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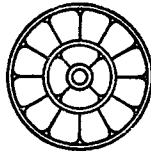
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.

AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

Mother India has again to call for financial help. Our last appeal brought a very good response and we are deeply thankful. Costs have been steadily rising in everything. Our immediate need was to stock paper. We have paid over Rs. 7,000. This has made a big gap in our resources. So we badly require donations of any amount that can be spared by our well-wishers.

The scheme of Life-Membership is still in force. If attended to, it can also help. Advertisements too can be a good contribution. Tariff cards can be had on application.

Increase in the number of subscribers is always welcome.

We shall be grateful for help in any form, and particularly in the form of donations. The donations will be tax-free if sent ear-marked for us through the Ashram Trust.

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXX

No. 9

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail.”

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 569
THE ASHRAM'S SPECIAL CHARACTER AND ITS YOGIC TESTS: SOME WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER	... 570
POETRY AND THE OTHER ARTS: BASED ON A TALK BY THE MOTHER ON JUNE 29, 1955	... 571
A LETTER TO THE MOTHER AND HER COMMENT	... 573
A SONNET BY NIRODBARAN: WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND MARKINGS	... 574
SOME NOTES ON THE MOTHER'S <i>Prières et Méditations</i>	<i>Sanat K. Banerji</i> ... 575
THE SEEKING AND THE FINDING: A PAGE FROM A WESTERNER'S LIFE	<i>M. P.</i> ... 579
YOUR DOMAIN (Poem)	<i>Minnie N. Canteenwalla</i> ... 580
OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT: RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER— In the Year of the Greatest Difficulty	<i>Amal Kiran</i> ... 581
PURBAL (Poem)	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> ... 586
THE FOUNDING OF THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM PRESS: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. INDRA SEN	... 587

CONTENTS

SHANKARA—THE MONIST-DUALIST	<i>Jibendra</i>	... 595
TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE: DESCENT INTO THE INCONSCIENT		... 596
THE MARRIAGE OF SUNDARAMURTI: A POEM	<i>Peter Heehs</i>	... 600
RAMLAL'S SURRENDER: A SHORT STORY	<i>Vallabh Sheth</i>	... 608
THE IMAGE OF MAN: HIS FOUR FACETS— The Frustrated Man	<i>Romen</i>	... 611
THE CHARACTER OF LIFE: CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE— THE YOGA OF <i>King Lear</i>	<i>Garry Jacobs</i>	... 615
SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS		... 621

STUDENT'S SECTION

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION: SPECIAL FORTY-FIRST SEMINAR IN CELEBRATION OF THE MOTHER'S BIRTH CENTENARY: 18TH FEBRUARY 1978-19TH FEBRUARY 1978— "WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER": SPEECH BY ROMEN PALIT SPEECH BY RADHIKARANJAN DAS	<i>Compiled by Kishor Gandhi</i>	... 623
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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

EVERY malicious word, every slander is a degradation of the consciousness.

And when this slander is expressed in vulgar language and gross terms, then that is equivalent to suicide—the suicide of one's soul.¹

*

To answer to these undesired movements by the name of the Lord is certainly the best thing to do and the most effective way to get rid of them.²

*

Let the Divine Compassion express itself through you always and in all circumstances.³

*

Love alone can conquer hate and violence.

Get rid of all violence and you will no longer have any fear.⁴

*

Ugly thoughts bring ugly feelings—ugly feelings take you away from the Divine and throw you defenceless in the arms of the devil who wants only to swallow you up—and that is the source of endless sorrow and suffering.⁵

¹ *Champaklal's Treasures*, p. 139.

² *White Roses* (Letters to Huta), Parts I, II & III, 1973, p. 87.

³ *Champaklal's Treasures*, p. 140.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-41

⁵ *White Roses* (Letters to Huta), Parts I, II & III, 1973, p. 22.

THE ASHRAM'S SPECIAL CHARACTER AND ITS YOGIC TESTS

SOME WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

It is necessary or rather inevitable that in an Ashram which is a "laboratory" for a spiritual and supramental yoga, humanity should be variously represented. For the problem of transformation has to deal with all sorts of elements favourable and unfavourable. The same man indeed carries in him a mixture of these two things. If only sattvic and cultured men come for yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then, because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail. There might conceivably be under certain circumstances an overmental layer superimposed on the mental, vital and physical, and influencing them, but hardly anything supramental or a sovereign transmutation of the human being. Those in the Ashram come from all quarters and are of all kinds: it cannot be otherwise.

Sri Aurobindo

*

Whenever anybody comes and tells me, "I have a good many difficulties outside, I am not able to overcome them, I want to come here, for that will help me", I reply, "No, it will be still more difficult here, your difficulties will increase considerably, because it will no longer be isolated but collective difficulties added to your own. There will be all the frictions, contacts, reactions, all that comes from outside, as tests, exactly on your weak point, the most sensitive spot. Here you will hear just the word, the phrase, that you would not like to hear, and people will make just the gesture that would offend you. You will find yourself repeatedly in the presence of a circumstance, a fact, an object, it matters not what, just that thing among all that you would not like to happen. And it is precisely that which happens, and happens more and more, because you do not do your Yoga for yourself alone, you do the Yoga for everybody, without knowing it, automatically."

The Mother

*

I can tell you that there is in the world only one place where you can fulfil your aspiration and realise the Divice, *it is here*.

It is well understood that there are difficulties, everybody has difficulties, but nowhere else, as much as here, you can find the help to surmount these difficulties.

The Mother

POETRY AND THE OTHER ARTS

BASED ON A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON JUNE 29, 1955

THE usual poetic consciousness is vague, fluid, dreamy, half conscious. When I describe it thus and attach no very high value to it, I am speaking from the highest point of view—the supramental. From there everything below is obscure in various ways. Differences of more or less do not substantially matter.

What Sri Aurobindo has often said about poetry is deliberately from below the Supermind so as to stress all here moving in a spiritual direction, and pull it upward towards the Supermind. Necessarily the terms in which things are spoken of are not the same in the two pronouncements. Sri Aurobindo, in order to be understood in terms familiar to the ordinary consciousness and useful to it along its natural path of self-view and world-view, has put himself in the Higher Mind, the spiritual plane nearest to the ordinary consciousness, and expressed the truth about poetry.

That is a useful procedure and perhaps on another occasion I shall say things that will seem different from what I have stated already. But when one looks from the very top, no poetry written so far—except the kind which Sri Aurobindo wrote—has much value. Personally I am interested only in the full manifestation of what he has called “the future poetry”. I would ask you poets to rise beyond yourselves and work for that manifestation.

However, this attitude of mine is not only with regard to the poetic art. It holds for all the arts—music, painting, sculpture, architecture. All of them come from the sensuous mind, not the mind of the outer senses but the mind of the inner imaginative senses. We may indeed say that there is a play of intuition in poetry, but it is intuition within the sensuous mind. Although the original inspiration is certainly from far above, there is in this mind and in its transmission no assured light of the Truth, no divine Knowledge. But poets have a high conceit of themselves and put themselves at the very summit. I have thought it fit to tumble them down. That, of course, does not mean that poetry is useless. It has several things to give to people and many learn to move a little upward through it. Those who do not yet live in the highest consciousness can profit from the great poetry of the past. So I do not discourage poetry, but we must also see it from the supramental level for what it is and what all art is in the light of the Supreme.

If the poetic consciousness is one that moves away from the clear outward waking consciousness and yet does not possess the light of the divine Truth, it has necessarily to be vague, fluid, dreamy, half conscious. French poets, because they remain too much in the prose-mind, are really no poets at all: I have always considered them versifiers. I was told that English poetry is the real poetry. So I have read part of it and discovered that my impression about the poetic mind as distinguished from the mind of prose is correct. And I have found also that poetry proper is not higher than the intuitivised sensuous mind. You see, I myself at one time wrote poetry. I

had just to go into a region of consciousness a little lifted above the normal and there in a hazy atmosphere were a rhythm of images, a music of ideas, symbol calling to symbol, word beckoning to word and all swaying and joining and floating in a subtle sensuous pleasure: in French I would say, "une volupté des idées." I had only to withdraw into this domain and poetry would flow. I had also to go into it in order to get *en rapport* with the genuine poetry written by others. Having known the nature of this domain I cannot from the supramental standpoint say anything else about its value than what I have done. And I am sure Sri Aurobindo would completely agree with me. In fact he has expressed to me the same view.

To know the sovereign light of the Truth one must pass beyond all mind. When I first met Sri Aurobindo I had gone through a lot of spiritual experiences and realisations, but I used to find a basis for their working in life by giving them a mould with the mind. I had all kinds of fine and great ideas for world-work—artistic, social, religious. On seeing Sri Aurobindo I aspired for a total cessation of all mental moulds. I did not speak a word nor did he: I just sat at his feet and closed my eyes, keeping the mind open to him. After a while there came, from above, an infinite silence and it settled in my mind. Everything was gone, all those fine and great ideas vanished and there was only a vacant imperturbable waiting for what was beyond mind.

For days and days I carefully guarded my absolute silence and then slowly the Truth began to flow down from above. The Truth alone grew the substance of consciousness. No mental activity was left. This was in 1914 and since then I have never lived in the mind. Ideas get formed not on a mental initiative but in response to the Truth and in order to make the Truth mentally comprehensible and in order to transmit some expression of the Truth to the ordinary world. The mind does not work at all on its own. And when I speak from the highest standpoint, using a way of vision which is not brought into some sort of familiar *liaison* with your mind, I seem to state startling things which you put at once into a mental framework and even set in contradiction to statements by Sri Aurobindo made from another standpoint. Properly understood, our pronouncements can never be contradictory of each other.

As for the practice of poetry, my own personal bent is for a prose that is simple straightforward speech. I do not go in for images. Images for their own sake, for the pleasure they give, are not in my line. However, this is an individual disposition and an individual opinion. I do not ask everybody to follow them. But I do ask poets to aspire, in their own way and as far as it is possible for them, towards the supreme Light that Sri Aurobindo has shown us in his own creation.

A LETTER TO THE MOTHER AND HER COMMENT

MOTHER my dearest,

I want to tell you how I meet you in the morning and how in the evening. In the morning I give you with all my love all that is best in myself. In the evening, with love I pick out from God's finest gifts to the earth—gifts like sunsets, mountain-sceneries, seascapes, woods and flowers—the essence of beauty and add to it the essence of beauty from the whole universe, the world of moon and stars, and then I offer it all to you.

Do you know why I do this? It is because when I sit at the Distribution I see three types of people coming to you. There are a very few who offer you their love. A fairly large group is more or less indifferent. Then there is a third batch, still larger, who just grab from you things for themselves because they are thinking only of themselves. So I get very miserable and try to make up for what these people take away.

I think my own love not sufficient because these people are too many; and it is necessary to give you all the best from everywhere.

22.10.1955

SEHRA

The Mother's Comment

We have a poet. It is very nice. I mean, it is true poetry, not false poetry.

SOME NOTES ON THE MOTHER'S *PRIÈRES ET MÉDITATIONS*

JUST before beginning her Talks in the Playground in March 1953, the Mother took up her *Prières et Méditations*, with a small group of disciples, mostly young people. They were invited to ask questions arising out of the text. The answers were not tape-recorded, nor was any verbatim report taken. But I made it a point to note down the gist of every Talk immediately on returning from the Class, in English for the most part, with a sprinkling of the original French, as far as I could recollect.

In case those notes of mine might prove to be of some interest, I reproduce them here, exactly as they were written at the time, with only a few verbal changes here and there.

The Text

Before setting out in chronological order the details of her Talk each day, let me first bring together under one heading what she had to say on different occasions about the text itself.

Originally, these Prayers and Meditations were written for her own use alone. From the beginning of 1912, while she was still in Paris, till about the middle of 1920 when she came back to Pondicherry from Japan, the Mother used to write them down every morning, almost without a break, in a thick Notebook of foolscap size, after doing meditation. While in France she would come at five every morning to her meditation-room, open all the windows wide, wrap a shawl around her when it was winter, and meditate sitting in front of a window.

They were exact transcriptions, *notations exactes*, of the experiences she had during the meditation. The object was to record them as precisely as possible, so as to make them perfectly clear to the intelligence and also to make them serve as a source of reference for the future in case of need. There were no explanations, no theories, no elaborations, no ornamentations. They recorded the experiences exactly as they came, *tout simplement*.

They were not shown to anybody at the time. Every day, after the writing, she would put the Notebook in a drawer, lock the drawer and keep the key with herself. They were written in a minute hand, and the writings filled five of those large Notebooks. It was nearly ten years after the last of them had been finished that she showed them to Sri Aurobindo. When it was thought necessary to publish them, drastic cuts were made, a large number was left out and the Notebooks were destroyed. Nothing remains of the original except a stray page or two with faded writing.

They were published for the first time in 1932; each copy was marked with a number and distributed by the Mother among those whom she chose. Subsequently, an English translation was authorised and published. Sri Aurobindo himself did some of the translations.

The Frontispiece

The Frontispiece of the original French text explains that the book is made out of extracts from a diary written during years of an intensive yogic discipline, and that it may serve as a guide to three main types of seekers. In her Talk, she dwelt at some length on each of these types. To the first category belong those who wish to know themselves, master themselves, control themselves, *se connaître, se maîtriser, se dominer*. They may not believe in the existence of the Divine, or at least may not at first desire to seek Him. Even so, those who are sincere will find the Divine, *ceux qui sont sincères trouveront le Divin*.

The second category of seekers for whom the book is intended includes those who know that the Divine exists; only, they do not know the way to find Him. The third category comprises those who have already found the Divine, want to serve the Divine, and to transform themselves.

In this connection, she explained in some detail the way to understand the text, and the difference between "learning" and "understanding", *apprendre et comprendre*.

There are four ways of reading the text. They correspond somewhat to the four states of being, *états d'être*. If one reads in all the four ways, *avec les quatre manières*, one will have a full understanding. (I omitted to note down what these four ways are, but the gist of what she said about "understanding" is fairly adequate.)

