharasu in the hush of eventide was unforgettable, to say the least. Your eyes come to rest on stunning Himalayan splendour. Nature's original unspoilt grandeur relieves you of your pains and worries. Your every mental fibre slackens to express total and

happy submission. You are lulled to a serenity by an ageless penetrating bliss. The nearest metropolis could be only an hour away, if one knew how to fly; but in any case the distance is endless if tranquillity and enchantment are the terms. It was heaven, sheer heaven. Wisely has Racine said, in *Esther*,

Levons les yeux vers les saintes montagnes.

It rang so true especially from here. If one lifted one's gaze to these peaks one was sure to draw some mystic inspirations. One never hears about holy seas or oceans. Yet one often comes across terms like holy mountains, sacred peaks and so on.

In my childhood I had heard so many stories about the Himalayas. I still recollected how, night after moonlit night of summer, our mother tried to put us children to sleep on the open terrace. While my younger brothers and sisters snored, I went on contemplating for hours on end the panorama of a star-studded sky. This was to me the most restful way of passing the nocturnal hours. The flying rags of cloud also attracted me as they studded through heaven wiping clean the face of the moon. I gazed and gazed and wondered whither all those fluffy things sailed.

One night my mother caught me, wide awake and staring amazedly into space. She understood my problem and being a *gourmet*, gave me a fascinating lesson in geography,

"They are flying to the far-away Himalayas to savour the new leaves of the 'Sal'. They shall fly back when the wind blows in the opposite direction."

In north India the "Sal" leaves are widely used in sweetmeat shops for packing food.

The clouds and the snowy crags lived together in my mind. Over the years more facts and fictions poured in about the Himalayas. All those legends, facts, etc., and in addition my own feelings and imaginations adorned each and every part of the Himalayas of my dream. The vivid descriptions of the travels and their goals whetted my own appetite and inspirited me to undertake this and other harrowing and hazardous journeys.

The full and splendid personality of the Himalayan ranges could be recognized only by one who is at once a lover of art and also spiritually inclined to some extent. I am sure that an average pilgrim fails to see and feel what I as an artist saw and felt. Spontaneously a feeling of thankfulness escaped from my bosom and I humbly offered it mentally to Providence who made me a mystic painter.

However, little by little these massive ranges assume a very grave, even formidable aspect in grim contrast to the smiling appearance which so enchants one at first. But about that, later on. I should stick to Dharasu now.

Dharasu had an edge over the other villages that we had passed by. For it had not only shops for buying grains and cereals, but also grocers and haberdashers. Offices, too, of the government were there—or Durbar for the collectors. From Mussoori many British and Anglo-Indian tourists and hunters came here on and off. This region offered plenty of game, the principal one being a beast which was big like an average cow but in its appearance resembled the deer. Also wild fowl and

some other smaller game were there and captured for purposes of entertainment or for food.

Brahmin, Chhatri and Bunnia were the three castes living here. Their houses were surrounded by cultivated lands. This was a mouth-watering region with fields of walnuts, groves of peaches, woods of apple trees, to name but a few. Nature was bountiful.

We had lodged in a *dharmasala* (travellers' rest-house) just beside the market. A dark room with no other opening except the door: that was the kind of rest-house which fell to our lot. In front of the room there was some space where we could cook. That night we accepted the food brought by the housekeeper, but the following morning we prepared our own meal.

We spent one full day and two nights in this 'village'. What I refer to as a village is considered by its dwellers as a town. I could not guess the number of the population, but I noted more than a hundred dwellings. In the market area there were some double-storied buildings. As one went past the houses, in a row, one failed to perceive any gap between them. The ground-floor was used almost invariably as a shop. Near the suburb the dwellings were not so close to one another. I also observed many gullies with a mort of flies droning about over depots of rubbish.