When you understand a thing, that is, when it becomes part of your consciousness, your experience, when you understand the inner law of things, *la loi interne des choses*, you will never forget it even if you were to live for a hundred years. When, on the other hand, you get merely the surface meaning of words, without understanding what they actually represent in experience, you are likely to forget about it with a change of activity or a change of consciousness. Another point: one can understand only what is already there in one's consciousness, unless at the time of imparting a teaching the experience it represents is also conveyed.

For example, you hear the word "Divine". But how many of you,—she said she was not asking the older disciples—have experienced the *reality* which the word represents? If you had the experience of the reality even for half a minute, you would never forget the experience all your life.

How is one to get the experience? That depends on the aspiration, the will, a firm will to arrive. There is a door to open, the door of the ego with its bars closed tight. The experience comes and goes; it escapes through your fingers as it were. This goes on for a long time. But once the door is open, the experience is unforgettable. The help is always there, living (*vivante*), active. But faith is needed, and a will.

Then she turned to the question of the Supramental Manifestation. "I have never said," she observed, "that when the Divine manifests in His full glory, everybody would realise the Divine. That would be very convenient, but it is not so simple as that."

There will be a descent of Peace and Harmony on earth. And the conditions of life on earth will change. All earthly beings, *tous les êtres terrestres*, will profit by it, *en profiteront*—not man alone but animals and plants also.

Still, that does not mean that man as a race will disappear. There are some who think that man is a transitional species which is doomed to disappear. But that is not true. He has spread all over the earth and he is destined to remain, as monkeys remain. Only, a new race will be born among men, the race of supermen.

She concluded with a warning: "I have never given a promise, a hope to the lazy ones, *aux paresseux*."

It may be relevant in this context to repeat what the Mother said later, in connection with some of the Prayers, about reading this book. It is no use, she said, reading the book if no attempt is made to live it out. She had in fact written out a Note for the Reader when the book was being published, to the effect that no one should read this book unless he meant to put into practice what he read.

The reason, she explained on another occasion, is this. You may read the book ten times over, but it will give you little benefit unless you concretely experience the things described here. Mental ideas are nothing; they are mostly words and words moving about in your head. Cast them away. Throw them away like dust. Come straight down to the *things*, and you will see them as they are. It is these habits of the mind—preconceived notions and attachment to old and formed ideas—that stand in the way of the truth. Get rid of them, become free, and then you will see what a difference it makes.

She insisted that one could understand practically nothing of what has been said in the book unless one has had the experience described.

Sri Aurobindo had suggested the publication of the book so that it might encourage people to have the experience.

January 1, 1914

My notes do not begin till the 1st January, 1914. "... Was consecrated the first minute of this new year."

She had taken a vow that from that date onwards she would turn all her thoughts to the Divine Presence in the heart.

January 4, 1914

"The tides of material thoughts" are the thoughts about material things, about oneself such as 'what am I going to have for dinner?', 'what am I going to say if someone tells me this or that?', 'what will people think of me?' and so on. They always crop up and disturb the state of concentration. One has to keep a firm will and take a strong decision that they will not be allowed to crop up.

January 5, 1914

“A veritable zero in the world” is the physical consciousness. Left to itself, it is of no consequence, it has no power. But once you add to it, or rather put behind it, the Power and Presence of the Divine, it acquires a value and a power, as the zero does when backed by other numbers.

January 10, 1914

“The world of relativities” is our world, that is, the earth on which we live. It is made up of close interrelationships; each thing here is bound up inextricably with everything else. For example, a thought occurring in us generates a wave that goes the round of the entire earth.

January 11, 1914

“If we had a truly living faith” means the following. It is a mistake to think that we are bound by our past. We can break with it. We can shape our future, if we have simply the will and the aspiration, if we have the faith and call for the change. The Divine is there all the time, and to His Power there is no limit. If, on the other hand, we sit resigned to our fate in an attitude of helpless inactivity, we cannot lift ourselves out of our present state. Only if we call with a firm faith, aspire in full faith that the Divine may work the change in us, can the change come.

January 30, 1914

This world of ours is based on “the bedrock” of the Subconscious and the Inconscious.

February 9, 1914

“The inertia of inconscience...” Inertia and want of consciousness are the two things that stand most in the way of the Divine Force. The more the inertia disappears, the greater is the Force one receives; the greater the Force one receives, the less grows the inertia.

February 12, 1914

The “perfect personal disinterestedness” described here is the direct opposite of the ego-centric attitude. For example, when someone asks, ‘What is that man like?’ the ego-centric person does not pause to think whether the man is good or bad, ugly or nice to look at, wise or ignorant, and so on. He simply blurts out, ‘Oh, he is very nice to *me*!’ Always this ‘me’ is the pivot of his thought.

The attitude of personal disinterestedness is not the final stage of the spiritual endeavour. It is important because it leads to the identification of the consciousness with that of the Divine.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

THE SEEKING AND THE FINDING

A PAGE FROM A WESTERNER'S LIFE

I WENT from the U.S.A. to Spain and from Spain to London looking for the Person who would show me the "Way". After a year in London, a year of meeting many people and of various experiences, I still did not find the Teacher. Among the friends I came to know was an Indian. Circumstances so unfolded as to necessitate my departure from London. Where to go next? Where is the answer? India? I didn't know much about India, but I chose to go and continue to search there. Having an Indian friend made it more convenient.

I arrived in the strange land without too many preconceptions but expecting to find "realized" people all over the place. It so happened that I found myself in a well-off circle of Indians in the Punjab. I went to cocktail parties and drove around in chauffeur-driven cars and wondered why I had to come all this way to do the same things I could do in Europe. I didn't want such a life. Had I come to India to see an imitation of the West? What a disappointment!

I explained to my friend saying I wanted to see the real India, meet men who knew about the Self and the soul and how to change one's being. In response he suggested I go to stay with a certain religious man of high standing whom he knew.

So off I went to the town (still in the Punjab) where he lived—only to discover he was not at home for the week. I stayed anyway. His grown-up children were my hosts during my time there.

Once I was talking with his daughter in her room, and her book-shelf attracted me. I looked at the books and pulled one out, a thin book without any title on the spine. I kept it out to read in the evening when alone.

When I began to read I couldn't believe my eyes. It was so powerful, the words, the experiences, the aspirations. It was as if someone understood what I was feeling and thinking and living and wrote it down. As I read further I was emotionally overwhelmed. The writer had written most clearly, most vividly what I was going through, and more. I stayed awake for hours reading this book.

In the morning I asked about the author. The book was simply named *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*. Then I was told about the Ashram in Pondicherry. My hosts were very helpful and planned for me to go to their sister in Madras and then from Madras to Pondicherry.

When I returned to my friend I was in a happier mood. I was going—going toward something special now. Shortly I began my journey south. Everything went well. I arrived in Pondicherry and knew I had found "it" or "it" had found me. The search was over. This was the place where the soul could grow.

Now the decision was to be taken whether to stay on or go away. Since the finding had been done, the search, the life of looking had ceased and the time for commitment had come. I stayed five days according to schedule and returned to

Madras to continue my travels in the South of India. After three weeks of moving about I was in Madras once more and this was the time for the choice.

There was a car going to Pondicherry the following day and I was either going with it or going to Calcutta and soon back to Europe. I still had not decided after lying awake the whole night thinking. When the dawn came I was getting worried. As I started to dress, suddenly the answer came: "Go to Pondicherry." It wasn't a thought, it wasn't even me. It had nothing to do with all the mind's work through the night. It was something calm and clear—outside of me and yet deep inside. So I came to the Ashram.

M. P.

YOUR DOMAIN

I AM a slave of Your sweet domain!
 Consciously, in wakefulness, I seek for it.
 Longingly, I drench myself in its bliss—
 In its corners of healing solutions I sit.

On the edge of sleep I slide into its silken folds,
 Begging refuge from darkness into light.
 In deep oblivion I spiral down to a perfection-point—
 In Your arms engulfed, I surface again to a trembling height.

4-6-1978

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

OUR LIGHT AND DELIGHT

RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1978)

II

In the Year of the Greatest Difficulty

ON the evening of December 31, 1954, the Mother announced that the coming year—with perhaps two more months added—would be a very crucial one, the year of the greatest difficulty because a great outburst of the Divine was preparing and the hostile forces would give battle with the utmost ferocity to stop it. A sort of last-ditch fight was anticipated. The Mother said it would affect individuals and collectivities alike. She warned us to be on guard and to hold out at all costs.

I must, however, confess that I passed nearly the whole of 1955 very enjoyably by choosing as my special cross the most difficult poet in the world to study and translate and comment on. All such troubles as my friends went through were submerged for me by this poet: the Frenchman Stéphane Mallarmé. Grappling with his obscurity was to strive with the covering under which the light which is beyond the mind puts itself when the mind approaches it with its own terms and standards. An Upanishad says: "The Gods love the obscure." In an analogous sense Mallarmé loved it. Once, after a lecture, he asked a student to hand him the notes the listener had taken. Mallarmé said: "I want to put a little obscurity into them." Without that tinge of the elusive his thoughts would become merely mental. By a certain inspired twist he would distance them, so to speak, and make them suggest what cannot be expressed in the percepts and concepts to which our mind is accustomed. By the challenge which Mallarmé posed all the time to the mere mental, I felt I was getting in contact with a consciousness which made everything in the world a riddle instead of a plain fact and demanded an answer other than our normal life, even our normal imaginative life, could give.

I do not say that Mallarmé's way of conjuring up mysteries is the highest, the most spiritual. One can be mysterious without being mystifying, and it is then that one is authentically mystical: there strikes on us a glory of Truth which dazzles us into an ecstatic inner intuition of realities, each having a precise form with an infinite halo. With Mallarmé we are left not with realities but with symbols that by their baffling vividness, their dynamic vagueness, annul the ordinary system of experience and create what I may call a pregnant void, an emptiness full of the promise and potentiality of a new cosmos—but that cosmos itself is not there.

Perhaps in that year of definitive or decisive confrontation by the unspiritual darkness of the ages, the preoccupation with the Mallarméan darkness which was

a hidden illumination helped to prevent the unspiritual gloom from overwhelming one: it gave one a trick, a skill, an art, as it were, to live with that gloom and give a new turn to its presence so that it might be made, in spite of itself, to serve a higher end. Of course, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* was never far from me and I tried to look at Mallarmé and interpret him in the manner Sri Aurobindo had hinted at in his correspondence with Nirodbaran while commenting on two sonnets of the French Arch-Symbolist. But the Mallarméan technique and inspiration was a good training and I approached the end of 1955 with a happy face and a brain healthily athletic with a ready wrestler's grip for supra-intellectual secrecies.

Then suddenly a grim shadow fell over my achievement. It was of an accident which happened in early November. The mischance did not involve my own person nor was Pondicherry its setting, but it affected me keenly because the one involved in it was my wife Sehra's sister Mina who was a close friend to me and whose coming to the Ashram had been linked with me intimately. Late in the evening on the Divali day of 1955 we received an extra-express telegram saying that Mina in Bombay had been flung from her running scooter and very grievously hurt in the head and lay unconscious in hospital. Although the hour was fairly advanced we ran up to the Mother. She was in an inside room but came out at once on learning that we were waiting for her. She took the news most gravely and said the situation looked indeed bad. She wanted to be kept in constant touch with developments from day to day.

Sehra worried a great deal the same night and the next morning. Towards noon she felt that she just had to go to Bombay and be by her sister's side as well as near her niece Roshan who was naturally in extreme distress. We were told afterwards that Mina—a markedly beautiful woman—had looked horrifying when she had been picked up from the pavement where she had fallen off her scooter. One side of the face had turned black and huge and the mouth had been set in a frightful grimace with bared teeth.

Arrangements were made for Sehra to leave by the night train. In the late afternoon, as was her privilege in those days, she went to see the Mother at the Playground to tell her of her forthcoming departure and receive her blessing. Some minutes after she had left our house it struck me that I should rush out and see what transpired between the Mother and her. When I entered the Playground I saw the Mother standing on the threshold of her resting-room and Sehra kneeling at her feet. I hurried to where the parting was taking place. I reached there before Sehra lifted her head for the blessing. Looking at the Mother's serious face I gathered in a flash that she did not really approve of Sehra's precipitate journey. As soon as Sehra raised her head I said: "Mother does not want you to go. Don't go." Sehra was amazed as the Mother had shown no sign of a negative attitude. The Mother herself turned to me and protested: "I have not said No. Why do you say I don't want her to go? Let her go if she feels like it." I replied: "I am sure that you don't wish her to go. How can she do so against your wish?" The Mother's

face was still unresponsive to my intuition. But some ray of understanding entered Sehra's mind and she, although puzzled, managed to say: "If Mother truly disapproves, I shan't go." I addressed her: "Of course she disapproves. Ask her." It would appear that Sehra had not once asked the Mother: she had merely declared her resolve and received permission. When she said she would not leave Pondicherry unless the Mother openly gave her sanction, the Mother relaxed her own expression and showed that she did not like Sehra to leave. The trip was thus cancelled and the Mother explained in effect: "If Sehra on her own initiative took it upon herself to go and be a help to her sister, my responsibility would be secondary. If, on the contrary, she threw herself into my hands and left everything to me with full faith, I would become fully responsible and my direct capacity to save Mina would be in action. It was a choice between my staying in the background and my standing in the front as Mina's saviour."

These words provide an insight into the Divine's workings. They remind us of Sri Krishna's *Mahāvākya*: "Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver you from all evil. Have no fear." The idea of personal help, even the idea of self-help, are dharmas, set rules of conduct, which, though commendable under ordinary circumstances, grow obstacles in a life aspiring to be in immediate relationship with the Divine. Not that one remains passive or indifferent: one gives whatever assistance is possible, but the sense of individual responsibility is put aside, the Divine is constantly invoked, one's own self and ability are offered to Him as instruments and a deep equanimity which is suffused with complete trust in the Divine's wisdom-illuminated love serves as a base on which He is allowed to build His own vision of things to come.