Since we left Mussoori, wherever we had stopped to take rest, we had found the place too sleepy and practically as desolate as the way. Dharasu was quite different; it showed some signs of life. In fact, on coming here Hemanta began to feel on top of the world. He did not know what was to be done with all that mirth and energy. Poor boy! for all he could do was to zip off a longish letter to his wife (a love-letter, I suppose). He sent letters also to some others.

I thought it would be better to settle the matter of coolies now before darkness fell so that the next day we could start early without having to wait for suitable coolies. To our pleasant surprise Harihar, the keeper of the *dharmasala*, managed to bring to us two hefty highlanders. But, sad to say, they were loath to go all the way with us. We decided to go first to Jumnotri, because that seemed more convenient. These coolies were willing to reach us only as far as the first hamlet that might fall on our way. For this great service they wanted one rupee and four annas. They further said that if they were paid 50 rupees they would consider going all the way with us and back here. Hemanta went all out against this exorbitant demand.

"No need of coolies!" he exploded indignantly.

Nevertheless, after a lot of higgling over the terms of contract Harihar won them round. He told them that daily they would get one rupee and four annas as their pay, and four annas of bonus, for as many days as their service might be required. They agreed. For us, that was a relief, and we thanked Harihar for having clinched this deal and solved our problem so expeditiously. Thereafter we never got into any difficulty in regard to porters.

We slept comfortably that night.

(To be continued)

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

18

ONE who as a child has been to an English school in India could never forget the school's annual Sports Day. On that particular afternoon the school is divided into two camps, the Dark Blues and the Light Blues. During these three hours the neighbourhood could hear nothing but, "Come on the Darks" or "Come on the Lights", the shouting and screaming of children drowning all other sounds. Very few of us realise that this division between Dark and Light Blues comes from Oxford and Cambridge. Oxford is Dark Blue, and Cambridge Light Blue. On the Regatta days the whole of England is divided into two "hostile" camps, the Dark Blues and the Light Blues. It does not matter if one is not actually present on the riverside on the day of the Boat Race. The Race has become a matter of national pride, and no Englishman could be indifferent to it. There was a time when it did not matter if the boys (the oarsmen) got a second class in the exams, if they could "bump their opponents".

*

Cambridge brings happy memories, for I took my first three exams (Junior, Senior and Higher Cambridge) with Cambridge University and passed with credit in English and History. My joy knew no bounds when I first came to know that Cambridge University was Sri Aurobindo's *alma mater*. Eton-Oxford and Harrow-Cambridge is the general rule, but Sri Aurobindo won a scholarship and got himself admitted to St. Paul's School in London, perhaps to remind him of Christ's utterance, "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" For Mrs. Drewett must have acquainted him well with the Bible.

I often wonder why he had to go to Cambridge and not Oxford. First of all, the name itself seems to me very significant. Cambridge is a town where the river Cam is easily bridged, and he was to become the Golden Bridge between the Eternal and humanity. The letters (B. A. Cantab.) that a graduate from that University may put after his name are also very telling. Then if we look at the Arms of the City of Cambridge, we find two full-blown lotuses with four petals very much like the inner circle of the Mother's symbol. Below these is a wall with watch-towers which reminds me of the lines:

I have watched on the path of the centuries
For the light of thy running feet.

The wall is suggestive of building—building what if not the future, a new world?

Further down is water with ships floating on it suggesting a voyage—to a new world. And the whole design is enclosed in a square suggestive of “Perfect Creation”. To me all this is not fortuitous. Some occult meaning must be there.

Pundit Nehru too went to Cambridge University. When he was Prime Minister, Oxford University invited him in order to confer on him a doctorate. The Chancellor gave a brilliant speech all the time eulogising him. He concluded by saying that there had been but one indiscretion in Mr. Nehru’s youth; that was when he went to Cambridge. Nehru’s speech was equally brilliant; and he said that he had a faint recollection of having heard that there was a place called Oxford. This sort of digging at each other playfully is very common among Oxonians and Cantabrigians. Even Sri Aurobindo has left us a very amusing poem hinting at it, while discussing the right pronunciation of certain words with one of his disciples, Amal Kiran, who had raised some point on the strength of his understanding of a certain notation in Fowler’s Concise Oxford Dictionary: “I only hope the future lexicographers will not ‘fowl’ the language any more in that direction; otherwise we shall have to write lines like this:

O vizhn! O pashn! O fashn! m’dtashn! h’rr’p’lashn!

Why did the infer’n’l Etern’l und’take creash’n?

Or, else, creat’ng could he not have afford’d

Not to allow the Engl’sh tongue to be Oxford’d?”

(Life-Literature-Yoga)

In an address delivered to the boys of the Baroda College Sri Aurobindo once said:

“... I think it will not be out of place if in dwelling on this I revert to the great Universities of Oxford and Cambridge which are our famous exemplars, and point out a few differences between these Universities and our own and the thoughts those differences may well suggest.

“I think there is no student of Oxford or Cambridge who does not look back in after-days on the few years of his undergraduate life as, of all the scenes that he has moved in, that which calls up the happiest memories, and it is not surprising that this should be so, when we remember what that life must have meant to him. He goes up from the restricted life of his home and school and finds himself in surroundings which with astonishing rapidity expand his intellect, strengthen his character, develop his social faculties, force out all his abilities and turn him in three years from a boy into a man. His mind ripens in the contact with minds which meet from all parts of the country.... He moves among ancient and venerable buildings the mere age and beauty of which are in themselves an education. He has the Union which has trained so many great orators and debaters, has been the first trial-ground of so many renowned intellects. He has too the athletics clubs organized with a perfection unparalleled elsewhere, in which if he has the physique and the desire for them he may find pursuits which are also in themselves an education. The result is that he who

entered the University a raw student, comes out of it a man and a gentleman, accustomed to think of great affairs and fit to move in cultivated society; and he remembers his College and University with affection, and in after-days if he meets with those who have studied with him he feels attracted towards them as to men with whom he has a natural brotherhood....”

The oldest educational institutions in England, the two unique seats of learning have acquired a renown so alluring that boys all the world over look forward to going to one of those institutions if the family can afford it. The Universities were founded some 800 years ago. The Colleges are about 400 to 500 years old. Even today the old atmosphere of culture and learning is intact. Once inside a College one forgets that there is a philistine world buzzing and humming just outside. The deafening noise and cacophony of the modern world do not pierce through the ivied walls of these venerable buildings. The nerve-shattering speed of to-day's life has no meaning in Oxford or Cambridge. There reigns a leisured peace and no one is in a hurry there.

The best way to visit Oxford or Cambridge is to go when you have someone there you know. Then you get a chance of seeing a lot of things that are denied to the ordinary tourist. And if you can catch an early bus from London you have the whole day at your disposal. Most well-to-do families in India have someone or other in Oxford or Cambridge. So they know a lot about the two Universities. However, I should like to dwell a little on the architectural beauty of the two places first.

Before entering the city the best thing to do is to go up the Boar's Hill or any other hillock nearby. From there one gets a magnificent view of a fairy town of spires and steeples and towers and domes. The town looks like a model rather than a real town. Then you go in and see as many Colleges as you can manage and get lost among the sequestered gardens and verdant meadows and symmetrically paved courtyards, and ancient buildings. If one is bent upon studying the architecture of England through the ages, Oxford and Cambridge are the best places. One gets a kaleidoscopic view of the different styles of architectures, from the ancient times to the modern. There are the Romanesque, the Norman, the Gothic, the Renaissance and the Post-Renaissance, the Georgian, and even some modern buildings. Within a limited space one gets a very good idea of what the English architects were about, their aspiration and their genius.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Mother—Sweetness and Light. Edition Auropress, Pondicherry, 1978, pp. 212 + 13. Price Rs. 18/-

READING this book made me feel tremendously happy. I do not know why exactly, because nothing it says is so very out of the ordinary. Nor is the writing throughout at such an elevated pitch of style. Nevertheless, the book is special and precious.