Sehra proved a good medium. Here an interesting fact calls for mention. The Mother could act through her so well, first because there was a psycho-physical connection between sister and sister and secondly because Sehra's heart was wide open to the Mother. But the heart's openness brought about a strange phenomenon in the head. Mina had been severely hurt on her head but had become totally unconscious. Now, Sehra began to suffer from a strong headache as though some of the pain which would have been Mina's, if she had been conscious, had got transferred to Sehra and as though Sehra's brain had been acting proxy for her sister's and supplying the Mother with a focus-point for concentrated play of curative force.

Day after day the Mother's profound work went on. News was sent without fail so that some outer specific guidance might be available for the inner movement of the Power. Once there was no news. The Mother sternly demanded why it was lacking, and she emphasised the importance of a daily bulletin. Mina was unconscious even after a fortnight. The doctors were very much concerned, but the Mother said that the unconsciousness was a boon to the patient, for else the pain, at the beginning at least, would have been unbearable. Information came one day that the side of her body that had been paralysed was still immobile. The Mother put her concentration on it and the next day we heard of slight sturrings in the limbs.

On about the twenty-first day, when the unconsciousness kept on, I spoke to the Mother: "Mina has always been very receptive to my influence. It has often happened that things like an ache anywhere and even a state of fever got cured when I tried to channel your presence and power to her. I have the feeling that if I went to Bombay and attempted in your name to draw Mina out of her unconsciousness something in her would respond." The Mother kept silent for a few seconds and then answered: "I know that you can help. But let us wait a little longer. If no change takes place I shall send you to Bombay. But don't leave the Ashram just yet." Two days after this talk we were informed that Mina had come out of her dead stupor of more than three weeks. There was no sign of paralysis left but she could not speak at all except two words: "Mother"—"Sehra." My sister Minnie who had been visiting her all along visited her now too and reported to us her conviction that Mina understood everything said to her and what was going on but could not exteriorise her understanding. An eminent neurosurgeon was called to examine her. He put her through some tests and arrived at the conclusion that she would never recover normal speech. Thinking she was not looking, he sombrely shook his head. She caught sight of him and burst into tears. By a curious quirk of fate, this neurosurgeon met with an accident three or four weeks later and lost his own speech completely. He had to be sent to London to undergo a long treatment. Mina, on the other hand, began to increase her vocabulary though at times the words got mixed and one word popped out instead of another. When she returned home she tried to read a paper. The whole mass of printed matter seemed one black blotch. But gradually, as time went on, the eyes came to discern things on a page, though not to her satisfaction. She was in a hurry to come to the Ashram where, she felt, her hope of full recovery lay. Within a month of her home-coming she was on board a train, accompanied by a nurse. She would reach Pondicherry on January 6, 1956.

I went to Madras to receive her. She was extremely glad to see me. I noted that she had regained her old looks. The monstrous disfiguration had entirely vanished. This was enough of a wonder. The three of us reached Pondicherry happily and Mina's meetings with the Mother started again. She told the Mother in her broken way that she could not say any words with ease and frequency except "Mother" and "Sri Aurobindo". Hearing this, Champaklal who was somewhere near rushed into the Mother's presence and exclaimed: "Ideal condition, Mother, ideal condition! I also want to say nothing except these names." The Mother stared in a bit of amazement. So did all of us who were present. What was at the back of Champaklal's mind seemed to be that he was often led into useless talk and that only the names of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo with their deep spiritual associations made speech worth while. Several years later a difficulty developed in Champaklal's articulation. There was nothing organically wrong: some dietary deficiency appeared to be responsible. A period of silence was advised and treatment prescribed. The regime of keeping quiet suited Champaklal very much and he made it a rule not to speak even after the stipulated time was over and he had con-

siderably improved. He has gone far beyond the "ideal condition" he had dreamt of, for now invariably he scribbles on a writing-pad in answer to people's questions and the two Great Names themselves do not get audibly uttered. They certainly keep ringing within him, since he is all the while in a state of radiant joy and the absence of speech obviously helps in his case to conserve as well as communicate it better.

Mina made an earnest plea to the Mother that she might be given again the capacity to read her works and Sri Aurobindo's. She said she did not care whether she could talk as freely as before, but would be endlessly grateful if she could intelligently absorb herself in their marvellous books. Her prayer was granted.

Her speech too returned to normal. At one stage Dr. Sanyal proposed that if improvement was not rapid enough he might be permitted to drill a small hole on one side of the skull and let out whatever obstructive blood had collected there. No need arose for the operation. Mina had complete faith in the Mother and knew how to be patient. Little "howlers" were taken by her as part of the day's work. With her overflowing sense of humour she would laugh at her own occasional verbal misfires. I am sure she will not mind my citing one of the instances which provoked her own hilarity. She had presented to the Mother a beautiful large aquamarine. The Mother had it fixed in a headband. Mina, seeing it worn upon the Mother's brow, was pleased beyond measure and recounted to me that her "aquarium" was being carried by the Mother on her head.

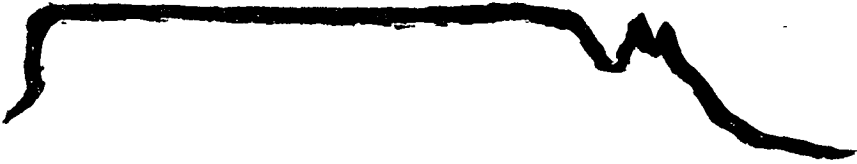
Actually, Mina in Bombay had set up an elaborate aquarium in her flat and she is an expert in fish-lore. Born under the astrological sign "Pisces" on February 28, she might be expected to be so—and we might expect her also to take spontaneously to life with the Mother, who, born on February 21, was herself a Piscine and by virtue of this early date the primary one. Like the first member of the Hindu procession of Ten Avatars—the Fish-Incarnation of Vishnu who led Manu the Indian Adam-cum-Noah to safety over the World-Flood—such a Piscine would most appropriately be our leader through the super-Mallarméan mysteries which Sri Aurobindo in a line of *Savitri* calls "the soul's great deeps". And what more natural than that with her love she should bear safely a wounded fish-child of hers across the profundities during that period when the blackest of black winds blew over the adventure of the Integral Yoga: 1955?

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN

PURBAL

Purbal is the uninhabited mountain seen at some distance from the hill-station of Matheran about fifty miles from Bombay. It has a remarkable "presence" well-suited to be a symbol to the poetic vision.



FROM the stunned rapture of a single rock
Thrust forward by a cleft in the mountain mood
Two purple peaks wake into our night and day,
One mastering the blind hours, one mothering
The moments that uplift their cry to the Vast.

Behind them stretches breakless and aloof—
Mile on straight mile—the unseizable sovereignty
Of force that sheds all feature, love that wears
No face for the deep prayer of the valley's heart—
Sheer walls upon whose granite godhead crumble
The ages of mankind—a trackless quiet
Where light looks inward and the world is lost!

Out of that mystery sprang your passionate Word,
O sweet companion-crests—two syllables
Of beauty softening down to our myriad dream
The timeless steep and silence of the One.

6-II-1942

K. D. SETHNA

THE FOUNDING OF THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM PRESS

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. INDRA SEN

Dr. Indra Sen, one of the first workers and assistant managers of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, was interviewed by Sanjay Bhatt and Bob Zwicker on 28 April 1977. The following text is the transcript of their tape-recorded conversation, as edited and amended by the interviewee.

SANJAY: *The first question is: How, when and why did you join the Press?*

INDRA SEN: I think it was in the summer of 1944. Mother said to me: "Now you too can come." My wife and children had come two years earlier and I was awaiting permission to come to the Ashram. When I came, Mother sent me to the Press for work. And I started working there; that is how it happened.

BOB: *What was your first job? What did Mother ask you to do?*

INDRA SEN: My first job was very interesting. I happened to join when R. V. Pillai was not at the station. He was in Hyderabad; he used to come and go, and I joined the Press at a time when he was not here. My duty was to receive consignments of machinery and type as they arrived from Madras under a deal which Pillai had executed. I used to receive them, get them opened, and then the machinery and the type were sorted out and placed in different rooms.

Well, just at the time when things were being received and sorted out, Mother said: "Let the work be started." At that time neither I nor anybody else at the Press knew how to compose or how to do any printing. But we started doing our best. Somehow we composed *New Year's Prayers* and printed it too! How the printing was done I cannot recall, but we studied the cases, the lower case and the upper case, and we composed. And Pillai was surprised how, nobody knowing anything, we were able to compose *New Year's Prayers* and get it ready. That was indeed a thrilling experience. We did not understand it all then, but it was a case of Mother's will getting a thing done even through untrained persons. But what a confidence it gave to us—we felt we could run the Press!

SANJAY: *Later on, from Delhi there was an entire Press which had come and a compositor with it—some machines and types, some press....*

INDRA SEN: That was much later. In the beginning, it was a press purchased in Madras, a second-hand thing for Rs. 40,000 if I remember aright. And it came. Then, later on we purchased, bit by bit, many things, even new machinery, new

printing presses and cutting machines and all sorts of things. In the beginning it was a running press which was purchased by Pillai on behalf of the Ashram, and it started coming and I began to receive it.

I used to function at that time in the rooms at the back, since the frontside was yet in possession of the owner of the house. He had given us only a part of the house. I used to work in the room right opposite to the church and carry on the work. The room was full of type-cases and machinery parts. And there I used to sit. Just at that time or, yes, a little later, I had to write my presidential address for the psychology section of the Indian Science Congress—and sitting in the midst of the type I used to write my address. That I remember very well, I wrote it while attending to that work, sitting in that room in the midst of type-cases. And the flow of that writing was beautiful—that too is a clear impression. The writing was entitled “The Urge for Wholeness”. It was later presented to Sri Aurobindo and then sent to the Science Congress office. It is interesting that it was noticed and printed, in summary and in full, many times over. But it was written in the room full of type-cases and machinery parts, while my primary dedication was to the urgent work of a printing press for the Ashram, which was enjoying Mother’s continuous attention.

BOB: *How many persons worked with you?*

SANJAY: *And how many were paid workers?*

INDRA SEN: Not more than half a dozen persons who wanted to learn composing and do some work. They were sadhaks of the Ashram, boys and girls who knew nothing, but they said they would work in the Press; and so they used to come and do anything that could be done and needed to be done—whatever anybody wanted to do he did. This is how the thing started.

There is one thing more in this connection. Vasudha’s brother was the engineer put in charge of reconstructing the premises. He used to work on the construction side and we used to do the cleaning of types and organisation of the printing press equipment. Mother used to get reports about our work through him. His name was Chandulal. He was short in size, very stout and a very nice man. He used to give daily reports to the Mother and brought messages from the Mother which we all looked forward to hearing from him every day.

And then one day he came and said: “Today, the owner of the house must give possession to us of the entire house.” We had been eagerly waiting for that. The man had promised, but later on, it appeared, he changed his mind. He thought: “I won’t give it to the Ashram, I want it for my own business.” Then Chandulal told us: “This morning Mother went to Sri Aurobindo and said to him: ‘Today he must vacate the premises.’” Chandulal further told us not to say a word to the owner but just to wait and see what happened.

The lunch hour came and still he was as firm on his *gaddi* as ever. We were curious and peeping all the time to see whether he showed any signs of a move. (*Laughter*) The lunch hour passed and we resumed our work. It was two o'clock, it was three o'clock, and yet no indication! He seemed to be settled firmly, with no intention of vacating. I must say we became a little despondent. I can quite recall his stout figure squarely seated on his throne, conducting his business on that crucial day.

From three to five, those two hours appeared to us very long, and our cherished hope reached its vanishing point, I must say. At five we closed our part of the premises and got ready to go. But just then he shouted out: "I am also going. You can take the house." (*Laughter*) The miracle had happened and we were beside ourselves with joy. How much he had really resisted the Higher Pressure, but ultimately he responded. Mother's plans regarding the Press had been much held up and now they could proceed freely and fully. We felt so happy. It was a day of rejoicing for all of us.

After that we were able to spread our things. In the beginning our work was concentrated in two or three rooms. And then we got the entire premises, began to enter the house by the main gate, not by the back door—then the back door became a back door. That is how it worked out.

SANJAY: *Did Sri Aurobindo say anything special about the beginning?*

INDRA SEN: Sri Aurobindo was constantly in touch with all that was happening. That I definitely recollect. Certainly, Sri Aurobindo knew the happenings of the Press, from day to day.

SANJAY: *Who had the first idea to start the Press?*

INDRA SEN: Well, I think Mother and Sri Aurobindo had been feeling the need for a Press at the Ashram for some time. And then, in an overt manner, the proposal came from Pillai, who said: "Mother, I can organise a Press for the Ashram." Mother accepted and gave to Pillai all kinds of facilities. Mother gave great facilities to Pillai because he was the technical man who could really organise it.

I had to work at times as an intermediary between Mother and Pillai. When Pillai wanted something, he wouldn't directly ask Mother, he would tell me and I would convey his wish to Mother. She was always so considerate. Pillai carried on the work very well, but after some time he began to withdraw. By then we had got ready, and when he left, we were able to carry on the work without difficulty. Our very first achievement of composing and printing *New Year's Prayers* by ourselves had given us a wonderful self-confidence. Mother had asked us to start work and we started it and it succeeded. We were now perfectly confident of printing things—with a sense of taste and beauty too.

SANJAY: *Did we have some books printed in Hyderabad where Mr. Pillai was the manager?*

INDRA SEN: Yes, *Collected Poems and Plays* was printed in Hyderabad. That was done by Pillai and it was nicely brought out. *Collected Poems and Plays* in two volumes, first edition—that was done in Hyderabad by Pillai himself.

SANJAY: *And before that, was there some Press in Pondicherry where the Arya was printed between 1914 and 1920?*

INDRA SEN: The *Arya* was printed at a Press called "Modern Press". But I have no personal knowledge of it because I was not at the Ashram at that time.

SANJAY: *Was there any date or time when Mother said: "Yes, now the Press is working"? You know, what I want is some chronological data on the subject.*

INDRA SEN: I don't remember any such date, any one particular date.