Sweetness and light—the words were first used together by Swift and then adopted by Matthew Arnold. Swift noted that the two things most necessary for a felicitous style (I think it was style) could be figured by the two products of the bee. Honey, with its sweetness, and the wax formerly used to make candles—these two gifts of the hard-working insect represent indeed much of what is valuable in life. Sri Aurobindo took up the metaphor somewhere in his correspondence, assigning both qualities to the psychic being, the hidden source of the inner *ananda* and *prakasha*. Towards sweetness and light our inmost heart always turns and what it touches is made wonderful with them.

Nirodbaran is well known for his correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, in which the master revealed an intimate and often humorous side of his enigmatic personality. It was also Nirodbaran who for twelve years was a personal attendant of Sri Aurobindo, serving him for a time as amanuensis. The story of this period has been told by Nirodbaran in his *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*. Not so well known are the details of Nirodbaran's forty-three-year association with the Mother. *Sweetness and Light* is the disciple's record of this relationship. We can be grateful that he has taken the trouble to set it down.

The book is arranged on basically chronological lines. Nirodbaran first visited the Ashram in 1930 and saw the Mother almost immediately after his arrival. "Her fair complexion, set off by a finely coloured sari and a head-band, gave me the impression of a goddess such as we had seen in pictures or in the idols during the Durga Puja festivals." When later Nirodbaran came to the Ashram to stay, his first impression deepened into a growing revelation of the many aspects of the divine Mother.

The author has given us a valuable document of the early, heroic years of the Ashram. The soup-ceremony, pranam, darshan, are all described, as are the many more common but not less dynamic daily manifestations of the Mother's grace, the waters of plenty that rained upon the disciples in those days. Nirodbaran has received amply of the Mother's *ahaituki kripa*, or spontaneous grace, and his recollections of some personal experiences form many of the sweetest and most illuminating pages in this book.

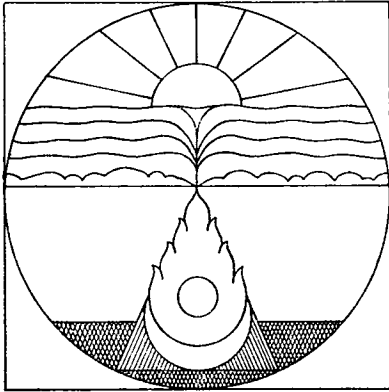
The Mother—Sweetness and Light was issued to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Mother's birth. It seems to have suffered to some extent from having to be completed in time to meet the deadline. After the first few chapters

the book's structure becomes somewhat amorphous, as reminiscence after reminiscence crowds in. The inherent interest and instructiveness of the separate incidents is not diminished by the presentation, but on the whole the effect of the book is less powerful than that of *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, which keeps its cohesiveness to the end. But it is the sincerely recounted candour of the remembered incidents which makes the value of *Sweetness and Light*, and one can forgive the author if, having too much wealth to distribute, he sometimes flings it rather randomly.

It would be difficult to choose the one anecdote most helpful to the seeker, the one experience most rewarding to the devotee. Only a person who has tried to follow this sadhana, in which nothing is more or less important, can fully appreciate the accounts of the Mother's interest in sports or her detailed knowledge of medicine. No one who is closed to the intrusion of the miraculous in our lives will be able to taste fully the *rasa* of her words and deeds.

The Mother's life here was, like the sun's, an outpouring of clarity and, like a jasmine's, a wafting of perfume. We lived among it, but did not wholly benefit. We can only be grateful to worker bees like Nirodbaran who have diligently gathered this sweetness and light and stored it in cells where we and the future can always partake of it.

PETER HEEHS



Poems by Peter Heehs
Night and Dawn
 and
Image of Adoration
 Rs. 12 EACH

Available from:
 SABDA
 Sri Aurobindo Ashram
 Pondicherry 605002

THE TALES OF INDIA

by

Daulat Panday
 (Lalita)

Parts 1, 2 and 3

Price : Rs. 8.00 each

LIFT ME HIGH

Poems by Lalita
 dedicated to the Divine Mother
 Price: Rs. 4/-

From: **Publication Department**
Sri Aurobindo Ashram
 and **SABDA**
 Pondicherry - 605002

BOOK-NOTICES

Sweet Mother: Harmonies of Light by *Mona Sarkar*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1978, Rs. 3.50/-

MONA Sarkar had the occasion to approach the Mother for diverse reasons: either for some work or for some inner help or as a captain and always as Her child. He noted down the conversations from memory and some of these are published in this small book. They reveal to us the significance behind Om, The Mother's signature, Her photographs, our Birthdays and Grace. We have always felt their importance to our inner need but the reason for that is explained now.

Also there is a talk on *Savitri*—the great epic poem of Sri Aurobindo. We learn how to approach it, how to read it and how to derive help from it.

A small book but of tremendous help to all aspirants.

The One Whom We Adore As The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1978. Rs.125/- De luxe (silk), Rs.50/- bound.

Sri Aurobindo alone knew who the Mother was, the Reality behind Her life and work, the deep truth of Her existence, and He has expressed it for us in lines of great mantric power and beauty in which the inner and outer worlds, symbol and fact, fuse into one. Such is the power of this mantra that it can also communicate to us the living truth it embodies.

The text in this book—lines from *Savitri*—is significantly arranged in an attempt to reveal the implications of this truth. Symbolic and “atmospheric” designs and colours on every page serve to convey more deeply its inner meaning.

After making us aware of the mystery of the Mother's Divinity, and opening us through many photographs to a deep contact with some of the divine aspects She manifested, the book traces the Aspirant's invocation and its answer, the Incarnation and something of the outer chronological order of Her life with its inner correspondences. Finally it returns to the mystery of Divine Love:

In me the spirit of immortal love
Stretches its arms out to embrace mankind.

Our Mother by *Dr. Prema Nandakumar*, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, 1978. Rs. 3/-

This little book is a first introduction to the life of the Mother and Her divine ministry for the transformation of man and the earth. It is illustrated with pictures of the Mother. The growth of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the launching of Auroville are also described in some detail in separate chapters.

(A review of *Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's* book *On the Mother* will appear in the August *Mother India*.)

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL FORTY-FIRST SEMINAR

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

(Continued from the issue of June 1978)

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER

Speech by Hardie Nag

WHO can fully describe the eternal warmth and light that the sun gives us? My effort too at expressing 'What I have learnt from the Mother' is bound to be totally inadequate.

Unfortunately it is only a few years back that I became a student of this Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Therefore I did not have much personal contact with the Mother.

But I am very, very fortunate that She has given me my name. Whenever I am depressed or whenever life strikes me a hard blow, I feel that She has given me the name for a specific reason. Although at present, I may not be aware of the part I have to play in Her eternal drama, at least I am sure that I have to prepare myself by conquering the small problems of life. And the fact that the Mother has given me a name which means, 'one who can endure', 'one who is courageous', fills me with a new-found strength. I feel I have a duty towards my name, I cannot let it down.

When, at times, I am alone and quiet, a strange emotion takes hold of me. The moment I think how She, the very incarnation of the Supreme, has given me a name, a sense of gratitude wells up in me; but on the other hand I cannot fathom Her immense Love, I am bewildered.

Sometimes influenced by my ego, my pride, I try to reason out and solve any difficulty that arises. I become confident of my own ability to surmount it. But how far can the boat travel alone on its own without the sustaining help of the winds? Slowly I see my imperfections, my incapacities. I learn to leave all in Her care, I learn to pray.

Encouraging and comforting, the Mother's words in Her book, *White Roses*, are treasured by me.