SANJAY: *Were the premises where the Press is now situated taken long before they started using it for the Press? How long before the machinery came were the premises taken on rent?*

INDRA SEN: The premises were taken on a long lease and later on purchased. Now they are the property of the Ashram, but they were originally taken on a long lease, probably of ten or fifteen years.

SANJAY: *But do you know anything about the date on which....?*

INDRA SEN: That our Ashram records would be able to show. But I don't remember that particular date.

BOB: *Dr. Indra Sen, would you describe the Press in the early days—the spirit, the daily struggle, the individual struggle, the spirit of the people working together in order to follow out Mother's wishes and her instructions and to dedicate the work inwardly and outwardly to her? Can you tell us a little bit about how it felt to be a worker?*

INDRA SEN: You ask for a long history of unsettled conditions. Well, I had a good deal to do at the Press and I didn't have experience. We went out recruiting people, thinking we needed them or would soon need them. Mother gave us the freedom to get as many people as we liked—but she didn't give us the freedom to send them away! Mother said: "No, you can't send them away." (*Laughter*)

That was war-time and Mother said: "What will they do elsewhere? This is war-time, they may not get work. You can't dismiss them." I had to write to her—my copy-books show it—"Mother, there is so much confusion and people don't do their duty and there is quarrelling." And Mother gave me the reply: "The Force is at work and things will get all right, you wait." This was her clear and definite reply. I didn't understand it well enough then, but it evoked in me an attitude of some faith and of waiting. These words, "The Force is at work and things will get all right", kept ringing in my ears. I repeated them to myself and I found real joy in doing so, while externally there was confusion and much frustration.

But within six months the situation as a whole changed. People dropped out and we were left with just the number we needed. That was, no doubt, a great experience. A remarkable play of egos, much confusion, much frustration, much pettiness too, yet things went on—and on the whole there was progress and in the end a surprising clarity and overall harmony. The Power showed its effectivity through the results that came about.

BOB: *Was this difficulty with the paid workers or among yourselves?*

INDRA SEN: In the situation as a whole, among ourselves as well as the paid workers. There was lack of organisation and too many idle hands, no smooth flow of work and so on. For example, we didn't have a man for accounts; he came much later. There were compositors, but we had no work for them. And so people were idle and there was a lot of chit-chatting.

BOB: *Did you ask Mother what to do about this? What people should do with the idle time?*

INDRA SEN: I asked her repeatedly. My copy-books show that. But Mother said: "The Force is at work. Wait and see." And Mother didn't want to do anything in an overt manner, as some of us wanted to do it. She relied on her own spiritual working and within six months things came round and became smooth and harmonious.

BOB: *But what was your idea? What did you want to do?*

INDRA SEN: My idea was, well: dismiss these people who are not wanted, give them notice. The ordinary idea, that was my idea. (*Laughter*)

SANJAY: *Sir, about the strike in 1947: could you tell us something about it? Why was there a strike and what did Mother say?*

INDRA SEN: I will have to recall. I will have to try to go back in my mind.

I remember that they wanted to enforce on us some demands. But Mother did not consider their demands reasonable. She gave them a warning, she said to them, "Look here, you are well looked after, you should not go on strike." But still they went on strike. Then Mother said: "Nothing doing. I won't agree, won't concede to any of their demands." A radical change in the whole situation, as permissible under law, was then brought about. We were free from the paid workers and they were free from us. The sadhaks displayed a wonderful spirit and coped with the entire work by themselves. Later we appointed a few hands on a new basis, as we needed them. Thus did the solution to the difficulty due to too many hands come about.

SANJAY: *How often did Mother come there?*

INDRA SEN: Perhaps two or three times. I remember Mother's last visit. She went to all the rooms and showed pleasure: "Well, this is nice and clean." And she remained silent when she found it was not good enough. But Mother went to almost every room in the Press.

SANJAY: *Did Mother come there after the strike or during the strike?*

INDRA SEN: Not during the strike, but on some other occasion.

SANJAY: *S said Mother had come there once. S told me that she had come and addressed the workers about how she was treating them and what they were expected to do.*

INDRA SEN: I don't remember. S might remember better because he has maintained continuity with the Press. So far as I am concerned, it dropped from my mind as my work shifted to other fields. The Press was very much in my mind up to the year 1951 or 1952. Then Mother gave me teaching work and I dropped the Press from my mind. Later when Mother sent me out, my teaching work also dropped from me. Then I began to look after Jawalapur and Tapogiri; for almost the last twenty years my main work has been there.

SANJAY: *Do you think that most of the departments which started after 1926 have something of the Overmind's working in them, in the forms which the mind has already made? Can we say that when Mother started all these organisations, she wanted to put in the Overmind?*

INDRA SEN: I had a lot to do with the organisation in the Press and later on in the Centre of Education, and the Mother always said: "This is over-administration." (*Laughter*) That is what Mother always told me. I remember it very well, I would say "Mother, things must be organised." She said: "No, let things grow!" I remember that very well. Mother told me that not once but many times over, because that hab-

it of my mind was very obstinate. I made proposals and got the same answer—again and again. (*Laughter*)

Of course, basically, all of us received encouragement from the Mother. We were spiritual seekers, we aimed at spiritual realisation and Mother was all for helping us in that pursuit. But she had to pull us out of our egos and, where hard formations were concerned, sterner action was necessary. Silence was the usual response, but at times a positive rejection was there—but only where the Mother saw that the person could stand the rejection well enough. My mind's habit was obstinate and it received the handling it needed; it has not been the loser for that!

BOB: *You say that most of the proposals you made were rejected?*

INDRA SEN: I haven't kept a count of proposals made, proposals approved and proposals rejected. But my present feeling is that all that I was then and all that I said and did then, deserved to be rejected. And that is what I have been doing all these years and yet it has not been done effectively enough.

SANJAY: *Do you think that we can view all these departments as channels for the working of the Higher Power to promote and achieve spiritual growth among the workers—a psychic and spiritual personality in them?*

INDRA SEN: Of course, the Ashram being a field for the realisation and the manifestation of the Divine, the various departments as constituents of Ashram life would reflect the same spirit. As spiritual seekers, we have learned to appreciate that the spiritual truths of life are the deeper and the higher determinants of life, and hence are more efficient. Naturally, we would like to live by them, to avail ourselves of them more and more in our life and action. By doing so we would grow spiritually ourselves and bring into being standards higher than those of our ordinary mental and vital nature.

Sri Aurobindo avowedly conceived of the Ashram as a field for the practice of Karmayoga, and it was most patiently organised as an environment imbued with the Divine Presence, in order to help the growth of the Divine Consciousness in those who sought such growth and lived in the Ashram.

The various departments of the Ashram are, in fact, intended for this purpose, as a field for the working of the Higher Power. They can be understood and appreciated fully only when seen in this way.

However, the human element which is sought to be remoulded is still human and much varied. The departments, therefore, in their quality and character, present human nature in its higher as well as its ordinary lower aspect.

SANJAY: *Suppose I am working in the Press—how would you advise me to go about doing my work, now that you know more or less what Mother wanted in the work to be done?*

INDRA SEN: Well, one thing: we should work out of a consciousness of the whole, the Will that inspires the entire Ashram life. Each individual should maintain, as best he can, an increasingly direct contact with this Will. While obeying his immediate superiors, his answerability and responsiveness should be to that Will to build up a living continuous contact with the source of our inspiration. This is what is very definite and clear to me. Suppose I am working under you. I obey you, but still I feel as though I am obeying Mother who inspires the whole work. There should not be a kind of "my personal will" being subject to "your personal will", but rather Mother's Will finding expression through you, and I obeying Mother's Will as expressed in and through you. Then the spiritual bearings remain correct.

SANJAY: At present, in the organisation of the Press, as in that of the School, they are bringing in ideas of working from outside, from organisations of a similar character—like new systems of education or new systems of printing and organisation and administration.

INDRA SEN: The inner creative Will is the primary fact. It must remain alive and active. And it can surely accept and re-create into its own perspective of life and existence any experiences obtained externally from other sources. But if things are accepted imitatively, then the creative Will gets ignored and suppressed. That is what comes to me in answer to this question.

In this connection, it is now also possible to explain what Mother possibly meant by saying, "Let things grow." At that time I understood what was meant by trying to organise a department, but "letting things grow" left me more or less blank. But now it is a significant phrase. One must aspire, seek unity and harmony in oneself and let the Divine unity and harmony remould us all in its own image. This takes time, but what comes about is stable and effective. What is organisationally—that is, in an external way—imposed does not work because we are inwardly not duly attuned to the situation of life. The approach of growing up ourselves in a situation to meet its demands under the overall guiding and inspiring Will is, therefore, the best solution. Organisation or the external form of relationships should be an expression of the inner status and growth, and freely change with it and not be a restriction on it.

This is perhaps enough as the first attempt to know our Press, how it came into being and how it has helped to grow up and to do its work as a department of the Ashram in its pursuit of the spiritual ideals it seeks to serve.

SHANKARA—THE MONIST-DUALIST

WHETHER it is true or not that Shankara is responsible for the all-round degradation of India by his doctrine of Maya, a certain aspect of what he called Maya is undeniable. There can be no denying the fact of incessant change of the world and of ourselves from moment to moment so that everything in this life is in a state of constant flux—nothing is fixed or stable.

Human beings, however, at all stages of development, from the highest intelligence to the lowest and least, are apt to believe and live up to their belief that things are stable or permanent so far as they themselves and their interests are concerned. If it is a certain and infallible fact that all is passing and nothing permanent in life, then what is the meaning of this frantic attempt to possess and retain things which are in their very nature unretainable, including life itself? And such an attempt too is an aspect of Maya which is self-evident.

That Maya is an illusion veiling the One Reality behind the phenomena may be understood in the sense that the world is and is not at the same time. This moment, says Vivekananda, is always vanishing—it is going, going, gone. So from one point of view Shankara is right in stressing the ambiguity and impermanence of this phenomenal existence. He is right also in affirming that we are not mere minds, lives and bodies which are constantly changing but something deeper and truer, namely, the Spirit or Atman which is One, unchanging, unborn, undying and eternal. This One has been affirmed again and again by men of spiritual insight and realisation of all climes and all ages. What has been lacking is the realisation of a Divine Consciousness which is master of both Eternity and Time and can manifest its supreme Truth, both single and manifold, in our universe.

Shankara the philosopher has been justly regarded by all as an uncompromising Monist, and the political, economic and social degradation of India has been attributed to his strong and strenuous advocacy of the state of Nirvana in the world-negating Absolute. But few have taken pains to give due value to his exquisite devotional poems including the Bhavani Stotra, his hymns to Sri Krishna and the matchless and incomparable tribute he has paid to Mother Ganges in immortal and unforgettable melodies. To those who have read his devotional poems, he is nothing if not a supreme Bhakta—a devotee of God in His various aspects and embodiments. Thus his life as a Bhakta belies his rigid and uncompromising stand as an Adwaitin. His ultimate outlook afforded no possibility of reconciling the two sides of his spirituality. These two sides call for a new outlook which would take us beyond Shankara.

JIBENDRA

TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of August 1978)

Chapter V

Descent into the Inconscient

(3)

THE very moment the Mother was informed of my trouble, all pain was gone. I began to move my legs freely. Now what to say to Dr. Sanyal who was to come? I feared he might feel offended and think that I had been troubling the Mother for nothing. What hypocrisy on my part! Instead of expressing the heart's gratitude to the Mother for giving me instant relief, I behaved like a fool, yielding to a human being's expectation and telling lies to avoid his displeasure! To what a level I was dragged down within a couple of days! One hole in the hull of a ship and it is sunk.

But ever-present was the graciousness of the Mother. Despite my great folly she was all help and sent me her force the moment my case was reported to her.

As the day sank to rest, I saw in my own room, two or three times, a golden sun just a little away from my head. Had I kept myself exclusively turned to the Mother nothing undesirable could have happened. A young boy peeped into my room again and again simply out of curiosity to see what I was doing. My attention was drawn to him and I could not concentrate. Here again I cared more for an external incident than for the Mother's force pouring itself in. Naturally I could receive nothing. Even today when I remember such silliness and weakness in my nature I hang down my head in shame.

The attack was from different fronts. Again and again the Mother sent word: "Keep quiet, I shall do everything." But this too I could not do. The mind seemed to be under a siege and the vital opened its door to all sorts of forces.

It came to such a pass that there was left no way for me but to enter the hell-fire of the Intermediate Zone. Sri Aurobindo has given a vivid description of this Zone in *The Riddle of This World* (p. 57):

"This is a zone which many sadhaks have to cross, in which many wander for a long time and out of which a great many never emerge. Especially if their sadhana is mainly in the mental and the vital, they have to meet here many difficulties and much danger."

What is stated above has a semblance to the following extract from *The Life Divine* (American Ed. p. 805):

"In entering within one may find oneself amid a chaos of unfamiliar and super-normal experiences... which may unduly sway or chaotically drive the being, encircle it in a cave of darkness, or keep it wandering in a wilderness of glamour, allure-

ment, deception, or push it into an obscure battle-field full of secret and treacherous and misleading or open and violent oppositions...

"If there is too much egoism in the nature of the seeker... or other dominating weakness, or an obscurity of the mind or a vacillating or a weakness of the life-force ... or want of balance, he is likely to be seized on through these deficiencies... or misled from the true way of the inner life... or to be left wandering about in an intermediate chaos of experiences and fail to find his way out into the true realisation.

".. the dangers can only be surmounted if there is or there grows up a complete sincerity, a will for purity... a readiness to lose or to subject to a divine yoke the limiting and self-affirming ego. These things are the sign that the true will for realisation, for conversion of the consciousness... is there, the necessary stage of the evolution has been reached: in that condition the defects of nature which belong to the human being cannot be a permanent obstacle to the change from the mental to the spiritual status... "

The subject is elaborated in great detail in *Savitri*:

This evil Nature housed in human hearts
A foreign inhabitant, a dangerous guest:
The soul that harbours it, it can dislodge,
Expel the householder, possess the house. (VII.2)

The forces have a thousand and one way of attacking us. Day by day my condition worsened. All the circumstances and environments so conspired, one after another, that I completely lost the inner power of resistance. I became a football for good or evil, whichever had the chance to kick it about. I cite instances of both.

There was a talk in the air that the Mother would appear on the balcony on January 13, 1959. Worshipping hearts and hungry eyes sped to the balcony street. But I could not leave my duty of guarding the department to which I had to attend. Next day someone offered to relieve me. The usual time for the balcony darshan was 6:15 a.m. I went out limping all the way, stick in hand, at 4.15 just when the Ashram gate opens and no sooner did I stand before the Samadhi than I saw the sovereign figure of Sri Aurobindo emerging from it. I was overwhelmed.

* Then I went for the balcony darshan. As said earlier, almost all forward leaps in my sadhana originated from the balcony darshan. That day, when on returning home I lay down for rest, I felt the action of the Divine Shakti in the legs and gradually it moved upward. In no time the whole body was in its grip giving me the full joy of a deep trance in that helpless state. At the time, the body seemed not to breathe any more. The whole of myself that was "I" took its station at the crown of the head. There was no sense of time and space. When there was a tendency to soar up, leaving the body, a dissuasive voice that the body was too weak for the strain made me shrink from it. As long as I was in trance, the body was totally free from pain, there was not the least sense of it.

Another act of the Mother's unbounded graciousness to save me: When I came under the treatment of Dr. Sanyal my going to the balcony was stopped to

spare me the strain. But for that I had to pay dearly.

Prof. Agarwal was on a visit to the Ashram from Lucknow and was staying at my place, for I had known him from his college days. It was Divine Grace that brought him here at the time. He took pity on me and at his own risk took me to the balcony darshan four days later.

The moment the Mother saw me she fixed the blazing rays of her eyes upon mine and my whole body from top to toe except the part below the knee got filled with a bright white light. She kept her gracious gaze at me as long as she was there and the body retained the light. But the forces of the nether regions of my being could not tolerate this and waited for a chance to knock me down. Why are we put to such a plight? We may trace the answer in the lines of *Savitri*, that man has to

... learn by failure and progress by fall

And battle with environment and doom,

By suffering discover his deep Soul

And by possession grow to his own vasts. (Vol.II.5)

Sometimes our inner state projects itself into outer circumstances. The action in the "subconscient cave" exposed to view various kinds of weaknesses, bad habits, insincerity, crudity that had lain dormant there. Now was the turn of vanity. "Our darkened lives to greater darkness move."

Back from the balcony I recovered much, but the energy gained was seized upon by wrong forces. This time the ego joined them as their spearhead to give an assault that proved fatal.

A suggestion was thrown out at me that I was not cared for. Despite my being in charge of a department, my authority was flouted and the charge was passing out of my control. This was a great provocation to me. Every minute the inner temperature went on rising. I struggled hard not to let the tongue go but to no good. Three hours passed in keen struggle; at the end I was overthrown and my temper burst forth like a bombshell.

Everybody in the Ashram appeared to me to be in the wrong. I began to condemn them at the top of my voice. At the time, access to the Mother was much restricted; still the Mother inquired of the doctor twice a day about my condition, sent her blessing flowers, herself chose the medicines for me but nothing touched my being, there was not the least response from within.

In 1951 when I had an experience of an ascent,¹ I had the good fortune of getting the Mother's blessed touch of which I was conscious, to which I was receptive and from which I drew strength. It was this that gave me the courage to challenge an array of forces round me, "Come with all your might, no harm you can do to me", and pass through the crisis unhurt.

And so, quite naturally, in 1958 when I saw the "Wings of Evil"² hanging over

¹ "This double movement of ascension and descent constitutes the fundamental process of the integral yoga." *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 150

² Two months later at Shillong I saw in a vision, with eyes open, the whole of my left leg from

me and the "desert of the coming days" as a result of the descent into the darkest chamber of my being, I looked to the Mother for her gracious help. I had a burning conviction that if I had one touch of her, one look, one blessing flower, it would make me whole. Like dying plants coming back to life by the touch of kindly drops of heaven, sinking souls regain the joy of life by the touch of the Mother's blessings. But as luck would have it, while she was taking so much personal interest, giving me so much attention, I was a non-responsive block of stone, unfeeling, unmoved.

When I refused to take the medicines selected by the Mother, those around me perhaps thought I had gone mad. And when shouting was reported to the doctor he was convinced that mine was a clear case of mental derangement. All this I came to know much later. At the time I had no sense, no control over my actions. I drifted about like a rudderless ship. Even children were removed from the house to avoid my contact.

The story is long, I refrain from further detail. The Mother fixed a date and a time for me to be taken to Madras and to be admitted to a Hospital. The next account will show that everything she does has its meaning.

(To be continued)

bottom to knee-joint in the gorge of a big crocodile. A moment later I saw its body cut sharply lengthwise with a knife, pulled off and thrown away. Surely this was a happening on the subtle-physical plane from where originate all actions on the surface.

THE MARRIAGE OF SUNDARAMURTI

A POEM

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1978)

2

“BUT where is Nambi Arurar?”, demanded the king
Of a passing attendant. “We can hardly proceed
To Puttur without the groom.” “Your majesty”—
The slave boy swallowed in fright as he replied —
“The Prince Arurar lies asleep.” “Asleep!
Asleep at this hour? Wake him up! Bring him here!”
“Asleep,” the king muttered, as Shammugam careened
Down the long, tumultuous, richly appointed hall,
“And does he think that this too will be a game,
My Prince Arurar?” Narasingha smiled
At his own anger as he pronounced the name
And with a fond repentance corrected himself,
“My Sundaramurti.” Yes, his favourite indeed
Was an “image of loveliness”. As the monarch turned
Into an empty, half-lit chamber, his mind
Went back through years made sacred with delight
To the day when he first saw the beautiful boy.

The Brahmin clans of Tirunavellur
Were celebrating an important rite
Before their king, and he was obliged to stand
As the Purohita poured out libations of ghee
Upon the seven tongues of the sacred fire,
Which flared with each accepted offering,
And the hall resounded with the cry “Swaha!”
After the ancient Vedic ritual
Had been completed, the cult of the Great God
Began with a long blast on the conch-shell horn.
The golden idol of the Auspicious One,
Draped in embroidered silk and hung with pearls,
From the temple’s Holy of Holies was brought forth,
And Uma from her own inviolable shrine,
Adorned and robed like a richly dowered bride,
Was carried in on a jewelled palanquin.
Then, to a crescendo of shrill shenais,

Before the priesthood of the witness fire,
 Whose rhythmical hypnotic flickerings
 Endowed the granite gods, whose sinuous limbs
 Were twined in gestures of ecstasy around
 The hall's great columns, with mysterious life,
 The marriage of Soul and Nature was performed.
 Now it was time to sing the sacred hymns
 Of Appar and Sambandhar, and there arose
 A comely woman, Isaigyaniyar
 By name, and by her side the beautiful boy.
 He was a sunbeam in the dusky hall,
 A beaker of laughter in the solemn throng.
 Leaving his mother's hand, his head held high,
 He walked with unselfconscious confidence
 Until he stood alone before the king
 Still as a palm when suddenly the wind dies.
 The vinas and the drums began to play,
 And he, with a hand that like a butterfly
 Followed the beat, opened his mouth to sing.

How sweetly the familiar notes and words
 Were linked in melody, was all the king
 Could think when first the music struck his ears.
 How sweetly the familiar melody,
 Turned by the lips of the delightful child,
 Reached into some immeasurable beyond.
 How sweetly charged with what unusual weight
 Of meaning came the often-heard refrain:
 "How canst thou, beautiful blue-throated Lord,
 Lover of her who is incarnate grace,
 Refuse to him by whom thou art adored
 The intoxicating vision of thy face."
 The untroubled stream of Narasingha's mind,
 Flowed on in rhythm with the poignant hymn,
 Until its deep occult significance
 Broke in, as sweet and terrible as death
 And, like a river flowing into the sea,
 He was transported to another world.
 Although as if in trance, he remained aware
 Of all around him: still the temple hall,
 Where the smoke of incense swirled and the lamps flared,
 Was visible, but to a more perfect eye,
 Which saw all things as beautiful portions of

The universal form of the Great God.
 And at the centre of that brilliant domain
 Of beauty and ecstasy, the lovely boy
 Was the embodiment of all its charm.
 After what seemed a blissful eternity
 The echoes of the last notes died away.
 The Brahmin clans of Tirunavellur
 Went back to their village, but the boy stayed.
 The kingdom's finest masters were summoned to court
 To bring up the child and when he came of age
 To initiate him in the mysteries:
 The Vedas and Vedangas he learned by heart
 And the sacred canon of the Tamil saints,
 The incantations of the Great God's slaves.
 Statecraft and law and every science and art
 That had to be mastered by a future king
 Were taught by Narasingha's ministers,
 Whose policies had made his Pallava state
 The greatest south of the Godavari.
 War-tested veterans instructed him
 In the departments of the soldier's trade,
 Riding and archery and how to hurl
 The javelin and wield the battle-mace
 And the sacred code of honour. In these the men
 Were his preceptors; but it was the queen's
 Ladies-in-waiting who instructed him
 In the preliminary arts of love.
 For though his student's vow of chastity
 Was never broken, the attractive child
 Was far too fetching for the palace girls
 And women to remain indifferent.
 For them the boy who for his beauty seemed
 To be the re-embodied god of love
 Learned with the gestures of his eyes to spell
 In an accomplished secret alphabet
 The give-and-take of unexpressed desire.
 This the king noticed and his counsellors,
 Who privately advised him that the time
 Had come for him to choose his ward a bride.
 The Prince was not unwilling. For too long
 He had constrained his turbulent stream of life
 To flow between the banks of right and wrong,

But now the violently mounting flood
Threatened to overflow them. He had tried
To redirect his love of man to God,
For so it was the Bhaktas had attained
Emancipation and enduring peace,
And his devotion was not insincere:
All the profoundest yearnings of his heart
Found beatific issue and release
In contemplation of the beautiful form
Of Parvati's beloved. The Great God
Was the adorable embodiment
Of all the aspirations of his heart
And, in His aspect of omniscience,
The incarnation of his mind's ideal;
But the impatient clamourings of his life
And his body's blindness could not recognise
In the yet vague lineaments of Uma's Lord
The source of the delight and energy
For which they craved. Nor even she herself
Could satisfy by her ethereal grace
The exigencies of his parts of earth.
Two paths alone seemed open: to gather up
In one sublime intensity of flame
His human energy and offer it
Upon the altar of God, or else to spend
It all on the enjoyment of His world.
The harsher choice long had the upper hand.
He was in love with sacrifice and longed
To offer in an integral holocaust
His fragmentary self to the one Lord,
Extinguishing his separate will to be
In the great sea of being. He came to loathe
The personality that severed him
From the unique Person and strove to rend,
As if a convict's uniform, the robe
Of egoistic habit wrapped around
The truth and beauty of his naked soul.
He would be no one. Ceasing to play the part
Allotted him in creation's comedy,
He would ascend into the flawless peace
Of non-existence, beatifically
Released from the incessantly turning wheel

Of pain and pleasure, truth and error, sin
 And virtue and continual death and birth.
 He pondered scripture and asked again and again
 To hear the histories of the God-drunk saints
 Who by renunciation reached the goal.
 And when an anchorite with matted hair,
 One of those homeless wandering mendicants
 Who had abandoned all in Shiva's name,
 Came to the palace seeking alms, the boy
 Grew wild with uncontrollable happiness.
 Leaving his books and pleasures he would sit
 For hours together at the sadhu's feet,
 Listening to discourse on the Path, the way
 To bridle the unruly sense and mind
 And how to slay the enemy Desire.
 Or he asked him countless questions—why it was
 That Shiva's throat was coloured blue, and how
 The moon became entangled in his hair,
 And who were the inhabitants of Kailas,
 That mountain round which all the planets turned
 And on whose cloud-surpassing radiant peak
 The God's eternal city Alaka
 Displayed its splendour and where he himself
 Sat sovereign upon a throne of gold,
 With Uma at his side. Such things he asked
 Or else he enjoyed the silent company
 Of Shiva's servitor, without a word
 Doing his bidding, filling his jar and bowl,
 Oiling his limbs or washing his holy feet
 In water carried from the distant well,
 Singing the sweet refrain, "What greater joy
 Than serving the servants of Kailas's Lord?"
 In this he was sincere. This was one side
 Of the prince's complex personality.
 There was another: he was a born slave
 Of beauty and a fervent worshipper
 Of all that in concrete material form
 Gave body to the spirit of loveliness.
 He thrilled to the world's contacts as might a child
 Find satisfaction in his mother's arms
 Or a man in the embraces of his wife.
 All nature was his soul's seraglio

And every beautiful thing his concubine.
 To him the boughs set quivering by the breeze
 Blown from the sandal-rich Malayan hills
 Were a perfumed nautch-girl's gracefully slender limbs
 Rhythmically turned to an enamoured dance.
 So all the universe revealed to him
 Gestures of secret personality
 And unexpected messages of love,
 And lavished a sweetness no ascetic urge
 Could cause him wholly to repudiate.

Thus when the king suggested to the prince
 That he was seeking for a suitable girl,
 The accomplished daughter of a Brahmin of rank,
 With well-proportioned limbs and fair of face,
 Sundarar understood and was content.
 Soon Narasingha's subjects all had heard
 That he was searching for a daughter-in-law
 And from each corner of the kingdom came
 A steady stream of fathers who hoped to join
 Their sacerdotal birth to royalty.
 Many came and, disappointed, returned.
 But then appeared in Narasingha's halls
 A wealthy Brahmin merchant of Puttur,
 Sadangali Shivacharyar by name,
 The noble scion of an ancient clan
 Who thought it not below his dignity
 To earn his living at the Vaishya's trade.
 He told the king he had an offer to make.
 His youngest daughter had just turned thirteen,
 And she, according to his highly skilled
 Astrologers, would make the perfect mate
 For the young prince. "No doubt," the king replied,
 "But, Swami, you are not the first to think
 Your daughter fit to marry a future king.
 Many have come and, disappointed, returned."
 "Even the rarest treasure has its price,"
 The Brahmin said, "I am prepared to pay.
 My daughter, entering your house, will bring
 As marriage portion as much silver and pearls
 As six of my best stallions' backs can bear...."
 He paused, then went on: "A herd of once-calved cows..."
 Pause again—"A third of my ancestral lands..."