Who is not filled with an immense joy by reading this most beautiful gem of Hers?—

“Behind the sorrow and loneliness, behind the emptiness and the feeling of incapacity, there is the golden light of the Divine Presence shining soft and warm.”¹

Or yet another:

“Remain sheltered in my arms, enveloped by my love and blessings.”²

I like to read and re-read these words and see the instant change in me; whatever may be my mood, be it anger or pride, instantaneously it is effaced by a sense of gratitude.

This is my prayer before the Mother on Her birthday:

“Grant, O Mother, that I may always remain your little child, fulfilling all that you wish me to do.”

To conclude, I would like to read a poem by Sri Aurobindo which very vividly reminds me of my own intimate yearning for the Mother.

BECAUSE THOU ART

Because Thou art All-beauty and All-bliss,
My soul blind and enamoured yearns for Thee;
It bears Thy mystic touch in all that is
And thrills with the burden of that ecstasy.

Behind all eyes I meet Thy secret gaze
And in each voice I hear Thy magic tune:
Thy sweetness haunts my heart through Nature's ways;
Nowhere it beats now from Thy snare immune.

It loves Thy body in all living things;
Thy joy is there in every leaf and stone:
The moments bring Thee on their fiery wings;
Sight's endless artistry is Thou alone.

Time voyages with Thee upon its prow—
And all the future's passionate hope is Thou.³

Speech by Dimple Roy

THE Mother reigns supreme over this universe. It is at Her will that the constellations change, the mountains remain static, the waves roll and rise. The earth is Her playhouse where She rules, orders and teaches.

We see Her in the Ashram too, working quietly, organising methodically,

¹ *White Roses* (1973), p. 23. ² *Ibid*, p. 11.

³ *Collected Poems* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 5), p. 154

teaching patiently. We see the seeds of Her mighty efforts around us—in the Ashram, in its people. In watching this, I learn indirectly: I teach myself discipline, I yearn for perfection, I respond to beauty, love and joy.

But what I have learnt directly from the Mother was not achieved by effort. It came in noiselessly and naturally like the sunlight and I accepted it spontaneously. She taught me one of the most beautiful things of life—prayer.

Earlier, in my childhood I was taught to repeat hymns and chant mantras, but that was about all. I knew them by heart, I sang them faultlessly but my mind roamed here and there. It was the student's prayer of the school which I chanted religiously. But when I came here and turned the pages of the Mother's *New Year Prayers* and *Prayers and Meditations*, I found my own prayer in them.

"We surrender to Thee this evening all that is artificial and false, all that pretends and imitates. Let it disappear with the year that is at an end, may only what is perfectly true, sincere, straight and pure subsist in the year that is beginning."

So simple yet new was this prayer that it touched me deeply and something in me responded to it; I wanted to love it, I wanted to realise it.

I then understood what prayer was and what I had to pray for.

Turning the pages I read on.

"Lord! we aspire to be Thy valiant warriors so that Thy glory may manifest upon earth."

"Lord, give us the strength to reject falsehood and emerge in Thy truth, pure and worthy of Thy victory."

These marvellous words, this lofty aspiration opened the doors of my life. They made me aware of my defects but never allowed me to sink in the pool of depression for long. The Mother always had hope and encouragement even for the bleakest moment. As She says:

"At the very moment when everything seems to go from bad to worse, it is then that we must make a supreme act of faith and know that the Grace will never fail us."

Reading this I have always felt the narrowness of human judgment, the unnecessary anxiety being replaced by a new ray of hope. All of a sudden, life for me took on a new colour—it was not merely going to school and coming back home. Life was meant for something greater because She asked everyone, irrespective of caste or creed, capacity or quality, "The world is preparing for a big change. Will you help?" Every cell seems to move in response to this question. Something passionately cries "Yes" but how? What path must we follow? How does the change take place?

"Forward, for ever forward!

At the end of the tunnel is the light...

At the end of the fight is the victory!"