And a fixed share of my temple revenues."
 "Your daughter will be dowered well indeed,"
 The king said to the merchant of Puttur,
 "But not for insufficient promises
 Of dowry have the others been turned away.
 My son the prince's heart is not for sale;
 My only thought is for his happiness.
 You have a daughter? Then let the girl be seen
 By Sundaramurti." "As your majesty
 Commands," came Shivacharyar's quick reply.
 And, at a sign from him, a palanquin
 Was carried into the hall. Upon it sat,
 Half hidden by a shimmering silk display,
 The merchant-Brahmin's youngest child Pavai.
 The prince, as he drew near the palanquin,
 Felt, superhumanly possessing him,
 As sense of immanent finality.
 And even before he saw the smiling face
 Held up to him, he knew that this was she
 That he unwittingly was waiting for.
 This single girl embodied all he lacked;
 She was his being's integral complement.
 Her mind was the reflection of his own mind
 Making it shine more brilliantly, a sun
 Made brighter by the light of a full moon.
 And when he spoke to her the perfect word
 Came to his lips, clothing inevitably
 In ornamental thought the nude idea.
 She was the positive impelling pole
 Needed to shock his soul's mute negative
 Into creative action. Thrilled, he felt
 The sympathetic vital energy
 Seated within her strong submissive heart
 To be the destined partner of his own,
 Source and support of his intended works
 And inspiration of his future's song.
 In Pavai his ideals were made concrete,
 The fire of his life kindled and set to work,
 The longings of his body satisfied.
 He stood before her in the crowded hall
 As if before an idol, unaware
 That everyone around was staring at him.

King Narasingha knew the prince's mind.
And, drawing closer to the girl, whose eyes
Were lowered modestly at his approach,
He threw a golden chain about her neck.

All this had taken place before the rains
Had washed away the summer's lingering heat
And filled the vibrant lush green countryside
With scarlet cannas and hibiscuses.
Now it was almost spring. The morning's chill
Gave place to the voluptuous warm delight
And radiance of slowly lengthening days
Outspread beneath deep blue and cloudless skies.
Five months had passed and the auspicious date
Fixed for the wedding had at last arrived
And he, the court and half the men of the town
Today would ride to neighbouring Puttur.
"Your Majesty..." The slave the king had sent
To waken Sundarar had returned. The prince
Stood silent beside him as Shammugam explained
That the Prince Arurar had not been asleep,
But, prone before his shrine, engrossed in prayer.
"It is good," the king said, with an impatient frown,
Trying to speak in his most serious tone
To the boy whose curious and evasive eyes
Refused to be held, but fluttered about the room,
As if in search among the arabesques
That adorned the walls, for an untasted flower—
"It is good the first hour of this important day,
Begun with favourable auspices,
For so the augers have pronounced, should be
Devoted to communion with the divine.
I am well pleased. May the Great God grant your prayers.
Now go, get ready. We shall soon depart."

(To be continued)

PETER HEEHS

RAMLAL'S SURRENDER

A SHORT STORY

RAMLAL and Kusum were husband and wife. They had one son named Raju. Raju fell ill. He being the only child, they tried their level best to cure him. The best doctors were called and, when they failed, the parents consulted the best Hakims and, when they also failed, the best Vaidyas were called and consulted. All the medicos failed and washed their hands of the case. But even though they failed they charged fees and went their way.

When nothing availed, as a last resort Kusum said to her husband, "Provided you agree, we may take a vow to offer Rs. 251 at the feet of the Lord if the boy recovers." Ramlal considered the proposal. He had had to pay the medicos even though they had failed and here he was to offer Rs. 251 if the boy recovered. So there was no case of loss under any circumstances. Also no time limit was fixed to fulfil the vow. So Ramlal agreed. Then Kusum and he prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, hear our prayer. Our son Raju has fallen ill. The doctors have failed. We pray to You to cure the boy and, if by Your Grace the boy recovers, we shall offer Rs. 251 at Your Lotus Feet."

The boy recovered. The question arose of offering Rs. 251 at the Lord's Feet and thereby fulfil the vow. Whenever Kusum reminded her husband of the vow, he would find some excuse and postpone going to the Lord's temple and he was sure that the Lord was not going to call upon him to fulfil the vow. In this way two years passed by and the vow remained unfulfilled. But Kusum was very particular to fulfil the vow. So when she saw that her husband was prolonging the time for going to the Lord's place, she resolutely told her husband that if the vow was not fulfilled within eight days, she would go on a hunger strike. So at last, unwillingly, Ramlal fixed a day for going to the temple.

Before the day arrived he contrived a plan so that the vow might be discharged and at the same time he might not have to part with the money but on the contrary gain something. The fixed day arrived and Ramlal acted from the morning in such a way that Kusum was surprised to see that her husband was very eager to fulfil the vow and thereby be out of God's debt. At the appointed time the three, Ramlal, Kusum and Raju started for the Lord's temple. They duly arrived there. Some devotees had come before them and had already made their offerings. With all the devotion that he could command Ramlal prostrated himself before the Lord, asked forgiveness for the delay and put the sum of Rs. 251 at the Lord's feet with a coconut. He made Raju also do the prostration and give another such fruit. Kusum too made her pranams to the Lord and she was happy that at last the offering was made.

Asked Ramlal, "Well, Kusum, are you satisfied now? Do you feel absolved from the Lord's debt? Is the weight lifted from your heart?" Kusum replied

in the affirmative. Asked Ramlal, "Shall we go home?" Again Kusum replied in the affirmative. "Then let us make a move," said Ramlal. And all the three were making for the door, and Kusum was on the point of leaving the door, when suddenly Ramlal cried out, "Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, halt, halt, what grave injustice we would be doing to the Lord if we go in this way!" Kusum could not understand anything, and so asked, "Well, what is wrong and what do you mean by the words 'if we go in this way'?" Then Ramlal said with a smile on his face, "I shall just explain and you will be satisfied, but before that you shall have to give some answers!" Saying this Ramlal told Kusum, "O mother of my child, tell me one thing, and I adjure you, in the presence of the Lord, to tell me the truth and nothing but the truth. Say, will you tell me the truth?" Kusum was perplexed at this utterance, she could not understand anything, so she said, "What are you talking about? Please say something clearly so that I may understand what you want. And why should I not tell the truth and that too in the presence of the Lord? I will tell you the truth, and the truth only. Speak out your mind." Ramlal said, "Now that you have promised to tell me the truth, please say whether the Lord is your father or not?" Replied Kusum, not knowing what he was driving at, "Without doubt the Lord is my father." "Right O," said Ramlal, "then you are the Lord's daughter." Kusum said, "It goes without saying that I am the Lord's daughter."

All the while Kusum was at a loss to understand what her husband had in mind. So she said to him, "What is your purpose in these questions?" Said Ramlal, "I will tell you my purpose, but before that please be kind enough to tell me just two things. You have said that you are the Lord's daughter, then naturally Raju is the Lord's daughter's son. Is he not?" Kusum naturally had to reply in the affirmative. Then said Ramlal, "Please don't take anything amiss and be angry, just tell me whether by this relationship I am the Lord's son-in-law or not?" So saying Ramlal asked Kusum, "Have you understood my purpose now?" Kusum was so puzzled that she said, "No." Said Ramlal, "What a simpleton you are, O *bablāni bā*!¹ Please tell me, has ever a daughter gone from her father's place empty-handed? What would people have said? They would have said, 'See, here is the Lord of the three worlds and His daughter and her family went empty-handed from the Lord's house. What a shame!' How great an insult we would inflict on the Lord, of course unknowingly, if we were to go empty-handed from this place! The Lord inspires me." So saying, he took Rs. 101/- from the sum lying at the Lord's feet and, giving them to Kusum, he said, "Kusum, take this, your father the Lord gives this to you." He handed Rs. 101/- to Kusum. Then taking another Rs. 101/- he said to Raju, "Raju, take this, your grandpa gives the same to you." And then Ramlal, with a wily smile on his face, asked Kusum, "Well, Kusum, please tell me whether the Lord will allow His son-in-law to go from His house without anything." So saying he took Rs. 51/- and said, "The Lord gives this to me." Thus in all he took Rs. 253/- from the amount lying at the Lord's feet from various

¹ *bablāni bā* = mother of my child.

offerings.

Ramlal was happy at the idea that he had discharged the Lord's debt, fulfilled the vow and had earned Rs. 253/-. Kusum was dumbfounded and Raju not understanding anything looked wonderingly at his parents alternately. And what was the Lord doing? The Lord was standing, His feet entwined, with an enigmatic smile on His face as if saying, "You cannot rob me, I lack nothing. You rob only yourself."

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THE IMAGE OF MAN

HIS FOUR FACETS

Facet III: The Frustrated Man (2)

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1978)

RAJA Rao has attempted to answer in his own way the question we have put: "What makes India go on, in spite of her outer degradation?" But he has failed, due to his lack of a deeper vision and his stressing the past only in its traditional aspect and not going to the source.

Raja Rao has written three notable books, *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, and *The Cow of the Barricade*. While the first is a tale of hero-worship, a veritable *Gandhi-purana* where "Gandhi is the visible God and Moorty is the visible *avatar*". (*Indian Writing in English* by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, p. 307) The second is in fact his autobiography, "recapitulating the various details of his turbulent existence." (*The Indian-Anglian Novel* by Krishna Rao, p.130)

Kanthapura is an allegory making the foreign ruler's "red men" the forces of the Asura, while the followers of Gandhi are the gods. The citizens are divided into two camps, for and against the gods, the one camp seeking reform and the other being averse to progress. Curiously, Raja Rao himself, for all his western education, seems to be against progress and harps on tradition.

At some places Gandhi has been raised to the pedestal of a Rama, sometimes of a Krishna, the British prison equated to the gaol of Kamsa, the tyrant. At other places Gandhi is elevated to the status of Shiva killing the serpent of obscurity. Sometimes Rama is combating the ten-headed demon Ravana, sometimes Gandhi as Krishna is fighting Kamsa.

The event occurs during the non-co-operation movement of 1930. The narration is not straight but goes forward and backward in time, interlaced by other complementary disjointed events.

The story is about the rousing of the village *Kanthapura* by its placid hero Moorty as its leader. Strange names like Waterfall Venkatamma, Nose-scratching Nanjamma, Temple Rangappa, Gold-bangle Sommanna increase the ludicrousness of the plot.

When Gandhi goes to England, for the second Round Table Conference, Raja Rao waxes into a delirium of excitement: "They say the Mahatma will go to the Red Man's country and he will get Swaraj.... And we will be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Sita will be with him for Ravana will be slain." (*Kanthapura*, Champak ed., p. 258)

According to Iyengar, "*Kanthapura* is a fusion of poetry and politics, the perennial with the present." (*Indian Writing in English*, p. 310)

But *The Serpent and the Rope*, a huge tome published after two decades, is an ambitious project covering over eight hundred pages and seems to embody the main thoughts of Raja Rao. This is not a factual novel, but has become in fact a pulpit, as in Aldous Huxley, for his long dissertations, musings and essays on various aspects of existence. He attempts to overwhelm the reader, not by his ingenuity, power, and inspiration as novelist but by the sheer weight of his thought; it was, it appears, his aim to reveal how much he had read, his mastery over Vedantic lore, the Christian philosophy, Indian religion and his knowledge of the European languages. The sum total of facts could hardly run over a hundred-fifty to two hundred pages and the rest are his tirades, speeches, expositions and orations.

There is no doubt that the hero Rama was Raja Rao himself, a European Brahmin, a French Vedantist, the neo-Tristan and a pseudo-Satyavan.

The facts of the novel are as follows. In 1946 in his twenty-first year Rama, a scholar with a knowledge of French, goes to France with a government scholarship to pursue a research in European history and meets Madeleine, a teacher in history, and five years his senior in age.... They marry in 1949 and a child is born whom they first call Krishna then Pierre. The child dies in 1951 due to neglect. Rama visits India in 1949, 1951 and 1954. There is also a mention of his pilgrimage to the Himalayas with his aunt, and his sojourn in Banaras. Other characters are his step-brother Shridhar, Mother Gauri, Cousin Savithri.

Rama is an orthodox Brahmin, which does not prevent his wedding an alien woman. Rama preaches Catharsis, Vedanta and is a devoted follower of Shankar and accepts the illusionistic concept as the supreme truth of existence; yet these do not stop him from being an extremely sensual, sex-driven person. Thus there is trenchant opposition between what he preaches and what he practises. He is a man not sure of himself, a hypocrite mouthing tall sermons and sky-scraping talks. This is Rama or rather Raja Rao himself.

Yet he says about Sri Aurobindo, "The superman is our enemy. Look what happened in India. Sri Aurobindo, if you please, wanted to improve on the Advaita of Sri Shankara, which is like trying to improve on the status of the Zero." (*The Serpent and the Rope*, p. 205)

In this silly way he goes on to belittle Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo appears to him a foolish phenomenon, an impossible character who "disturbs the sanctity".

The distortion needs no comment.

Only thing we can affirm is: Raja Rao dares to rush in where angels fear to tread; he poses as an advanced thinker, but in reality he is a backward-looking, sophisticated speaker of outdated orthodoxy. Does he think that he can undo Sri Aurobindo's colossal achievements as thinker, yogi, poet and a superman of the future, the greatest avatar, by merely slinging a few muddy words in his meaningless novel?

If Raja Rao is a misguided and all-too-conceited writer, Premchand, writing in Hindi, gives an authentic picture of poverty-stricken India, greater than any writer including Mulk Raj Anand who writes more or less as an onlooker rather than a

direct participator like Premchand. His personal conflict with poverty and his direct and authentic contact with the lower classes of India, his intimate and knowing experience of poverty make his books so living yet so bitter. A critic comments: "It is the beauty of the art of story-telling that no moral dictates are stated or morals preached. The object of the author must merge into the characters and situations and should be revealed through the story. Premchand employed this technique with some success in the beginning and perfected it as he wrote more and more. He added the art of characterisation to the earlier flat and diadactical novels; and thus the art of novel-writing in Hindi reached its maturity with his last novel *Godan*, 1936." (*Hindi Literary Trends and Traits* by Indu Prakash Pandey, p.164)

There are three types of characters portrayed: "In the novels of Premchand the reader is given a realistic picture of India; the Northern Indian villages and peasants seething under the Zamindari, Mahajan systems, factory-workers huddled up like beasts in the slums of Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Calcutta; the middle class living in an imaginary world of social respectability; Zamindars, Taluqdars, Rajas and Nawabs rolling in luxury; social and political workers trying to do their bit against all these odds." (*Ibid.*, p. 166)

The frustration is scathing. The disillusionment is supreme. This is because Premchand is a realist, which necessarily limited him to materialism. Materialism is a cult which is alien to the Indian blood; poverty does not break or kill the Indian spirit, it generates a dispassion, an equanimity and broadens the Indian's nature. He does not suffer it like a beast but tolerates it as a necessary condition of external existence. Perhaps we could draw a parallel in Saratchandra or Bibhuti Bhusan Banerjee, both of whom have depicted poverty, but poverty has not frustrated their spirits. They are none the less realists, and witnessed equal degradation.

We shall trace the outline of a story by Premchand to seize the depth of frustration. *Kafan* (*The Shroud*) relates the bitter tale of a father and a son, both sweepers, squatting outside their huts, by a fire which has almost turned to cinders. It is winter and inside the hut the son's wife is in the throes of child-birth. She intermittently wails and goes into a comatose sleep. But the two men are callous to her agony. They have sold away every bit of article to keep the wolf from the door. The wife was the only toiler in the family and with her confinement all sources of income have ceased. Nevertheless, the men do not a stitch of work, drink whenever they can, lay their hands on any cash, gossiping, stealing and gambling, which is the way of their existence.

By morning, the poor woman is dead, having delivered a still-born child. The men weep and beat their breasts and rush to the Zamindar to ask for some money to prepare for the poor woman's cremation.

The landlord does indeed give some cash, while abusing the men. The men, approaching others, moneylenders, and shop-keepers, manage to collect a fair amount of money, which however is not spent on cremation but on drinks, while the corpse

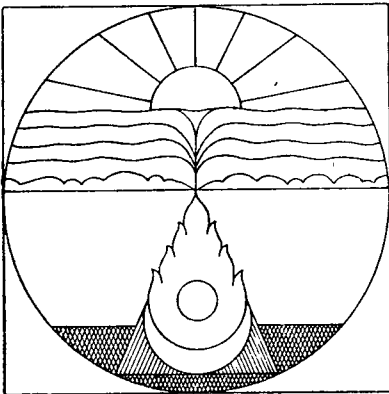
rots in the hovel.

This is the naked picture of frustration.

Summing up, we may say frustration is a common denominator of present-day existence. It has become a hall-mark of sophistication and among the rich a psychological luxury, among the poor a turning to themselves as the last resort and to most a deformation of consciousness, a short-sightedness. Frustration neither enlightens nor leads the way; it leads instead into the morass of ruin.

(To be continued)

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THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1978)

The Yoga of King Lear

VII. The Battle

It is at this point that almost every critic, reader and member of the audience would wish the play to end. Lear has undergone his purgatory on the heath, he has been purified of passion and born into love. Life itself which carried him on his miserable journey has brought him to this happy home. John Holloway writes, "Union with Cordelia barely proves Lear's salvation... but that union is the thing to which he rightly belongs. He deviated from it, and *life itself brought him back.*"²⁴ Why should there be anything for him but the happiness of reunion? Lear is weak and childlike. There does not appear to be anything left of his old self. But the reunion is interrupted by war. If life and Shakespeare do not agree with our verdict it is best to look more carefully at all that follows for an answer, for surely there must be one.

The outcome of the war cannot be dismissed as arbitrary, rather it is a lawful expression of the prevailing balance of forces. Cordelia has brought the French army on a personal crusade to save her father. It is not a war to excite the enthusiasm of the French kingdom. It offers no spoils of war, no extension of power, no threat to the country. As Cordelia says, it is not a war of self-seeking but a mission of love:

O dear father!
It is thy business that I go about;
Therefore great France
My mourning and importun'd tears hath pitied.
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right. (IV.iv.23)

At the last moment, the King of France is recalled home on some matter of import to his kingdom. Conditions of life remove him from the scene.

But for the English the situation is different. The war is an invasion by a foreign power threatening to overthrow the present rulers. The national pride and interests of the country are at stake, not merely the personal affections of a daughter. Even the Duke of Albany, who feels sympathy for Lear and the wrongs done against him, is forced to look on the war as a foreign attack which must be repelled regardless of the justness of their cause:

... the King is come to his daughter
 With others whom the rigour of our state
 Forc'd to cry out. Where I could not be honest
 I never yet was valiant. For this business,
 It touches us as France invades our land,
 Not bolds the King, with others whom, I fear,
 Most just and heavy causes make oppose. (V.i.21)

General human consciousness was not so developed at this time to fight powerfully and unselfishly for a true or idealistic cause but it was capable of great self-sacrifice in pursuit of selfish ends or the interests of the community. The present conflict evokes the deeper defensive instincts and energies of the British army while leaving the French with only an inspired ideal to lead them. France as a nation was not pure and high enough in its consciousness to be successful in a mission of love. No wonder the war was quickly over.

The outcome of the war is inevitable from a deeper perspective as well. Lear sacrificed the interests of his kingdom to his personal needs. The contest and division were an offense to the consciousness of the country. Cordelia too offended that consciousness by insisting on her pride in preference to an inheritance with the result that she was exiled from her homeland. Thus by their combined action father and daughter have placed Britain under the rule of evil beings. Now Cordelia brings the French army on a personal mission. The consciousness of the country they both have rejected refuses to serve them. It strives only to defeat a foreign threat to its sovereignty. Bradley has objected that "there is something almost ludicrous in the insignificance of this battle" and he attributes the fact to the excessively large number of characters in the play and the fatiguing of our emotions. But the real reason for its insignificance is that in terms of life it could not have ended differently. Shakespeare makes it quick and insignificant to underline this fact and avoid drawing attention away from the real forces at work.

Lear's reunion with Cordelia is quite short. The war is lost, king and daughter captured and secretly sentenced to death by Edmund. Lear is unaware of the danger. He no longer cares for curses or revenge. His only thought is the joy of being with Cordelia.

Lear. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison.
 We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage;
 When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
 And ask of thee forgiveness; so we'll live,
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
 Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—

And take upon's the mystery of things
 As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out
 In a wall'd prison packs and sects of great ones
 That ebb and flow by th' moon.

Ed. Take them away.

Lear. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
 The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee? (V. iii. 8-21)

Here Lear gives full expression to the growth of his being in what Bradley calls "that serene renunciation of the world, with its power and glory and resentments and revenges... This is that renunciation which is at the same time a sacrifice offered to the gods, and on which the gods themselves throw incense; and, it may be, it would never have been offered but for the knowledge that came to Lear in his madness."²⁵ But note the lines by Lear that follow:

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven
 And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;
 The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell,
 Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see 'em starv'd first. (V. iii. 22)

Still there remains the smallest seed of the old Lear in "We'll see 'em starv'd first", a seed which if allowed to survive could resprout in a being of his stature into the old imperious king. But long ago Lear himself initiated a movement to outgrow that being of passion, and life has taken full charge to bring the movement to its ultimate goal. So long as anything remains to be done, the momentum will not stop. The moment Lear utters those words Edmund gives instructions to the Captain for their execution.

VIII. The Duel

As Edmund's order is a response of life to Lear's final outburst, so too life responds to Edmund's order with the entry of Albany, who demands his arrest as a traitor and challenges him to defend his honour. It appeared from the outcome of the battle that evil had been fully victorious. But, in fact, the defeat of the French army was a victory for Britain, not for those in power. Since the moment of Gloucester's blinding the strength and momentum of the evil forces were on the decline. They quickly exhausted the opening given by Lear's initiative and evoked a reaction from the established forces of civilisation. Cornwall bestowed Gloucester's title on Edmund, blinded his father and was killed by a servant. This marks the beginning of the descent. The fact that Cornwall's death followed so closely on these other two acts was a sure indication that the power which put Edmund in the limelight and the power which committed the atrocity against Gloucester could not long maintain its position. When it began its fall, it was inevitable that all which it had established should fall with it.

The second sign of the changing tide is the death of Oswald and the interception of Goneril's letter to Edmund. Oswald attempts to slay a blind defenseless old man but loses his own life instead. Goneril has openly proposed that Edmund kill Albany, marry her and take his title. With Oswald's death the letter passes to Edgar and from him to Albany. The result is Albany's challenge to Edmund and the duel between Edgar and his bastard brother. The letter is an act initiated in evil. That evil has spent its force for destroying others and falls back on those who released it.

The third sign of evil's decline is the open conflict between Goneril and Regan upon Albany's challenge to Edmund. Actually this conflict was present in seed from the very beginning and first expressed by Kent even prior to Cornwall's death:

There is a division,
Although as yet the face of it is covered
With mutual cunning, twixt Albany and Cornwall. (III.i.19)

The force and agents of evil are usually invincible so long as they are united. But unity is natural only to forces of good. There is in evil a tendency toward internal division and self-destruction which makes it open to conquest from within and without. Here the source of division is the jealous competition of Goneril and Regan for Edmund and absolute power. Regan expresses it when she pleads with Oswald to show her Goneril's letter. Now at Albany's challenge it comes fully into the open. With the letter Albany exposes Goneril and Edmund:

Alb. Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee
On capital treason; and, in thy attaint (*Pointing to Goneril*),
This gilded serpent. For your claim, fair sister,
I bar it in the interest of my wife;
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,
And I, her husband, contradict your bans.
If you will marry, make your loves to me—
My lady is bespoke.

Gon. An interlude!

Alb. Thou art arm'd, Gloster. Let the trumpet sound.
If none appear to prove upon thy person
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge; (*Throwing down a glove*).
I'll make it on thy heart,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

(V.iii. 82-95)

The evil they represent thrives on deceit and concealment. Goneril was able to go so far primarily due to Albany's ignorance, not his weakness. Gradually he discovers

that her beautiful outer appearance conceals a fiend:

See thy self, devil;
 Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
 So horrid as in woman. (IV.ii.59)

But still the appearance saves her:

Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame!
 Be-monster not thy feature. Were't my fitness
 To let these hands obey my blood,
 They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
 Thy flesh and bones. Howe'er thou art a fiend,
 A woman's shape doth shield thee. (IV.ii.62-7)

The letter removes the last shade of her disguise and reveals in her all he felt to be true. So also Edmund has gained his present position only by deceiving Gloucester and Edgar and expressing false loyalty to Cornwall. The letter and Albany's charges fully expose him as well. What grew in darkness becomes weak in the light of truth.

In ordering the execution of Lear and Cordelia, Edmund has failed to realise that the power which supported him thus far is waning. His act exceeds the limits sanctioned by his strength and the strength of the forces he represents. Immediately he is challenged and confronted by Edgar in disguise. He must fight in broad daylight to defend the acts he committed in darkness. Edmund is a product of a social transgression by Gloucester and his life is indifferent to social mores. In the end he is challenged by Edgar who conceals his identity behind a visage. By social convention Edmund who is now Earl of Gloucester is not obliged to accept the challenge:

In wisdom I should ask thy name;
 But, since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
 And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,
 What safe and nicely I might well delay
 By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn. (V.iii.141-144)

But for his protection he is unable to call upon the social rules he disregarded for a lifetime. His life has been an offence to the social consciousness of the country and that consciousness refuses to serve him.

Edgar comes not to revenge wrongs done to his father or to Lear, nor to save the country. His motive is to challenge the usurper to his title. He appears in still another disguise because he has been robbed of his true identity and he fights to regain that identity. He displays the confidence and strength of one who knows he is facing a social outcast. Edgar is by nature mild, timid and unaggressive. He prefers the ano-

nymity of a disguise to being in the limelight. He is forced by life to finally act in defense of his father and his title and inadvertently the country as a whole. There is a nobleness in his unformed personality which is brought out by the stress of circumstances. Albany marks it even through his disguise, "Methought thy very gait did prophesy a royal nobleness." He is the one with the least trace of passion or ambition in his nature and yet by defeating Edmund he is propelled from insignificance to become ruler of half of Britain. Because Lear renounced power it was possible for a leader to emerge who by nature did not seek power and could never abuse it. Edgar's victory is due not merely to his individual strength and initiative. He is supported by the ascending powers of order and civilisation and his victory marks the re-establishment of those powers in authority.

(To be continued)

GARRY JACOBS

NOTES

24. *Case book: King Lear*, edited by Frank Kermode, Macmillan & Co., 1969, pp. 223-4.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

SHORT NOTICES OF BOOKS

Sri Aurobindo:

The Karmayogin: Early political writings-2. (Vol. II of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library) xvi+440 pp; Picture, Ind. Bib. Note; 19×27cm; 1st 1972; (Released for loose sale 1978) Rs.50/- (bd.) Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo started *The Karmayogin* on June 19, 1909 after his acquittal in the Alipore Conspiracy Case, and edited it till February 1910, when he left for Chandernagore. In his editorials he commented on the political and other significant events of the time. This volume contains the political writings and public speeches of Sri Aurobindo. They throw a rare light on the times and the happenings and reveal the active part he played in India's struggle for freedom.