But the Mother did not stop here. She leads the way to the gates of transformation where, written in golden letters, are Her marvellous words

“Each day, each moment, must be an occasion for a new and completer consecration; and not one of those enthusiastic and trepidant consecrations, over-active, full of the illusion of the work, but a profound and silent consecration which need not be apparent, but which penetrates and transfigures every action. Our mind, solitary and at peace, must rest always in Thee, and from this pure summit it must have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality, behind unstable and fugitive appearances.”

Even though I am far away from this goal, I come back with all my ignorance and drawbacks to Her all-forgiving self. I find the greatest assurance that until the transformation of man takes place She will never leave us. Otherwise how could She say,

“You can be sure that the best possible will happen and that the world is going as quickly as possible towards its golden transformation.”¹

Speech by Shoma Dutt

WHEN I first asked myself the question “What have I learnt from the Mother?” something in me replied with a startling imminence, “Now what haven’t you learnt from the Mother?” True, I said to myself, She has taught us everything, absolutely everything. It is only we, Her children, who have failed to put into practice all that She has taught us. As for myself, one of the many things She has said and which has had a great impact on me and thus will forever remain deeply engraved in my heart is to be cheerful. A smile, it is said, can chase the winter away. The Mother too mentions that an ideal child is he who “knows how to smile and keep a happy heart in all circumstances”. So, whenever I feel sad, I try to convince myself to be cheerful and that’s that—the next moment I am happy again. But this lesson took me some time to learn and how I learnt it is quite a story. .. And that is what I am going to recount now...

The thorns of life pierce many a human heart. Man reels with pain, he tries to drown his agony in the wine of oblivion, yet nothing, nothing can ease the terrible ache. For, in Virgilian language, ‘There is a touch of tears in mortal things...’ and every man has to suffer and weep and sometimes forget that laughter exists. Some time or other the sun does set in the human heart. And it is then that the soul of man is spirited away to a dark world of sorrow .. Yet, Happiness steals softly like the tender dawn when She, the Mother of all, smiles.... For men look up and see Her, and discover in Her compassionate eyes a secret joy divine. They forget their misery... for really, can one weep in front of the Eternal Bliss?

Our sorrows melt into Her Smile and become the expression of happiness and delight. Just as in the morning hush the first ray of the sun turns all Nature into a golden ecstasy, so Her immortal Smile soothes a weeping soul. True, a balm of sweetness is Her divine Smile, a sunlit Grace caressing a tear-stained heart....

¹ *White Roses* (1973), p. 134.

I remember that, when I was just a little child, one day I was feeling very sad and depressed. Something had happened to me, I think I had received a scolding for a thing I had not done. I know I had cried my heart out that day, I even remember having noted down in my little personal diary: "Sweet Mother, I am feeling so sad and sleepy tonight. I can't write to you. Bonne nuit .." But that was all; I had written to Her and She soon appeared in my dreams.... That dream I will never, never forget—it was one of the sweetest I ever had. Now I can say, thinking about that little wisp of a memory snipped out gently from my past, that Shelley was right when he said.

'Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.'

I saw myself weeping in a deserted corner of a dark, dark street—not a sound could be heard, not a man could be seen.... I wept and wept, I was feeling so tired and misunderstood. Then, suddenly I saw 'Douce Mère' standing in front of me. She smiled! I looked at Her for a while, surprised and not knowing what to do. And then instinctively I ran towards Her and flung myself at Her feet. I poured out to Her all my misery in quaint, unfamiliar sobs. She lifted me up and smiled and then caressing my hair She slowly disappeared. .

All of a sudden the bitter, sad tears that had welled from within my heart melted in a world of absolute sweetness... I felt happy as a lark which has just learnt to fly to the rhythm of its song. I experienced all my infant happiness returning to me in a silver gurgle of spring. I laughed and my tears of the previous night turned into glittering dew-drops of the morning sunshine

And just to add a last word, Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*

'Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.'¹

So when you feel sad, call Her, and She will let fall a magic drop of transparent cheerfulness in your heart, and you, my friend, will smile again.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

¹ Centenary Edition, Book III, Canto II, p. 314