The Harmony of Virtue (Vol. No. 3 of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library) viii+490 pp; Bib. Note; 19×27cm; 1st 1972 (Released for loose sale 1978) Rs.50/- (bd.) Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

The volume contains Sri Aurobindo's early prose writings (1890-1910) and covers a variety of subjects, e.g., *The Harmony of Virtue*; Bankim Chandra Chatterjee; *The Sources of Poetry and Other Essays*; Valmiki and Vyasa; Kalidasa; *Art and Literature*; *Passing Thoughts*, etc.

The Mother:

Words of Long Ago (Collected Works of The Mother Vol. 2) (Set of 15 volumes) viii+290pp; Pic. Ind; Bib. Note; 16×24 cm.; 1st 1978,

Price of Set: Popular Edn. Rs. 500/- .. \$ 150/-

De luxe Edn. Rs. 1250/- .. \$ 250/-

Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

In this volume are collected all the writings of The Mother from the period before 1920, except *Prayers and Meditations*. There are notes, essays and her numerous talks to different groups. Also included are her adaptations of some stories under the title 'Tales of All Times'.

Contents: The Path of Later On, The Virtues, On Thought, The Supreme Discovery, The Divinity Within, On the Mysteries of the Ascent towards God, The War, Impressions of Japan, To the Women of Japan, Myself and My Creed, Tales of All Times, etc. etc.

Vijay (Compiler)—from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother:

Light for Students x+140 pp; Pictures, References; 12×180; 1st 1978; Rs. 9.50 (ubd) Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry.

The most important period in the life of an individual is the time he spends as a student. During this period his personality develops and determines the course of his future. Here are brought together some selected passages from the writings of

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*

A special review of Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *On the Mother*, Vol. II, will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Mother India*.

NOTE

By oversight the author's name—Jagdish Khanna—was omitted after the article *The Ideal Child: Some Comments* in the August issue, pp 553-4.

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 August 15, 1978)

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM THE MOTHER

Speech by Romen Palit

THERE could be no greater celebration of the Mother's centenary than by acknowledging our debts to her, attempting to follow her teachings as exemplified in her life, and trying to live up to the highest ideals she has placed before us.

Personally, her life is a living embodiment of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, the manifestation of Truth. This is what we can judge from her outer deeds; the rest, her inner life and spiritual actions are and ever shall be closed books to us. We know only whatever she has chosen to reveal to us.

I have been singularly privileged to have had both inner and outer contacts with her for over four decades. This, let me hasten to add, does not in any way increase my importance, or my worthiness. This only expresses her overwhelming grace towards an unworthy individual.

I have had occasion to witness her myriad ways, her countless moods, and her many actions, revealing a few facets of her ever-new, ever-elusive and multitudinous personality. I shall speak of some of these facets that have struck me as the most outstanding.

The first thing she revealed to me was her selflessness. Equally with Sri Aurobindo there was no greater selfless being. She did not keep back anything for herself, including her life, her consciousness, and all she was and had she manifested here for all who cared to receive that abundant bounty. If it were not so, she would not be the Mother.

Behind the selflessness was self-sacrifice and this sacrifice was the first step towards spiritual life. This was the cardinal lesson.

In fact, she was so selfless that she did not make us aware of her divinity. She was one of us, though in actuality she towered far above humanity. In some of her loving notes to me she signed her name thus: 'Thy little mother who loves thee.'

Compassion and love are perhaps her next two qualities. Personally, I have tast-

ed true divine love in her and through her. As a motherless boy I felt that I had got back my own mother, a mother who did not possess the admixture of the base metals of human weaknesses but gave me the pure gold of divine love. As a wayward and wild boy, I learnt what true love was and what was true compassion. This went a long way to refine my nature.

I have witnessed her compassion not only for the aspirant and the seeker but also for the ignorant and even for the hostile. I have seen her showering her love on persons whom we considered to be totally unworthy, which includes myself, when I come to think of it. She answered my meaningless and childish letters, patiently, lovingly and without the least annoyance.

This gesture of compassion I saw in her when she dealt with other children, in her Wednesday classes, translation-classes, programmes on Darshan days and in her never-ending numerous interviews and dealings with matters least spiritual. The same compassion, patience and love were ever present on all these occasions.

How much she has laboured to educate us in every way, each of us, collectively and individually, through her talks, parables, meditations, personal examples and, above all, her power and presence, silent and ever dominant, working from above or within!

Her love for children was unceasing. It could be truly said that she was "a child leading children". She once remarked in a half jest that she could refuse ten adults in order to admit one single child in the Ashram.

I was formerly scared of animals and birds. She taught me to love these creatures. She had once her own cat, 'Chiku', and Sri Aurobindo had his cat, 'Big Boy.' They were old inmates of the Ashram.

In the nineteen-forties she even had her crow, a huge black bird, which she used to feed with her own hands every morning. She had also her favourite squirrel which at certain times ran up across her gown to feed from her hand. Doctor R's dog used to go up to Sri Aurobindo to receive his blessings. Y's pet monkey had once the unique privilege to sit upon the Mother's lap.

She also loved cows. In fact cows, in those days, were taken great care of under the Mother's personal guidance. They used to be given special nourishing food, baths with medicated soap and on the whole great care was taken of their well-being. Even their calves used to have their fill before the cows could be milked.

On Sunday afternoons she used to come out to her balcony (the old one) and gaze down at the cows assembled there, brought specially for her. She used to see every cow in turn as she would do a human being. This was popularly known as 'the cow darshan.'

She was greatly pained at the callous treatment men accorded to the animals. She has mentioned this several times in her talks. Also she has remarked that the coming race of supermen would be in status as gods are to men, and she hoped that the supermen would treat men better than men treat animals today. She also mentioned that animals aspire to become human beings in their next birth. The example of her own

cat aspiring to become a human being can be cited in the present context.

She also remarked further that in many ways animals were better than human beings in habits, tendencies and closeness to nature.

Another outstanding thing I learnt from the Mother was gratitude. If anyone gave something to her, or did something for her, she showed her gratefulness by reciprocating the same in a vaster measure in act and kind. Devoid of gratitude, a man becomes a demon without a soul. Even animals reveal gratitude very clearly. The greater the gratitude, the closer is man to divinity.

Hand-in-glove with gratitude is humility. Sri Aurobindo has said in a poem,
Therefore we know by that humility

That thou art God.¹

This humility was manifestly apparent in the Mother. She did not possess any bias or conceit whatsoever. We have seen her, the supreme master of Yoga, consulting a Tantrik Yogi in matters concerning the secrets and practices of Tantra. This was indeed a great lesson for me.

The Mother was ever frank and open, a thing men exploited for their own egoistic ends. Although she was aware of this ugly fact, she did not cease to be frank and open. This, because she cared little for money, position, or fame. Perhaps she remained open and frank in the hope that the person or persons would change in the long run, following her example.

Further, even the most vile, the most perverse too were her children. Could a mother banish them or push them aside?

Compassion and love were not her only qualities. She could be, if she chose, which was not often, quite severe—particularly to those she most loved. This severity was not vindictive: it was aimed at making us conscious of our shortcomings. I have had many occasions to face her rebukes and her scoldings. This aspect, she wrote to me once, was her aspect of Mahakali.

I have known from her what true love is. She was a friend, a counsellor, a constant guide and ever-encouraging companion. Sometimes I wonder what was the speciality she found in me that she should shower all this love upon me. To me she was always 'Thy little mother who loves thee' and I was her 'little one.'

Lastly she showed how to love Sri Aurobindo and follow him entirely. In fact, her entire existence was directed to the manifestation of Sri Aurobindo and his great ideal. The Ashram, the International Centre of Education, the Physical Education Department and the many other departments in the Ashram and even outside bear ample testimony to her work—her efforts to embody the Master's ideal and mission.

Personally I have imbibed my little musical and artistic aptitudes from the Mother. From Sri Aurobindo I have imbibed my poetical and literary tendencies.

But this in no way exhausts what I owe to the Mother and what I have learnt from her.

¹ "God" in *Collected Poems* (Cent. Ed., Vol. V), p. 63.

Speech by Radhikaranjan Das

Friends,

This meeting is a greeting from an insect to his fellow insects. Excuse me please if I have hurt your sense of dignity but in due time you will all understand why I have called ourselves insects.

One day Narada the celestial sage approached Lord Vishnu and stood beside him waiting for a chance to speak. When Vishnu became aware of his presence he said, "Speak, O sage, for my ears are ready to hear your words." Narada asked timidly, "Lord, is there any striking reward for staying in good company?"

Vishnu: "Yes, there is."

Narada: "Lord, pardon my impudence, but can one profit in any way just by seeing or coming near a good man?"

Vishnu: "Go down to the earth and exactly in the middle of a certain village you will find a pond. Go there and call out the name Swarnapada thrice. Then an insect will emerge from the mud and will initiate you."

Narada came to the earth singing always the name of the Lord. After doing what he was asked to do he returned to heaven and said to Vishnu, "Lord, I have sinned: just by glancing at me Swarnapada died."

Vishnu: "All right. In that same village there is a manger where a calf is born today. Go there and ask it and it will answer you rightly."

But to the misfortune of Narada the calf also left its mortal coil just on looking at the sage. This time Narada returned in tears and said, "Lord, I am the greatest sinner in all the three worlds; the calf also died by looking at me."

Vishnu: "Never mind. Go to the king's palace and the new-born prince will instruct you."

Narada: No, Lord, I don't want to kill the prince now."

Vishnu: "Go, Narada, for it is my command."

Heavy-hearted, Narada reached the palace. Seeing the celestial sage on such an auspicious occasion men began to flock round him and asked him various questions concerning the new-born prince and his future. But so heavy was his heart, so great a pain troubled him, that he hardly knew what to speak. But then the king said, "We should show him the baby so that he can predict his future and also bless him." And they called Narada to show him the prince in his cradle. But Narada was much perplexed. When the king saw this he said, "Let us leave him now; for he doesn't feel at ease with us around. Let him be in the room with the baby prince all alone." Saying this he departed with his courtiers.

As Narada entered the room in which the baby prince was kept his heart-beat increased from 72/sec to 140/sec, his heart hammered against his ribs, his eyes grew big, his limbs began to tremble, the Veena slipped from his hand, horripilation occurred, even his parched mouth stuck and stopped uttering Hari's name. This was the third murder that he was to perpetrate.

But, strangely enough, the babe smiled and said, "O greatest among the seers, listen now. I was the insect Swarnapada. By seeing you once in my insect existence, I jumped thousands of births and became a calf. I was the calf in the manger. Seeing you once in my bovine life I died only to jump again thousands of births to be finally born in the best family of the best race. And here seeing you once I have acquired all that is to be known in this human birth. Such is the power of meeting a real good man even once in a life-time."

Some of my friends here may find my story strange and may question: What has this story to do with the subject of my speech? To them I answer: we are all like Swarnapada the insect, and the very fact that we have had the privilege of not only seeing the Mother but of being chosen by Her to be Her experiment-ground for the future race is an incalculable boost on the path of spiritual progress. We are at present in one of the hours of God which does not come again for centuries. We must heed to its call or we shall be like those imprudent virgins who had not kept their lamps trimmed and whose ears were sealed to the call of the Lord. Let us place ourselves in the hands of the Mother and though bound by physical laws of evolution we shall jump several steps spiritually. And it is that which is asked of us; for Sri Aurobindo says, "Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything."¹ It is for this great spiritual leap that we have assembled here, and not merely to have an education. Some might say they came here because the education is free or because this is a new experiment; but I say these are only external helps to lead the chosen souls to the rightful owner. Once the Mother said, "In fact I hold myself responsible for everyone, even for those whom I have met only for one second in my life."²

And I can firmly say that every meeting with Her, however small it might be, is an experience and a revelation; whether we feel it or not, that look of Hers works deep and for long in our being.

*

When I was just a babe of three I came to the Ashram for the first time. (Mind you, I don't remember anything about it. It was my father who told me about it much later.) It was in August 1962. At the time of the Mother's Balcony Darshan, I was fast asleep on my father's shoulder. When the Mother reached the balcony, my father hesitated to wake me up, lest I should cry. So he lifted me with both his arms above the heads of others. From that strange position I had had my first Darshan of the Divine.

After the Darshan I saw the march-past, then I was given my dinner in the dining room and was taken to Parc-à-charbon, for it was there that my father resided at that time. It was only after reaching there that I opened my mouth. I told

¹ *The Ideal of the Karmayogin* (Cent Ed, Vol. 2), p. 20.

² *Bulletin*, Feb. 1958, p. 77.

my father that I wanted to go immediately to the Ashram and wanted to pray a few words before the Samadhi. He said, "We shall go tomorrow." But I insisted on going that very night and said that I had a very special prayer which could not wait till the next day. My father tried all possible ways to dissuade me, but I won. He had to bring me to the Ashram. When we reached the Ashram, Nolini-da was near the gate. When he saw a child like me still awake, he questioned my father, "What is his age, and where are you taking him now?" Hearing my father's reply he said, "Children below three are not allowed inside the Ashram." But when my father mentioned my extreme urge, he let us in.

I went and sat by the Samadhi for a moment and then returned and told my father, "Father, I prayed: 'O Mother, I want to march in your playground like those that I saw today' and She said, 'Yes.'"

Then my father told about my prayer to Nolini-da who smiled and said, "Surely, one day you will march like the others." Then he continued, "The answer 'Yes' emerged from the depth of his soul."

After this incident months passed, years passed. I was admitted into the Ashram when I was seven years old. Due to some mishandling, my application form was lost, so my father pasted one of my photos on a piece of paper, wrote my name, my age, and my address and sent it to the Mother. The Mother signed there for my admission. Yet I had to wait for three years more after that to have the privilege of marching in the playground, because I was in the new group. After waiting for full seven years my aspiration bore its fruit. Now I know that the Mother has taught me at least this, that a sincere prayer is always answered. And I still bow low to Her with gratitude for admittance here without a proper application form.

I have learnt many more things from Her; but they all are not as physically evident as this incident and so I prefer not to speak about them. This incident is a lamp-post that guides me and shall guide me evermore on the path of spiritual progress.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI